



City of Cerritos

Low-Income Water and Sewer Utility Assistance Program Guidelines

1. PROGRAM PURPOSE AND GOALS

The City of Cerritos Low-Income Water and Sewer Utility Assistance Program (“Program”) was approved by the City Council on January 26, 2026. The Program helps low-income residents pay for their water and sewer utility bills. Water and sewer service is essential for health, safety, and daily living. Utility costs have increased due to necessary system repairs, required upgrades, and operating expenses.

The Program provides a forty dollar (\$40) discount on each bimonthly water and sewer bill. The discount is applied directly to the customer’s utility account. This assistance is ongoing and helps reduce the cost of basic water and sewer service while allowing the City to continue providing safe and reliable utilities.

2. PROGRAM AUTHORITY AND POLICY BASIS

The Program is authorized by the City Council and allows financial assistance for qualifying low-income customers. All Program funds are used only to help pay water and sewer utility bills. Funds may be applied only to eligible water and sewer charges on approved residential accounts. Program funds cannot be used for reclaimed water service, late fees, penalties, or any other City programs or charges.

3. PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND BENEFITS

The Program provides a fixed discount of forty dollars (\$40) on each bimonthly City water and sewer bill for eligible households. The discount is applied directly to the utility bill and is not paid as cash, so it will not be refunded if the bill is less than the discount amount.

The discount will appear as a separate line on the bimonthly bill labeled “Low-Income Utility Assistance Discount.” It applies only to water and sewer charges and does not cover late fees, penalties, returned payment fees, or other non-utility charges.

The discount begins on the first full billing cycle after the application is approved, and the bill will show the start and end dates of the benefit. Approved customers will receive the discount for twenty-four months and must reapply after this period to continue receiving assistance.

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To qualify for the Program, applicants must submit a complete application with all required documents and meet the following requirements.

Residency and Account Requirements:

Applicants must be residential customers who receive City of Cerritos water and sewer service at their primary residence and have an active utility account in their name. The account must be in good standing, meaning it is current on payments, active, and has no

unresolved billing issues, penalties, or service interruptions. Only one Program benefit is allowed per household or utility account.

Proof of residency may be shown with a valid California driver's license or other form of identification, such as a utility or phone bill, that displays the Cerritos address and the applicant's name. Accounts held in the name of landlords, property managers, or commercial entities are not eligible.

CARE or Public Assistance Program Participation (Required):

Applicants must either be currently enrolled in the California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE) Program or be enrolled in one of the eligible public assistance programs listed below. Enrollment must be active at the time of application and during each recertification period.

Eligible Public Assistance Programs:

- **Energy and Utility Assistance Programs:**
 - California Alternate Rates for Energy (CARE), including CARE participation through Southern California Edison (SCE CARE) or Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas CARE)
 - Family Electric Rate Assistance Program (FERA), including FERA participation through SCE FERA
 - Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) Program
 - Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- **Health and Medical Assistance Programs:**
 - Medi-Cal
- **Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs:**
 - CalFresh
 - Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - National School Lunch Program
- **Income and Cash Assistance Programs:**
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- **Housing and Family Support Programs:**
 - Emergency Rental Assistance Program
 - Head Start
- **Tribal and Federal Social Service Programs:**
 - Social Service Programs through Indian Affairs

Participation in any of these programs qualifies an applicant, provided household income continues to meet the program's eligibility requirements throughout enrollment and recertification.

5. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION AND VERIFICATION

A complete application is required to receive assistance. Applications that are missing information or cannot be verified will not be approved.

Applicants must provide proof that they are the utility account holder and evidence of current enrollment in the CARE Program or another eligible public assistance program, such as an award letter, approval notice, or current benefits statement. They must also provide a valid California driver's license or other form of identification, such as a utility or phone bill, showing their name and the address that receives City water and sewer service.

Participation in any program listed in Section 4 qualifies an applicant, as long as income continues to meet eligibility requirements, a complete application is submitted, and all information provided is accurate and true.

City staff will verify account ownership, residency, and eligibility, and may review submitted information against internal utility billing records. Some applications may be selected for additional review to ensure Program integrity. Providing false or misleading information may result in denial or removal from the Program.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process is designed to be simple and easy to follow. Applications are available online on the City's website or in person at the Water Billing Division counter at City Hall. Applicants should complete all required sections, including name, service address, utility account number, and program participation.

Applications can be submitted online via email to waterbilling@cerritos.gov or in person at the Water Billing Division counter during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. City staff will review applications within 5–7 business days for standard applications and up to 10 business days if additional verification or follow-up is needed. If any information is missing, applicants will be contacted and given time to provide the required items.

Applicants will receive written notice of approval or denial. If the application is denied, the notice will explain the reason. Approved applicants will receive the discount for 24 months and must recertify every 24 months. They will also receive a reminder at least 45 days before their recertification is due. For questions or assistance, please contact the Water Billing Division at (562) 916-1235.

7. POST-APPROVAL AND RECERTIFICATION

After the application is approved, the utility account will be updated to show the bimonthly discount, which will begin on the next billing cycle. The benefit will remain active for 24 months.

To continue receiving the discount, applicants must recertify before the end of the 24-month period. Recertification requires submitting an updated application along with proof that the applicant still meet Program eligibility requirements.

If an applicant does not recertify by the deadline, the discount will automatically stop.

8. PROGRAM LIMITS AND EXCLUSIONS

The Program does not apply to commercial, industrial, or institutional utility accounts. It also does not apply to accounts that are not in the applicant's name, landlord-held accounts serving tenants, duplicate accounts, or multiple accounts for the same household. The discount cannot be used for penalties, late fees, or other non-utility charges.

Program funding may be limited each year through the City's budget process. The City may change, pause, or end the Program at any time with City Council approval. Eligibility rules, discount amounts, or administrative procedures may also be adjusted as needed to ensure the Program remains fair, legal, and financially sustainable.

9. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The Program is managed by City staff to ensure it runs smoothly and fairly. The Public Works Department oversees the operation of the City's water and sewer system. The Administrative Services Department is responsible for managing the discount in the billing system, monitoring the Program budget, preparing financial reports, and handling applications, eligibility checks, customer communication, and recordkeeping.

To protect the Program and prevent errors or misuse, staff duties are separated so no one person can make all changes alone. Regular audits are conducted, and the billing system has controls to carefully manage account updates and apply discounts correctly.

10. APPEALS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATION REQUESTS

If the application is denied, the applicant may appeal the decision by submitting a written appeal within 30 days of receiving the denial notice. Appeals can be delivered in person to the Water Billing Division counter or sent by email to waterbilling@cerritos.gov. Applicants may include any additional documents or explanations to support the appeal.

Appeals will be reviewed by City staff or management who were not involved in the original decision. The City may request more information if needed.

11. PRIVACY AND DATA PROTECTION

The City will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all applicants and participants in the Program. Only authorized City staff who need the information to manage the Program will have access, and access is controlled through secure systems and internal procedures. All applications and supporting documents are stored safely in City systems and are kept or disposed of according to the City's document retention policy. Applicant information is used only to administer and verify eligibility for the Program and will not be shared except as required by law, for authorized audits, or to confirm Program participation.

12. REPORTING AND PROGRAM REVIEW

The Administrative Services Department will monitor the Program's performance using internal utility billing and reporting systems. The Program will be reviewed periodically to ensure it continues to comply with regulations, remains effective, and is financially sustainable.