

Multnomah County
Aging, Disability & Veterans Services Division
Safety Net Program
Utility Assistance Program Guidelines

PURPOSE: Provide funds to clients of the ADVSD network who are unable to pay utility costs and are at risk of utility service shut-off, especially during weather-related events.

Access to this program is contingent upon availability of limited funds. If demand exceeds capacity/budget, ADVSD reserves the right to limit or terminate program services.

ELIGIBILITY:

To be eligible for assistance, an applicant must be a resident of Multnomah County (to meet the residency requirement, the applicant must have continuously lived in Multnomah County for at least sixty days prior to the request and have the intent to remain a resident of Multnomah County indefinitely; this program is not intended to assist individuals in establishing residency in Multnomah County) and:

1. **Must be a client of the ADVSD Services network.** This includes all programs within ADVSD (e.g. Long Term Care, Adult Protective Services, Oregon Project Independence, OAA). Individuals 60 years or older, or having a long term disability determination through Social Security or the Veterans Administration (70% or greater rating) are presumed to be clients of the Network.
2. **Have a need for assistance based on one of the following:**
 - Housing-stressed (paying more than 60% of income toward housing cost) (priority to those with lowest incomes/highest rent)
 - Temporary financial burden causing short-term decrease in income
 - Financial exploitation (APS)
 - Documented risk of eviction (utility must be maintained as part of the lease) *some housing subsidies come with lease requirements to maintain the utility service; in these cases a notice from the property manager is required.*
3. **Must have limited income and resources:**
 - For a single person- income less than 300% of SSI limit and assets less than \$2000 (excluding the value of one vehicle, the home when used as a principal residence, and a prepaid funeral plan)
 - For married couples- a spouse's income and resources will be considered in making an initial eligibility determination as compared to Medicaid waived service eligibility rules
4. **Must demonstrate financial need/inability to pay:**
Having a financial need for assistance is not based solely on meeting the income and resource qualifications above, but by comparing the household's income with regularly recurring expenses such as rent, utilities, health insurance premiums, out of pocket medical expenses including past medical bills, and food. A "reasonableness" standard will be applied by ADVSD Program Staff in assessing financial need that

may result in assistance being approved at less than the requested amount or by making assistance contingent on the applicant paying a portion of the cost of the requested assistance. Generally, an applicant will not be expected to contribute if discretionary income is less than \$200 a month.

5. **Have a plan for on-going payments after assistance is provided**, or be in the process of developing a plan (client must explore all options, including utility discount programs and community energy assistance).

Utility assistance will not be provided more than 1x/fiscal year unless an exception is made (program staff can consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis).

All assistance is provided as a third party payment on behalf of the applicant. Assistance cannot be provided directly to the applicant or the applicant's family, or be used to reimburse the applicant or the applicant's family for expenses otherwise covered by the fund.