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Governor

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## General Information System (GIS) Message

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### Section 1

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<b>Transmittal:</b>	21 TA/DC077 Upstate and New York City
<b>Date:</b>	November 19, 2021
<b>To:</b>	Subscribers
<b>Suggested Distribution:</b>	Commissioners, HEAP Coordinators, SNAP Directors, TA Directors
<b>From:</b>	Valerie Figueroa, Deputy Commissioner Employment and Income Support Programs
<b>Subject:</b>	Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)
<b>Effective Date:</b>	Immediately
<b>Contact Information:</b>	LIHWAP Bureau at <a href="mailto:NYSLIHWAP@otda.ny.gov">NYSLIHWAP@otda.ny.gov</a>
<b>Attachments:</b>	<a href="#">Attachment 1 – LIHWAP Overview</a>

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### Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to advise social services districts (districts) of the opening of a new benefit program, the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), authorized through the Continuing Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The program will provide benefits to low income households who pay a high proportion of their income for drinking water and wastewater services. On December 1, 2021, LIHWAP benefits will be available to assist low income New York State households who have past due bills (arrears) for drinking water and/or wastewater services through LIHWAP which is a centrally located state administered program.

LIHWAP benefits will be based on the actual amount of drinking water and/or wastewater arrears, up to a maximum of \$2,500 per drinking water or wastewater provider, or \$5,000 if drinking water and wastewater services are combined, per applicant household. Benefits will be paid directly to the household's drinking water and/or wastewater vendor(s).

Eligibility for LIHWAP benefits will be based on:

- Income;
- household size; and,
- amount owed to drinking water and/or wastewater provider(s).

Applicants may be eligible for a benefit if:

- The applicant or members of their household are U.S. Citizens, U.S. Nationals, or qualified aliens; and,
- Their household's gross monthly income is at or below the current income guidelines used for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) for their household size; or
- They receive HEAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance (TA), or Code A Supplemental Security Income (SSI Living Alone) benefits;

## And

- They pay a vendor directly for drinking water and/or wastewater usage; and,
- Their drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater account is twenty (20) days past the due date, they have a water lien that is levied on their local property taxes, or their drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater service is terminated or otherwise facing disconnection due to unpaid arrears.

In December 2021, the LIHWAP application will be available for download on the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) LIHWAP website at: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/water-assistance/>. Households will also be able to apply through an online portal. Applications should be completed by the person who has primary and direct responsibility for payment of the drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater bill. Primary applicants must provide:

- Proof of identity
- Proof of residence
- Documentation of earned and unearned income
- A drinking water, wastewater, or combined drinking water and wastewater bill listing their permanent and primary residence
- A valid Social Security Number (SSN)
  - SSNs of additional household members will be requested

LIHWAP benefits will be issued directly by OTDA through the Statewide Financial System (SFS), and districts will have no responsibility for the administration of LIHWAP benefits. LIHWAP benefits will be issued through a new online state portal outside of the Welfare Management System and OTDA'S benefit issuance control systems, and district staff will not have access to LIHWAP benefit issuance information. However, districts may receive inquiries about these benefits from the public. In addition to providing information to the public, OTDA requests districts provide LIHWAP information to their municipal and/or private drinking water and wastewater providers. The attached LIHWAP Overview, which provides information on this new benefit and how to apply, may be shared with applicants and interested parties.

OTDA developed a LIHWAP information page at: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/water-assistance/> and is establishing a call center that will answer questions related to the application process and eligibility requirements for these benefits. The call center is under development and OTDA will provide the call center number to districts as soon as it is active. Districts receiving inquiries regarding LIHWAP benefits should advise that, for more information, individuals should check the LIHWAP information page at: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/water-assistance/> for updated information or email the LIHWAP Bureau at: [NYSLIHWAP@otda.ny.gov](mailto:NYSLIHWAP@otda.ny.gov).

Information on how to become a vendor for LIHWAP can be found on the OTDA LIHWAP Vendor information page at: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/water-assistance/vendors/>.