



Everyone has the right to  
an affordable and healthy  
home during and after the  
COVID-19 crisis

**Pandemic Response Guidance**

# **Ensuring Access to Essential Energy and Water Services**

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# Ensuring Access to Essential Energy and Water Services

*Ensuring access to energy and water services, especially for under-resourced communities, communities of color, and undocumented people, during and the recovery period directly following the COVID-19 crisis.*

Enact a comprehensive moratorium on utility disconnections for water, electricity, and gas services during the declared state of emergency and the recovery period that applies to all utility structures, including municipal, investor-owned, or cooperative utilities.

Prioritize the immediate, safe reconnection of currently disconnected households.

Establish emergency water distribution stations for households waiting for their water to be turned back on.

Immediately expand access to utility and state energy assistance funds during the declared state of emergency and the recovery period by increasing funding, modifying eligibility requirements, allowing for cross-eligibility, and enabling online enrollment.

- Accelerate disbursement of newly expanded federal LIHEAP dollars to meet immediate state relief needs.
- Modify eligibility to include people and their households affected by COVID-19 who are out of work, have reduced work, or are experiencing severe disease-related symptoms that affect their ability to work.
- Allow for cross-eligibility for energy assistance funds, i.e. if one is eligible for Medicare or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), they should also immediately qualify for household energy assistance.
- Expand existing energy assistance funds to include water assistance.

## Ensuring Access to Essential Energy and Water Services (Continued)

Expand bill payment assistance and set up arrearage forgiveness to reduce energy and water burdens for existing low-income and newly low-income households during the crisis and the recovery period. If neither are sufficient, offer long-term payment plans.

Suspend all late fees and penalties due to non-payment of bills for income-qualified households and households experiencing hardships from COVID-19 during the declared state of emergency and the recovery period.

Suspend all credit and debt collection during the state of emergency and the recovery period for existing low-income and newly low-income households.

Consider special rates for income-qualified households to ease energy and water cost burdens during and after the moratorium on disconnection for residential customers and for small businesses required to close during the declared state of emergency and the recovery period.

Require Public Service or Public Utility Commissions to hold virtual energy efficiency stakeholder processes now to discuss creating continuity plans for energy assistance, energy efficiency programs, and the energy workforce during the crisis. Ensure that participation is inclusive and open to all interested parties.

Ensure there are clear communications, available in multiple languages, to all utility customers about new policies.



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