

Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

Q & A as of 9.27.2021

Question	Answer
Vendor Agreements	
Is there somewhere to see the list of the 512 vendors?	https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Jx44MZ4E57ig-sDc2m_JJBXksRNSExVVIep3HSqSfo8/edit#gid=1091724026
Will the vendor agreements need to be entered into NCFAST?	Yes. The same process that counties use for energy vendors will be used for water vendors. NC FAST is in the process of creating the ability to load energy vendors into NC FAST. The projected date for that functionality is November 13th but may be completed sooner than that. In the meantime, please hold onto all agreements you receive and add them into NC FAST when that functionality becomes available.
What dates should we put on the Vendor Services Agreement?	The date of the month the agreement will be signed. Agreements are for 12 months.
My vendor had a question regarding the contract where it says after receiving the LIHWAP payment, services will need to be maintained for 90 days. Does this mean that if the client does not pay their bill that the vendor cannot shut the water off for 90 days?	The 90 day maintenance period has been removed from the vendor agreement.
The vendors I have spoken with have one main reservation, the 90 days they must agree to not turn services off if the client does not pay. It sounds like that is non-negotiable??	The 90 day maintenance period has been removed from the vendor agreement.
Our USDA Revenue Bond requires we disconnect 60 days after nonpayment	LIHWAP is administered by Administration for Children and Families (ACF) through the Office of Community Services instead of USDA.
Once we start getting the vendor agreements back from the vendors do we key those into NCFAST the same exact way we do the electric vendors? or is there a certain way to key those contracts in for the water companies?	Yes. The same process that counties use for energy vendors will be used for water vendors. NC FAST is in the process of creating the ability to load energy vendors into NC FAST. The projected date for that functionality is November 13th but may be completed sooner than that. In the meantime, please hold onto all agreements you receive and add them into NC FAST when that functionality becomes available.
Will vendors need to complete a W-9 as well in order for payments to be made?	No, vendors will only need to complete the vendor agreements.
When is the information regarding the vendors due?	Please have the survey completed by Friday, October 8, 2021.
What is the time period do you want the vendors to look at for the cut-offs? Clients get their water turned off and back on over and over again, so by the time payments are issued the water can be back on and caught up again	Water vendors should use the month the client applies for LIHWAP.

Will the counties receive a report that identifies the client and vendor? We had to update the automatic payments for LIEAP during the summer due to death, moving, and permanently disconnected service.	Yes, once data share agreements are returned from water vendors, this will allow a data match to happen and this information will be provided to counties through a report so that they can process the payments. Counties will also receive a list of customers that did not match so that they can request that the vendor notify that customer of their ability to apply for LIHWAP benefits.
If the vendor is submitting the balances due now; it will differ in November; so how will the correct amount of funds be distributed?	Funds will be distributed based on the balances the vendor provides. Please ask your vendors to hold off sharing their data until November 2021. To submit their data, vendors can use the following ZIX Portal - https://web1.zixmail.net/s/login?b=ncdhhs . The Portal will allow files up to 30 MB to be uploaded. If the vendor's file is larger than 30 MB, they will need to break it down into multiple files.
IN the data sharing agreement, it asks for SSN. Can we provide just the last 4 digits?	To ensure that an accurate data match is complete, the complete SSN is needed if available. We are aware that not all vendors capture SSNs in their accounts, if the SSN is not provided a data match using name, address or DOB will be used, but NC FAST cannot guarantee that the match will be accurate. If no match is found, the household will have to apply for LIHWAP.
For Vendor Survey question 2e, it asks how many households have been disconnected as of 9/1. How far back is this going, back to March 2020?	Vendor should go back to when they started disconnecting services after moratoriums were lifted.
Could you provide a list of the vendors that have completed and submitted the vendor agreements so that we do not duplicate the efforts already completed?	Yes.
So the LIHWAP agreement will go to all energy providers as long as they also include water and waste charges right?	Yes.
1 of our water vendors does not give past due notices, bill due on the 15th and 16th they cutoff. Would they be in Group 1 or 2?	Group 2 because the household is in jeopardy of a disconnection.
One of the water vendors asked if DSS would be doing pledges for the LIHWAP approvals, with it being followed like LIEAP I said probably not but I wanted to ask.	Yes, for Groups 1 & 2 they are considered to be in a crisis so pledges will be made.
Has the State already gotten any vendor agreements from vendors or are counties responsible for sending out the agreements?	Counties are responsible for sending out vendor agreements because the county have to fill out a portion of the agreement, sign it and submit the information into NC FAST..
Data Matching	
When a client is matched, who will key the application? How will the counties get the payment data request?	Once NC FAST completes the data match, the info would be sent to the county and the county would write a check outside of NC FAST. There will not be an application process for LIHWAP automatic payments.

Do vendors automatically have the right to share customer information, without knowledge or permission from customer?	Clients are giving permission when applying for program and when the vendor enters into the data share agreement. Clients will be notified and will have the option to opt out of program.
I know you mentioned Epass and Paper Apps, however I thought that some portion of the process involved automated payments. I joined a little late and might have missed the specifics.	Yes. Similar to the LIEAP Pandemic auto payments last year, there will be an automated process for customers where the vendor has provided the data and we were able to successfully match that data to a customer in NC FAST. A portion of the LIHWAP funds will be set aside for customers who cannot be matched or the vendor did not provide the data so the customer will have to apply for LIHWAP.
What is covered?	
Clarification, for one of our vendors the bills have electric, water, wastewater, and trash all in one bill, if LIHWAP program pays the water and wastewater part of the bill but the client does not have the means to pay the other charges, services will not be restored. Should the LIHWAP program pay the water/waste water portion of the bill anyway?	According to ACF, if the vendor cannot separate the charges or if they have written regulations that does not allow the bill to be broken out, we can in fact pay whatever it takes to have services restored or to prevent the disconnection of services.
If water and waste water are included on bill with electricity and the vendor will not reconnect service without the entire bill being paid, how do we handle that if clt cannot pay other part of the bill and no other funds are available to assist?	If CIP funds are available, clients can do a dual application for LIHWAP & CIP to help with the electric portion of the bill.
Will deposits be included?	Yes, deposits can be paid if it will assist the client with restoration of services.
Is there a limit per household? If so, what is the max amount per household?	For Groups 1 &2 the amount is based on how much is needed to restore or prevent disconnection. The max is \$600 per household for Group 3 applicants.
Is this a one time payment like with LIEAP or can persons be eligible each time they are disconnected or in threat of being disconnected? If not, does the client have to wait 90 days to reapply?	This program has limited funding; however, that does not mean that someone could not receive more than once. If we pay a vendor to prevent disconnection or to have services restored and they end up in that same situation again, they can apply again for assistance if funding is still available.
Do you know if Jackson Native Amer and Swain Native Amer clients be elegible for this program	The Eastern Band of Cherokees Indians and the Lumbee Tribe received their own LIHWAP funding. Clients would be encourage to call their tribal office for assistance.
	The priority groups are based on the client's bill. Group 1 consists of all households whose water and/or wastewater is disconnected. Group 2 consists of all households whose water and/or wastewater is subject to disconnection. Group 3 consists of all households who have a current bill. Groups 1&2 need to be processed within the 10 business day timeframe and Group 3 applications can be held for 30 days before processing since they are not crisis.
How will the county manage the priorities?	Policy is being developed to provide more detailed information.

And is it for sure the 3-rd party vendors can't be paid? There are bills from the 3rd party vendor for services in the client's name.	No. Third party vendors cannot be paid with LIHWAP funding.
Can LIHWAP be used in conjunction with CIP to pay the water & wastewater portions to satisfy the CIP requirements.	LIHWAP can be used to pay water and/or wastewater bills. CIP can be used to pay heating or cooling costs. Both funds can be used together.
For priority group 3, will counties have to determine the water/wastewater burden for each applicant in addition to the other eligibility factors?	No, Group 3 will consist of households with current bills and those payments will be based on income eligibility and household size.
Application	
Since the application is available through EPASS....does that mean the application will be processed in NCFast?	Yes.
Can you clarify for us that even if a person is categorically eligible they would still have to meet the criteria of Priority Group 1 and 2? I'm just afraid that if clients hear the categorically eligible part they are going to think they automatically qualify to receive!	If we do an automated payment, those we do a data match on that are Cat EI will not have to "apply". However, it is unclear at this time if we will even be able to do an automated payment. An application must be completed regardless of whether someone is Cat EI or not if they aren't captured in the auto payment if we can even do them and if we find we can't feasibly do the auto payment, everyone will have to apply, regardless.
Can they apply and do a telephone interview with the acceptance of a telephonic signature?	Yes.
How should we handle bills that are in someone else's name other than the person seeking the assistance: i.e. bills that are included in the rent where the landlord is the account holder but the applicant is behind in rent so the water is not paid...	Same process as Energy. If the bill is in someone else's name, the applicant must provide a written statement showing that they are responsible for the bill. Applicants can also submit their lease as proof if it is stated in their lease agreement.
For Robeson Co do Native Americans apply only at the Lumbee Tribe?	The Eastern Band of Cherokees Indians and the Lumbee Tribe received their own LIHWAP funding. Clients would be encouraged to call their tribal office for assistance.
If the client does not do an Epass and wants to do a paper app, is it required they actually come to the agency or can they mail or drop off paper apps?	They can mail or drop off.
Do you know yet if In NCFast will we be able to do a CIP app and a LIHWAP app simultaneously?	Yes, there will be a dual application.
what is the turnaround timeframe to process these apps?	Group 1 & 2, 10 business days.
So if you have a client that comes in to the agency because their utilities are going to be cut off, and they qualify for CIP, you can't pay the CIP eligible expenditure and then use LIHWAP for the water portion.	Yes you can.

Do the employees that are taking apps for the LIHWAP program have to be DSS employees with benefits in order to key information into NCFast?	Employees must have access to NC FAST; same as the employees that key energy programs.
Administrative Funds	
Have county allocations been announced/provided yet? If not, when can we expect to hear on this?	No county allocations have not been provided yet.
Will there be a new daysheet code?	Yes, there will be new daysheet codes for LIHWAP
Miscellaneous	
I know that it was discussed that a flyer would go out in the community will that be available for the counties to review prior to being publically available	Yes, flyers are being developed. Flyers will be provided once they are completed.
When is the policy expected to be send to counties?	Policy is being written and is being sent through the review process.
Once the model plan and policy is developed are we going to have another meeting to get any clarification needed?	Yes, there will be additional meetings and trainings forthcoming
Will training be available for workers? When is it expected to be available.?	Yes training will be provided
Are we going to have/need a sandbox (soon), so that we can prepare training and internal monitoring materials?	No, there will be no sandbox. Trainings will be provided in other formats.
is the DCDL dated 9/16/21 the most current communication to counties?	Yes this is the most recent communication provided.
What is being done with the data after it is collected. (to be clear I informed those with our county water system and those associated with it what was said in the letter about identifying those stated in the letter with other energy programs	Data will be matched against LIEAP, FNS and TANF data in NC FAST to determine if the household is categorically eligible. If so, the client's water/wastewater will be automatically paid
Can you explain how it is going to ensure it is secured?	Data will be submitted using Zix Secure File transfer. The secure email address will be sent to vendors (Allison, not sure when this will occur)
What happens if the SS# or DOB is not included?	If the SSN or DOB is not included, a data match will be attempted using the household's first and last name. If the search does not yield results, the household will have to be contacted by the county to apply for the program.