

Lifeline Plan - FAQs



- **What's the difference between the Lifeline Plan and the Inclining Block Rate?**

The Lifeline Plan is the water affordability plan that provides a fixed bill each month based on your income eligibility in one of three tiers. The Inclining Block Rate is the water usage rate by volume, providing a lower rate for water usage of the average family, with an inclining rate for water usage above the 4,500 gallons.

\$18

Your monthly water, sewer & drainage bill if household income is **at or below 135% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**

\$43

Your monthly water, sewer & drainage bill if household income is **above 135% of FPL but at or below 150% of FPL**

\$56

Your monthly water, sewer & drainage bill if household income is **above 150% of FPL but at or below 200% of FPL**

- **How did DWSD determine the average household size of three people?**

According to the U.S. Census, the average household size for Detroit is 2.6 people. In terms of average household size for low-income households only, DWSD is open to reviewing that data and taking it into consideration. We will continue to study census data to compare census tracts, household population, and household income.

- **How do you know three people use 2,300-3,000 gallons on average?**

The water usage for the average household is based on taking a year's worth of water meter readings and getting to the average based on the 230,000 accounts.

- **What if I go over 4,500 gallons?**

If you are enrolled in the DWSD Lifeline Plan and your water usage for a specific month is more than 4,500 gallons, you will be charged for the water usage at the higher rate of \$4.492 per each additional CCF (748 gallons). For example, a household with income at or below 135% of the poverty level, the DWSD account holder is enrolled in the Lifeline Plan, and they use 6,000 gallons of water in one month, the bill will be \$38.06 instead of \$18.

- **Why are there three tiers to the Lifeline Plan?**

DWSD created a tiered approach based on recommendations from an affordability study which is posted on the city website. The tiered approach, versus income-based for each individual household, is the most cost effective way to manage the pilot program.

- **Why not an income-based rate structure in Detroit?**

This **is** an income-based rate structure. We assess household income and place the customer in one of three tiers.

- **What does SNAP/FAP mean?**

SNAP and FAP are the federally-funded food assistance programs, which used to be known as food stamps.

- **Will Wayne Metro help me enroll in SNAP/FAP?**

Yes. As part of their wrap-around services, Wayne Metro will help you enroll through the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) in SNAP/FAP, which will provide your household with added benefits. They will help customers enroll in other programs as well.

- **What does moderate income mean?**

The moderate income range is household income greater than 150% of Federal Poverty Level, but less than or equal to 200% of Federal Poverty Level. The capped payment for moderate-income customers (\$56) is based on the average of moderate household income in this range, per the water affordability study DWSD relied upon in crafting this pilot plan. For example, if your household has four people, annual income is \$56,400 or less and you are responsible for the water bill, you're eligible for one of the Lifeline Plan tiers.

- **What documents do I need to enroll in the Lifeline Plan?**

In order to start the enrollment process with Wayne Metro, you will need to provide the following:

- Photo ID — Detroit ID, State of Michigan ID or driver's license, federally-issued ID, or passport
- Social Security number
- Proof of income category eligibility

- **How can I monitor my water usage so I don't go over 4,500 gallons?**

Register on the DWSD Customer Service Portal at csportal.detroitmi.gov to access your account, view and print your bill, see real-time water usage, and pay your bill. We will also alert you when you have used 3,000 gallons of water.

- **What's the difference between the Lifeline Plan and the Inclining Block Rate?**

The Lifeline Plan is the water affordability plan that provides a fixed bill each month based on your income eligibility in one of three tiers. The Inclining Block Rate is the water usage rate by volume, providing a lower rate for water usage of the average family, with an inclining rate, or uniform rate, above the 4,500 gallons of water usage per month.

- **Will residential water shutoffs resume?**

The water shutoff moratorium will end on December 31, 2022. **No Detroit resident** will face a water shutoff if enrolled in the Detroit Lifeline Plan or the 10/30/50 Plan. DWSD will continue working with Wayne Metro and coalition partners to ensure it offers eligible Detroiters the help they need. And, DWSD will provide extensive outreach for all households at risk. The moratorium can no longer continue in its current form – the unintended consequence is those who can afford to pay their water bill are choosing not to pay and therefore DWSD has seen the bill collections fall by \$40 million this year which is not sustainable.

- **How long is enrollment available?**

We will continue to enroll customers until all funds have been exhausted for the program year. The Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIWHAP) funds must be used by September 2023. WRAP funds are replenished annually.

- **What is the long-term plan?**

The DWSD Lifeline Plan is a pilot program using currently available regional, state and federal funding. We need the support of elected officials, water advocates and community leaders to lobby the state legislature and congress for a permanent funding source, and also provide feedback on how the plan can be improved.

- **Water advocates say they had no input into the plan. What is DWSD's response?**

For nearly 10 years, the water advocates have long said that an income-based water affordability plan is absolutely necessary in Detroit. We often disagreed on how to get here. Now, with more than \$15 million in federal and regional funding and a water rate study, DWSD has found a means to provide 80% of residential households relief on their water bill and make available an income-based water affordability plan that provides a fixed bill as low as \$18 a month. The plan is based on the request that the water bill be no more than 2% of income, which we have done at 1.8% of the average household income for each tier. Water advocates and community leaders were walked through the new plan, and we are providing numerous opportunities for residents, advocates and any other stakeholder to provide feedback on the plan for the next 60 days via the DWSD website, at community meetings, and during Board of Water Commissioner meetings.

- **What is Wayne Metro?**

Wayne Metro is a community action agency that receives federal, state and local funding for housing, food, utility, head start and other assistance. They have been the administrator of the Water Residential Assistance Program (WRAP) since it began in March 2016.

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