

ORANGE WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

AFFORDABILITY OUTREACH PROGRAM

June 2018

PURPOSE: OWASA’s Affordability Outreach Program is designed 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 to those in financial need – to lower monthly water and sewer bills.

And while we 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.

On February 8, 2018, the Board of Directors approved the 3rd Affordability Outreach Program Plan and authorized staff to implement the program in accordance with the plan. Previous versions were approved by the Board on [October 22, 2015](#) and [December 8, 2016](#).

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 40 cut-offs per month. Our reconnection fee is \$45. If we can help a customer avoid a service cutoff, we help them avoid this fee.
- Implementation of a year-round rate for multi-family, master-metered customers which helps ensure a more predictable and consistent bill for sub-metered tenants.
- Development new outreach materials, including a motion graphic in English, Spanish, Burmese, and Karen available on our [YouTube channel](#)
- Save2Gain Neighborhood Conservation Challenge in Town of Chapel Hill Public Housing Complexes (2017 and 2018).



CURRENT STATUS: On-going; scheduled to propose a 4th Year Program Plan at the Board’s January 2019 Work Session.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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