

CDBG-CV
EMERGENCY UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
POLICIES & PROCEDURES MANUAL



Office of Economic & Community Development
40 East Market Street, Wilkes-Barre Pa 18711



January 14, 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

The following manual describes the policies and procedures that govern the City of Wilkes-Barre Emergency Utility Assistance Program. This program is administered through the City of Wilkes-Barre's Office of Economic and Community Development (O.E.C.D.) which is the Participating Jurisdiction (PJ) for the Community Development Block Grant Program, a federal entitlement grant program that is funded by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

In general, O.E.C.D.'s Staff are responsible for the implementation of this Emergency Utility Assistance Program, although the eligible resident is ultimately responsible for making the process work, thus their individual involvement and partnership with O.E.C.D. is of the utmost importance. Some of O.E.C.D.'s responsibilities include:

General Objectives of the Emergency Utility Assistance Program

1. Eliminate unsafe and unsanitary living condition due to a loss/potential loss of a vital public utility service.
2. Preserve and maintain a vital public utility service for income eligible residents.
3. Allow residents to stay in their primary residence while they take the necessary precautions to prepare for, prevent and respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

II. The Emergency Utility Assistance Program -

A. Program Description -

The Emergency Utility Assistance Program is a needs-based assistance program that is open to those who occupy a home (rented or owned) in the City of Wilkes-Barre, and are responsible for the utility bill, who has experienced a 30% or greater reduction in total household income, as well as any residents who are on a fixed income and can demonstrate an increase in daily living expenses due to preparing for, preventing, or responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Assistance provided may equal the average of up to six (6) months of utility bills.

B. Source of Funds –

CDBG-CV – Authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Public Law 116-136

C. Financial Assistance -

Financial assistance will be provided in the form of a onetime grant paid directly to the utility company identified on the application.

D. Who can apply:

You can apply for the Emergency Utility Assistance Program if your household income has been negatively affected due preparing for, preventing and responding to the current COVID-19 pandemic whether you are working or not or your household meets income guidelines below. To qualify, your annual income must fall below a given level, depending on the number of people in your household. You will also need the financial information for everyone in your home. Total household income must be below 80% of the median income.

2020 Income Limits

<u>HOUSEHOLD SIZE</u>	<u>50% OF MEDIAN INCOME</u>	<u>60% OF MEDIAN INCOME</u>	<u>80% OF MEDIAN INCOME</u>
1 PERSON	\$25,100.00	\$30,120.00	\$40,150.00
2 PERSONS	\$28,700.00	\$34,440.00	\$45,900.00
3 PERSONS	\$32,300.00	\$38,760.00	\$51,650.00
4 PERSONS	\$35,850.00	\$43,020.00	\$57,350.00
5 PERSONS	\$38,750.00	\$46,500.00	\$61,950.00
6 PERSONS	\$41,600.00	\$49,920.00	\$66,550.00
7 PERSONS	\$44,500.00	\$53,400.00	\$71,150.00
8 PERSONS	\$47,350.00	\$56,820.00	\$75,750.00

The City of Wilkes-Barre uses “Annual Income” as defined under the Part 5 Income Definition.

III. GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR THE UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A. Introduction

Residents shall be informed of the availability of the above programs through publications in the local print media, social media, brochures & flyers and as well as the City’s website.

B. Phone Interview

A resident may contact the Office of Economic and Community Development for general information regarding The Emergency Utility Assistance Program. Upon a resident’s request to participate in the program, The Program Manager shall ask the preliminary eligibility questions to determine program eligibility. If determined eligible an application will be dropped off, mailed or emailed to the resident to complete along with a list of required documents (attached below) needed to process the application. The completed application and required documents can be returned via email, regular mail or picked up by an employee of the Office of Community

Development. During this interview, the specific program guidelines, and procedures will be explained to the applicant. Original financial documents may vary depending on the Applicant. In general, the following original documents are needed:

- Pay-stubs covering the most recent 60-day period for all members of the household who are 18 and older and are employed.
- Additional income verification documents such as Social Security/SSI Award Letter; Disability Benefits Documentation, Alimony or Child Support Documentation, pension, unemployment or other income related information.
- Most recent two years of Federal Income Tax Return for self employed Applicants.

C. Conflict of Interest

No person who is an employee, consultant, officer, or elected or appointed official of the City of Wilkes-Barre who exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to any of the above described Resident Assistance Programs may obtain a personal or financial interest from the activity, or have an interest in any contract, subcontract or agreement, or the proceeds hereunder, either for themselves, their immediate family, or with whom they have business ties, during their tenure as an employee of the Department of Economic and Community Development.

IV. Confidentiality

It is the administrative policy of the Office of Economic and Community Development that staff shall not permit the release of the residents files or any information in its custody concerning applicants or recipients that would clearly constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy within the meaning defined in 5 U.S.C. 522 (b) (6), unless required under state or local law. In applying this standard, staff may only release:

- Name of the Applicant or Participant
- Address of the Property
- Proposed or Actual Amount of Financial Assistance

However, Officials from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are permitted access to all documents and files related to the Community Development Block Grant Program funded activities.

V. Discrimination Prohibited

Financial assistance provided by the City of Wilkes-Barre's Emergency Utility Assistance Program is available to any person meeting the eligibility requirements without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, handicap or familial status.

Environmental Review Policy for Emergency Utility Assistance Program

Program Manager will conduct the initial interview followed by the financial conference to determine program eligibility. Once eligibility is established, the Program Manger will fill in as much information about the project property on the **Environmental Review for Activity/Project that is Categorically Excluded Subject to Section 58.5 Pursuant to 24 CFR 58.35(a) form** and email to the Environmental Review Officer.

If the project is identified as **“Categorically Excluded AND subject to”** a Notice of Intent for a Request for Release of Funds will be issued, if applicable.

Program Manager will provide the file to the Environmental Review Officer, so he/she can complete the review process. By no means is a NOTICE TO PROCEED to be generated and/or sent before the Program Manager receives confirmation from the Environmental Review Officer that the Environmental Review processes has been completed.

Once the Environmental Review is complete and signed off on, Program Manager may proceed with the utility payment process.

Information needed to process your Emergency Utility Program application with the City of Wilkes-Barre...

- 1. Copy of Deed –**
- 2. Copy of lease/rental agreement-**
- 3. Proof of income –**
 - Most recent paystubs/unemployment printouts covering the last 60 days –**
 - Social Security annual award letter –**
 - Pension, annual, monthly award letter or proof of monthly amount-**
 - Unemployment documentation --**
- 4. TWO most recent bank statements for everyone over the age of 18**