



## HOPE PROGRAM FAQs FOR UTILITY PROVIDERS

### What types of utilities does the HOPE Program assist with paying?

The HOPE Program assists eligible renters with payment for essential utilities, which are:

- Electricity,
- Water,
- Sewer/wastewater,
- Natural gas, and
- Propane for home heating.

### How is the award of utility assistance determined?

The HOPE Program will pay an eligible applicant's past due essential utilities up to the following amounts:

- Electricity: up to \$510
- Natural gas, propane or heating oil: up to \$135
- Water: up to \$105
- Wastewater: up to \$120

### How will payment be made to utilities?

Payments by check will be mailed to utility providers for each applicant that receives utility assistance. The payment will include the account payer's name, address and account number so that utility providers can match the payment to the correct account. This information is gathered from the applicant.

### How should a utility provider handle a payment when the address matches to a customer, but the account number doesn't match?

Utility providers are asked to use all the information on the check to correctly apply the payment to the account. However, if there is a discrepancy, apply the payment to the account that is serving the address on the check, since the program will verify addresses. Discrepancies in account numbers or account holder name should be disregarded since the program is unable to independently verify every account number, which the applicant may have entered incorrectly.

### What if there are multiple utility accounts at that service address?

Apply the utility payment to the active utility account at that service address and use the payer name and account number provided to match payment to the address. Payments may be applied to active

accounts and any newly created coronavirus repayment plans that resulted in the creation of a separate account than the utility service account.

### **Do utility providers have to sign an agreement to accept payments from the HOPE Program?**

No, utility providers do not have to sign an agreement in order to receive payments for past due utilities on behalf of eligible applicants. Instead, the program will provide guidance on how the payment should be applied and how to handle various situations that may arise around these payments.

### **What if the payment provided by the HOPE Program results in an overpayment of what is actually due or past due for a customer?**

If there is an overpayment, then the HOPE Program encourages the utility provider to credit to the applicant's account against future obligations rather than return the overpayment to the program. Utility providers will be asked to implement their ordinary processes for dealing with overpayments of amounts due.

### **Can applicants receive more than one round of utility assistance?**

Yes, future rounds of utility assistance may be available, subject to fund availability, for additional past due amounts. HOPE applicants can apply for assistance every 3 months, as long as funds remain available.

### **Are there other obligations that come with accepting this funding?**

From time to time, the HOPE Program may ask for a utility provider to provide information about how they applied a payment. By accepting HOPE Program payments, the utility provider is agreeing to cooperate with these inquiries. Utility providers will also need to apply the funds in a timely manner.

### **Is there someone I can speak to at HOPE if I have a question about the payment?**

Yes, the insert included in the payment will include contact information for individuals at the HOPE Program who will be ready to assist you in applying the utility assistance payment. Please contact them to resolve issues applying payment with any assistance checks received.

05.11.2021