

# ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

## AFFORDABILITY OUTREACH

June 2017

**PURPOSE:** To provide information on OWASA’s Affordability Outreach Program to increase community awareness of options to manage and reduce water and sewer bills and to empower low-income customers, and the local agencies that serve them, with information and tools to manage and reduce water and sewer bills.

**BACKGROUND:** “Affordability and Cost Management” is one of the five key strategic themes in OWASA’s Strategic Plan. During rate-setting discussions and strategic planning meetings, the OWASA Board of Directors concluded that water conservation should be promoted as a key strategy for customers – especially those in financial need – to lower monthly water and sewer bills.

And while OWASA cannot provide free service or charge different rates based on our customers’ ability to pay because of legal and bond order restrictions, we are a member of the community we serve and recognize the need to ensure that water and wastewater service meets a basic human need. It’s important to OWASA that our services be accessible to the community in order to protect public health and the environment.

The Board of Directors approved the 1<sup>st</sup> Year of the Affordability Outreach Program Plan on October 22, 2015 and the [2<sup>nd</sup> Year of the Program](#) on December 8, 2016, authorizing staff to proceed to implement the program in accordance with the plans.

The Affordability Outreach Program includes the following major strategies for addressing the affordability of OWASA’s services:

- Rates and Billing,
- Information and Outreach,
- Bill Assistance,
- Water Efficiency Retrofits,
- Leak Identification, and
- Community Partnership

**WORK ACCOMPLISHED:** Some key accomplishments include:

- Ongoing relationship and dialogue with over 20 social service agencies in the region
- Steady decline in the number of service cut-offs due to non-payment. The rolling average of monthly cutoffs has fallen by about 50 cut-offs per month. At \$45 per event, this results in an overall annual savings of \$27,000 in reconnection fees, as well as the avoided troubles associated with a lapse in water service.
- Development new outreach materials, including a motion graphic in English, Spanish, Burmese, and Karen available on our [YouTube channel](#)



**CURRENT STATUS:** On-going; scheduled to propose a 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Program Plan at the Board’s December 2017 Work Session.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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