



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING

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GOVERNOR

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## **MDHHS and City of Benton Harbor announce program to help eligible residents pay past due water and sewer bills**

LANSING, Mich. – Today, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and City of Benton Harbor announced a pilot program that will help pay the water and wastewater bills of eligible City of Benton Harbor residents who are past due on their bills or in disconnect status.

The federally funded Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) will assist households who have had their water disconnected or are facing disconnection by paying the full cost that will reconnect or prevent disconnection of service even if it includes costs other than water, such as trash, cable or internet. A LIHWAP payment will guarantee service for at least 90 days after receipt of payment and will cover reconnection fees when services have been disconnected.

“Access to safe drinking water is fundamental to the health and well-being of all people,” said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. “The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program will provide critical emergency support to qualified Benton Harbor residents, so they are not forced to choose between paying for water services and other necessities.”

To qualify, account holders must:

- Be a residential account.
- Be in arrears or disconnect status.
- Be under 150% Federal Poverty Limit and/or actively receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Food Assistance Program/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (FAP/SNAP), State Emergency Relief (SER), Social Security Supplemental Income (SSI).

The City of Benton Harbor is providing a list of customer accounts to MDHHS that are past due or in disconnect status for a data match to current benefit status to help determine eligibility and expediate the payment process. The earliest eligible customers would see updates on their billing statements is mid-December.

For more information about assistance, call 211.

Free bottled water continues to be provided by the state as residents are being encouraged to [use bottled water for cooking, drinking, brushing teeth, rinsing foods and mixing powdered infant formula](#). This action is part of an accelerated, across-the-board

effort to reduce the risk of exposure to lead in drinking water while the city replaces all lead service lines.

To arrange water delivery to homebound or residents without transportation in the city of Benton Harbor, contact 211, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Phones that cannot contact 211 should contact 844-875-9211.

The upcoming schedule for bottled water pickup is:

**Thursday, Nov. 11**

- Ebenezer Baptist Church, 214 E. Britain Avenue, 10 a.m. - noon.
- Brotherhood of All Nations, 1286 Monroe Street, 4 - 6 p.m.

**Friday, Nov. 12**

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. (Self-service)

**Saturday, Nov. 13**

- Boys & Girls Club of Benton Harbor, 600 Nate Wells Sr. Drive, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.,
- Harbor of Hope Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 769 Pipestone Street, 4 - 6 p.m.

**Sunday, November 14**

- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Avenue, 3 - 5 p.m.
- Brotherhood of All Nations, 1286 Monroe Street, 4 - 6 p.m.

**Monday, Nov. 15**

- Southwest Community Action Agency, 331 Miller Street, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. (Self-service)
- Abundant Life Church of God, 693 Columbus Avenue, noon - 2 p.m.

The ongoing response in Benton Harbor includes the city, Berrien County Health Department, local community organizations, MDHHS and the EGLE.

Additional dates and locations for bottled water pick up will be added to make sure community needs are met. Information will be posted on [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe).

To ensure the continued success of bottled water distribution locations in Benton Harbor and to recognize the city residents who have been stepping up to donate their time and talent, the State of Michigan has partnered with local agencies to pay city residents who work at state-supported bottled water distribution sites. Individuals who want to serve as community ambassadors to help distribute water should connect with an established distribution site. Individuals or groups who want to serve as unpaid volunteers can sign up [on the United Way's online platform](#).

MDHHS is engaging in a long-term effort to eliminate lead action level exceedances, educate communities on the effects of lead in drinking water, and remove lead service lines. These efforts also include recently approved funds to remove lead from homes in the city. Families living in Benton Harbor can apply for this service by filling out and mailing in [an application that is available online](#). Residents also can call 866-691-5323 to obtain information.

For questions about lead, MDHHS can be reached at 866-691-5323 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

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