

P R O C E E D I N G S

JULY 29, 2021

31:29

**Q1** First question is, \*31:32 an eligible vendor included in the plan document?

**A1** The eligible vendors would be the definitions that we shared today, and those definitions are not actually in the state plan, but it will be in the slides I thought we were going to be sharing. There aren't other requirements for eligibility of the water vendors, other than the requirements that they're going to have to adhere to once they're participating in the program.

But primarily, it will -- we will be used -- as we implement it, it will be based off those definitions, unless, you know, and as we get feedback on that. So is there -- yeah. Anyone else from CSD have anything else they want to add to that?

**A1 (a)** No. I think you covered it. It's -- the definitions are indicated in the presentation, and we can certainly look. If the feedback is to include that in the state plan, then we can look to see where we add that into the state plan so it's clear who the eligible vendors are.

**Q2** All right. A question from Nicole Smith. I heard that there are many water and wastewater utilities across the state. For those that have not or cannot enter into a direct payment agreement and will instead enter an agreement with the LSP, will we know that well in advance

or will we be trying to figure out those relationships when clients apply?

**A2** I can take that one.

**Q2 (a)** And there's part two; sorry. And will CSD be doing the outreach to all possible utilities in advance of the program's start?

**A2 (a)** Thank you for the question, Nicole. This is Kathy Andry (phonetic) from CSD. Welcome all of the participants. To answer the first part of your question, CSD will work to identify which water, wastewater suppliers that we will be entering into a direct pay agreement, and we will insure that the LSPs know who those providers are within each of your communities.

And part two, as far as -- could you repeat part to for me, Deidra (phonetic).

**Q2 (a)** Sure. Will CSD be doing the outreach to all possible utilities in advance of the program's start?

**A2 (a)** Thank you. So we are working to coordinate with water associations and also water utilities to work together to see how we can start to promote and do outreach in sort of a coordinated approach, and to really bring awareness to all households within the communities of the program.

So there'll be a variety of methods that we can explore on that front, but also working with the LSPs to support them in what you can do locally with the customer

base that you work with and your partners that you work with, and using your current sort of LIHEAP outreach strategies.

**Q3** When will we know which utilities we need to set up agreements with?

**A3** So we are currently working on that. You will know that in advance of the entering into the contract for the program. So we will make that resource available as soon as we kind of aggregate and put that together.

**Q4** And does that mean CSD will provide a standard template for those agreements?

**A4** Yes. We will be working on providing a template as a vendor template agreement for local service providers.

**Q5** The last part of the question. Will CS -- or excuse me -- will the LSP be responsible for collecting standards to report payee record data or government agency tax information -- identification. Sorry.

**A5** I will have to get back to you on that.

**Q6** Okay. Just a few more. If benefits can't be accessed or if benefits can't exceed \$1,000, will LSPS be able to issue the \$1,000 benefit even if the client will have a remaining balance? And how will the total funding be allocated geographically in the state?

**A6** We do want to get feedback on the \$1,000 maximum that we've indicated. We have received some data on the water side that the current average arrearage is about \$300. So

if from the public here, if you are seeing data or information that suggests that \$1,000 benefit is not sufficient to cover the arrearages, we would appreciate your comments and feedback on that.

We are -- our goal is to try to provide enough of a benefit to resolve the customer from being disconnected and sufficient benefits to restore services.

**Q7** Okay. Hold on just a second. How -- oh, maybe I overlapped this question. Sorry. How will -- I don't have the answer -- how will the total funding be allocated geographically? Did you answer that one?

**A7** We have not. We are continuing to work on an allocation methodology. We are definitely looking at low income population with each of -- in each of the county areas as a factor, and we're looking at an alternative factor, which we haven't fully landed on.

We were originally looking at water costs, but we received feedback that that data may not be -- accurately reflect the water costs within each of the areas. So we have not made a final decision on the allocation methodology. Our goal is -- sort of equitable distribution, definitely based on low income population within the community.

**Q8** All right. A general question. How would -- from Johanna Vargas (phonetic). How do I know who the LSP for my region is?

**A8** Thank you for that question. We are going to be providing the water suppliers and wastewater providers, we're going to do some outreaching to make sure you're aware of who your local service provider is within your community, and make sure that we provide that information to you.

You can also -- our local service providers, we have about 41 across the state. A majority of the providers provide services within the entire county. So the county boundary is based on their service area, except in Los Angeles, where we have three service providers, and in San Diego we have two service providers.

You can also go to our CSD public website to see which local service provider covers that county, as well.

**Q9** If a dual enrollment to LIHWAP and LIHEAP are encouraged, will the CSD be using the modify -- using or modifying the standard LIHEAP intake forms, or will additional documentation be required?

**A9** We are looking to modify the intake form to streamline the enrollment process so a customer can do a dual enrollment for LIHEAP and the Water Service Program, as well.

**Q10** You may have answered this already. Will there be a listing of all water vendors working with the LIHWAP Program?

**A10** Yes.

**Q11** Okay. A lot of questions. Hold on. Is there a ETA on when slides will be shared on the CSD website?

**A11 (a)** As soon as we can download it and post it. So it should be in the next couple days, I would assume. Right, Deidra? Maybe by tomorrow?

Q Thank you.

**A11 (b)** Definitely by Monday.

**Q12** What is the process for selecting service providers?

**A12** So CSD is using its existing network of LIHEAP providers, which is the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. We've been working with the providers for decades and administering the LIHEAP Program. And so we have -- we are using that network to also deliver support, services, service delivery for the Water Assistance Program.

**Q13** Okay. Does the assistance cover a specific period of arrearages? Is the assistance applied to the bill balance of a specific date?

**A13** So under the LIHWAP Program we do not have a specific time frame to when the arrearages needed to occur, so that basically, if you have past due balances that were pre-COVID and you currently have a past due amount, you -- we would be able to assist that customer based on what their current past due arrearages are.

**Q14** All right. Next question. Is documentation for income verification, immigration status, et cetera, required, or is there flexibility to waive these

requirements and enable self-reporting? Water agency experience has shown that requiring documentation to verify income level, et cetera, reduces program participation.

**A14** So the LIHWAP Program does require -- there is a requirement for verification of citizenship and legal residency. And so our county -- so the county providers -- so our LSPS are comprised of nonprofit and local government entities.

So at the county, local service provider will be required to verify citizenship and residency. We do not have flexibility to eliminate that requirement. It is a federal requirement.

**Q15** All right. Next question. How will rural special districts be notified who the LSP they connect with are?

**A15** So CSD definitely needs to do some outreaching with the water and wastewater vendors to insure they are aware of who the local service provider is in their area. And additionally, we'll be working with the LSPs to assist them with outreaching directly to the vendors.

So we definitely will be making sure there's an awareness of who's who within the community.

**Q16** All right. Based on the plan, a person's service is to be shut off, wastewater services can't be shut off. How will wastewater customers be qualified, and will you consider their potential shutoff of water as proof?

**A16** So wastewater applicants who are past due will be

eligible. So they don't necessarily -- you're right -- it's not going to be shut off. It may be a lien on the home. So we welcome your feedback in the area, but we're looking that, you know, if they can show proof of -- that they're past due on services, then they'll be eligible for the program.

**Q17** Does this program include municipal water utilities?

**A17** Yes.

**Q18** Okay. Oh, okay. From Ryan with Regional Water Authority. More detail on the public utilities reporting requirements would be helpful. What sort of data is being expected?

**A18** So on the reporting, what -- from the utility vendor, what we're going to need is confirmation back that the services were restored or services were not disconnected. That's the specific information that we need to get back, as well as confirmation that the benefit was credited to the customer's account.

So there will be a need to obtain and receive customer information for confirmation, and knowing that services were restored or not disconnected.

**Q19(a)** Okay. I have a four-part question. So can you describe the application process?

**A19(a)** The application process. So the local service providers will be working with their applicant. So the applicant will have to apply directly to the local service

provider for services, and the local service provider will insure that the applicant is qualified for services and determine the amount of benefit that is needed to resolve the past due or restore services.

**Q19(b)** Okay. Well, you kind of answered part two, which was, interested individuals have to apply through their LSP?

**A19(b)** Yes.

**Q19(c)** And another part, do utilities have to enroll and enter into an agreement? If we do not do so, would the residents be deemed ineligible? And that's the last question.

**A19(c)** So there's two methods that we're looking at for paying the water, wastewater supplier directly. CSD is looking at a direct payment model, which will -- so yes, an agreement will be required. Under the direct pay model we would establish an agreement with the water, wastewater where CSD would be working to issue payment directly to the vendor.

In situations where we're not able to get a direct payment agreement with those water, wastewater suppliers, then the LSPs will assist on that front and they will be working directly with the water, wastewater supplier, again, entering into agreement at the local level, to be able to issue the payment to the customer.

**Q20** All right. Next question. What if an LSP decides

that it can't afford to run the LIHWAP Program because CSD has not raised the program support cost it discussed previously?

**A20** Thank you for that question. CSD is -- we are -- the 10 percent is definitely a placeholder for CSD administration, and we were looking and evaluating the various payment methods to see what is going to be the most effective in insuring payment gets delivered to the wastewater vendors, and you know, what the needs of the LSPs will be to cover that expense, as well.

Additionally, we are -- HHS has advised that there is an expectation that we insure that we have streamlined processes, and that as much of the funds go for direct services as possible. But we also acknowledge that our LSPs definitely need support dollars at the local level for outreach and intake, and their funds are needed to insure that the payments are delivered to the vendors.

And you know, there's a lot of work at the local level with outreaching and doing means testing. So you know, there's work involved in insuring that the household is income qualified. So we definitely need feedback on what is needed to effectively support operations of the program.

**Q21** Thank you, Kathy. Will non-LIHEAP service providers be offered contracts?

**A21** At this time we are looking to work with the local service providers that deliver LIHEAP on the principle and

basis that we're trying to model the LIHWAP Program after LIHEAP, and really have a streamlined process for applicants to enroll.

If we don't have a service provider perhaps that is not able to provide services in their area, then we would have to look at alternative providers.

**Q22** All right. For utility providers electronic -- sorry. Let me start over. Whoop, tongue-tied. Where utility provide electric, water, wastewater services to customers, can we apply the LIHWAP fund to the customers' entire account balance, similar to what we are doing right now for LIHEAP program? It is very difficult for us to apply only the funding to only the water or wastewater balance.

**A22** Right. So we are able to -- our feedback is that we need to provide adequate -- for bundled bills where there's multiple services included in the bill, the direction we have received is that we are able to pay the multiple services if the benefit -- if the benefit amount that is needed -- I apologize.

I'm trying to make sure I get this right. The benefit amount that is needed to cover the past due to prevent disconnection, if that includes paying for garbage services or other services, we are able to pay that amount.

**Q22** All right. Well --

**A22** If there's --

**Q22** Oops. Sorry. Go ahead, Kathy.

**A22** Yeah. Just if there's not a way to differentiate between the various services, then we will be able to pay an amount adequate to prevent disconnection, even if it involves other services. And we'll provide additional guidance around that as we get into the program.

**Q23** All right. Next question. While Section 4.2 of the plan identifies coordination with the State Board, the timing for disbursements from the program don't appear to reflect that. Can you offer online information on how this would be accomplished to maximize availability of program benefits?

**A23** CSD is definitely working to coordinate with the State Water Board. I know that with the State Water Board Program it's not exclusively focused on low income customers; whereas, our program is. So we are hoping that our program will fill the gap to insure that we provide the assistance to the low income customers, and that overall, it depends on sort of what services the customer provides.

It comes down to timing. So if the customer is able to receive services under our program and we resolve their past due balance, then we've assisted them. The customer may receive services under the State Water Board Program prior to coming to our program, and then they're assisted under that program.

I may not fully answer the question. I know that it definitely comes down to timing as to when each of the

programs are launched. Again, we're trying to look to launch the program early fall, and I believe the State Water Board is looking to launch here in the same time frame, as well.

**Q24** Okay. Next question. If the \$1,000 is not enough, would it use other programs such as -- it says ERPA, but I don't know if she meant ERPA or ARPA. My question is, how will we know that the resident will not get disconnected due to the time it takes for the resident to apply to -- she has ERPA again -- to receive information back?

**A24** I'm not sure if I can answer that question. I don't fully understand. As far as if it's timing, if the \$1,000 is not sufficient -- we're hoping that the \$1,000 is sufficient to be able to take -- fully take care of that customer when they come in.

So we may need to consider a larger benefit amount to insure that the customers [sic] is -- you know -- that we're taking care of the arrearage and past due. So we are seeking input on that dollar threshold.

**Q25** Can you please repeat or answer the question to whether direct payment agreement is with CSD or the LSP?

**A25** The direct payment model is through CSD. Where we're not able to get into a direct payment agreement with the water supplier, wastewater supplier, we're going to -- the LSPs will then be responsible for paying that water, wastewater vendor directly.

**Q26** All right. Another question. Our water agency service area borders on the 60 percent state median income. Must the participating agency's entire service area be below the 60 percent SMI threshold, or can an agency apply for portions of this service area which does meet the SMI criteria?

**A26** So the SMI is specific to the applicant. The applicant has to meet the 60 percent state median income requirement when they come in to apply, and the local service provider will verify their income eligibility at that time.

**Q27** All right. Will payment benefit amounts be based off of a metric based benefit amount or a flat payment amount?

**A27** So benefits are based on -- we are not using a benefit matrix for this program. This program is an arrearage program. So if a customer comes in and they owe \$553, then we're going to pay that amount to resolve them from being disconnected or to restore services.

**Q28** Will towns like City of Parlier, who run their water billing, be able to participate on this program? If yes, how will the residents know that their town can offer this help?

**A28** Could you repeat the question?

**Q29** Sure. Towns like City of Parlier -- assuming it's Parlier, who run their water billing, be able to participate in this program? If yes, how will the

residents know that their town can offer this help?

**A29** So if the City of Parlier meets the definition of a community water supplier, then you're an eligible vendor for the program. And so to make the community aware, we're going to look at outreach strategies through our local service providers and to see how we can work with water and wastewater suppliers to help support making sure your customers are aware of this program, which could be done in a variety of way, through bill inserts or however you -- however water, wastewater supplier currently makes your customers aware of available discount programs.

**Q30** On my next question, is there a process for a local charity that our water district already works with to help pay our customers' bills become a LSP?

**A30** Not at this time. We are working with the network of local service providers that administer the LIHEAP Program directly. However, you can reach out to that local service provider to see how you can offer support through outreaching or other services that you may be able to partner up with them on.

**Q31** On my next question, is there funding for everyone who holds a water account, or is immigration status required?

**A31** So the program requires that citizenship and legal residency is required for this program. Government entities who are LSPs are required to verify citizenship or legal residency, too.

**Q32** Okay. Let's see. Some cities include other charges to the water bill, such as street cleaning, garbage pickup, et cetera. If the customer is going to lose services if they do not pay the full bill, will the LSP be able to cover those whole -- cover the whole bill or just the water account?

**A32** They can cover the bill, the whole bill, including fees.

**Q33** Okay. What if the wastewater provider does not disconnect services? Does a customer with a past due balance that meets eligibility still qualify?

**A33** Yes.

**Q34** All right. We have quite a few questions typed in here. So I don't know. Do you want to continue to read through questions, or do you want to allow -- give a few minutes since it's almost close to 12:00 to allow for verbal questions?

**A34** Do we have quite a few hands raised? I wanted to give opportunity for those who wanted to provide verbal comments.

**Q35** We don't have any hands raised. It looks like everybody was -- has been typing their questions, and like I said, we have quite a few typed questions and comments.

**A35** Okay. Okay. Well, we can keep going through the questions.

**Q35** Okay. Got to find my place again.

**A35** Okay.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Sorry Deidra. I'm seeing some hands raised on my end.

Q Well, I don't see them on mine. So if you --

FEMALE SPEAKER: Maybe I -- I can go ahead and unmute folks.

Q Okay. If you want to do --

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yeah. So we'll go ahead -- yeah. I'll go ahead and do that. Sorry to interrupt you. So what we'll go ahead and open it up to the verbal comments and we do ask that you keep it within three minutes, just to make sure we have enough time for comments. And so I will just be checking that, as well.

(A series of oral questions)

**Q36** Hi. I work for a wastewater agency in the San Francisco Bay area and we collect our annual sewer service charges on property tax. Therefore, we really don't have any kind of mechanism to help customers who are -- who have not really paid their property tax bill.

That would be -- you know -- that would be the arrearage for wastewater. Is there going to be any kind of mechanism for charges such as that?

**A36** That's so -- is it? It's on their annual tax bill. That's how they pay their wastewater services?

**Q36(a)** That's how they pay their annual sewer service charge, is -- it is a listing on their tax bill.

**A36(a)** Got it.

**Q36(b)** Like -- you know -- like flood control might be, or you know, other -- other listings that are on tax bills. But we are often asked if we can, you know, put together a low income program, but that is precluded by the way that we collect our fees every year.

**A36(b)** Okay. We need to look at how we can assist customers in that particular type of scenario.

**Q36(c)** Okay.

**A36(c)** And like to have more conversations about that internally. So I don't have an answer right away. I know that we would like to be able to assist those customers, so we got to figure out how we can make -- insure they're included in this program.

**Q36(d)** Yeah. I think you'll find that there are several other agencies --

**A36(d)** Okay.

**Q36(e)** -- with the same method.

**A36(e)** Okay.

**Q36(f)** And that the California Association of Sanitation Agencies might be helpful for that, as well.

**A36(f)** Perfect. Thank you. Great. We'll reach out to them.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you. And then moving on to the next commenter, Adriana Vargas, you can now unmute yourself.

Sorry. Just one moment. Okay. I think you should be able to unmute yourself, Adriana Vargas, if you would like to make a comment. Okay. I'll try the next commenter. Alan Reid (phonetic), you can go ahead and unmute yourself.

A How do folks unmute themselves? They have to press the microphone button?

Q Correct. But it doesn't look like he might be on there.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay. Sorry. Maybe I'm mis-reading the hand raised, but it does look like Cindy Tuck does. Cindy Tuck, you have your hand raised. So you can go ahead and unmute yourself.

Q Okay. Great. Can you hear me okay?

A Yes, we can hear you.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Yes.

**Q37** Okay. Fantastic. Cindy Tuck, with the Association of California Water Agencies. I just wanted to thank CSD for the webinar. This has been really helpful. We appreciate that the slides will be available and we look forward to helping you as a partner in the outreach and communication to our members.

**A37** Thank you very much. We look forward to working with you, as well.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay. And I think I was misreading the hand raise. So I think those are all of our hands that

we have up. So maybe we can go back to the written questions.

**Q38** All right. Let me find my order here. Do you want me to read comments, as well, or just go through the questions first?

**A38** Let's go through the questions.

**Q39** Okay. What criteria will be used to determine whether customers with drinking water and wastewater arrearages that are in jeopardy of being disconnected?

**A39** The criteria -- so as part of the enrollment process we will need to obtain -- the customer will be providing us with their waste -- with their water bill or wastewater bill that will confirm that they're past due. In some situations where they don't pay the bill, then similar to what we do under LIHEAP utility assistance, we reach out to the water supplier, wastewater vendor to confirm the amount that's past due and the amount that is needed to prevent disconnection and to -- or to restore services.

**Q40** All right. Next question. What do the reporting requirements for water entail? For example, what is the expected format and frequency for confirming that funds have been credited to the customers' accounts?

**A40** So what we're looking to do is replicate what we do under our LIHEAP direct pay model, is that we -- under that model we issue payments directly to -- our goal is to issue payments directly to water suppliers on a weekly basis, for

example.

And then once you get the client detail information on which accounts need to be credited, then we're going to require that the water supplier vendor return a confirmation to us those accounts are credited. Currently, we allow up to 30 days for water -- or 30 days to get back to us to make that -- to insure the confirmation that the account was credited.

**Q41** Okay. Next question. My water -- my wastewater agency collects sewer service charges on the county tax rolls. Therefore, we do not receive direct payments from customers. Will there be a mechanism for payment to the county for those who have not paid their property taxes?

**A41** Yeah. As the previous person indicated that we will need to figure that out, and we'll be working with the association to maybe figure how we can assist those customers.

**Q42** Will CSD be including other stakeholders and the LSP LIHWAP workgroup meetings?

**A42** The LSP workgroup meetings, currently they're with our local service providers. I don't know if that came from an outside participant, but we are working with our --

**Q42** Yes.

**A42** -- working with our --

**Q42** Yes.

**A42** -- local service providers. If other local service

providers want to participate, please let us know and we can add you to that workgroup.

**Q43** All right. If the water supplier notices a discrepancy between the approved credit amount and the water bill delinquency how is that to be resolved?

**A43** So under our -- we do understand that sometimes when the -- when we issue payments and by the time the water provider gets the payments, that perhaps the benefit amount, the account's closed or you weren't able to credit it, we will have to work through a process on how to manage sort of return payments or partial credits to accounts, which we -- we have an existing process under LIHEAP that we're looking to replicate and it may require the water supplier or vendor to issue those funds back to CSD or to the local service provider.

**Q44** All right. Next question. There are different income eligibility criteria, for example, 60 percent SMI and 80 percent SMI, for LIHEAP and CAP. Will CSD work to create a unitary application form for LSP submittals on behalf of customers?

**A44** So our current LIHWAP Program and LIHEAP Programs are at 60 percent state median income. And so that's a federal requirement that -- I mean, so that's the standard we're adopting for this program. So I'm not quite sure what the other programs the individual is referring to.

We do acknowledge that there are other -- we do

acknowledge that other programs that are being offered by the state will have different income thresholds. So under our program it's the federal program for LIHEAP and LIHWAP, the Water Assistance Program, which we're here today. We use the 60 percent state median income.

**Q45** All right. Next question. Can you talk a little bit about how categorical eligibility will work for clients that are not dual enrollment? Can the categorical eligibility be established by any household member or any - - or only the account holder?

**A45** So CSD is not -- well, we can get feedback, but because of the federal requirement that we have to report on household income, categorical eligibility is not going to be an automatic enrollment into the program, because we have to also obtain the household income.

So under LIHEAP, if they come in for LIHEAP services, for example, and they're determined to be eligible under LIHEAP, they will in that situation be automatically eligible for the Water Assistance Program, because under LIHEAP we do means testing to verify the households' income.

**Q46** All right. Is the \$1,000 max for each the drinking water and the wastewater bill, or a combination of both?

**A46** So the \$1,000 is for -- it's a one-time benefit to the customer. So if they come in and they need assistance for their water bill they would only be able up receive that

assistance one time up to \$1,000. So it's to pay one bill. That's currently what we're -- that's currently how it's set up. If you have other thoughts or feedback around that, please provide comments.

**Q47** If the water, wastewater agency does not meet the SMI threshold, can customers participate in the proposed direct payment model?

**A47** I'm wondering if there's some confusion here. I just wanted to clarify that it's the household that has to qualify. The household has to be at 60 percent state median income to qualify for services. So it's the individual that's coming through the LSP to seek services, and that they have to apply for the services working with the LSP to determine if they're -- if they meet the income requirements.

**Q48** Okay. Two questions. One, what charges are covered? Is it late fees, disconnection fees or reconnection fees, and two, is there a \*1:14:24 -- oh, you already answered that one. So we'll answer this one. What charges are covered, late fees, disconnection fees or reconnection fees?

**A48** All of the above will be covered.

**Q49** And will there be a requirement for the utility to conduct outreach?

**A49** There -- we -- I don't -- we're not going to look to require utilities to conduct outreach. However, we're

hoping that the utility will include outreach or some informational materials to their customers on the availability of the program.

Whether that's through your websites or your bill inserts or whatever existing avenues that you have where you outreach to your customers on available programs, we're hoping that water, wastewater providers will offer that.

**Q50** Will the payments come in the same way the LIHEAP payments come in?

**A50** If there's a direct pay arrangement with that water, wastewater supplier, then yes. Or if it's not through CSD, then alternatively would be with our local service providers, who will be working with the water, wastewater vendor locally to issue the payment directly.

**Q51** Is there a plan for LIHWAP to become a longer-term program like LIHEAP, versus temporary emergency assistance?

**A51** There is no authorization at the federal level that this will be a permanent program at this time.

**Q52** Who is the contact at the State Water Board for this program?

**A52** This program is being administered by CSD, our department, Department of Community Services and Development. So CSD would be the -- is the contact for this program. If you have questions the slide is still up, and you can email your question or comments to the LIHWAP at [CSD.ca.gov](mailto:CSD.ca.gov).

FEMALE SPEAKER: Deidra, can we pause for just a moment? There's another hand up and do you mind if I go ahead and open that up, back up?

Q Yeah, go ahead.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you. All right. Francisco Talamontez (phonetic), you are now able to unmute yourself.

**Q53** Hi. Yes. I'm calling from Pace here in L.A. We have a few companies, utility companies that combine water and electric on one account. So when they apply -- I know we can use LIHEAP, we can use LIHEAP, but whatever it -- how are we going to determine the amount that we get for water and for LIHEAP?

**A53** Um-hum. So we can -- we'll have to work with LSPs on how we strategize that. But we do know that this program will assist with paying the wastewater and the water services associated with that bill. And as I mentioned earlier, if that isn't sufficient to prevent disconnection, HHS has advised that we're able to pay the amount needed, even if that covers other services, to prevent disconnection and to restore services.

**Q53** Okay. Thank you.

**A53** Okay. Thanks. And we will be issuing a further guidance specifically around that.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Deidra, that was the only hand up. So we can go back to the questions box. Thank you.

**Q54** Okay. I will read just a few more questions, because I know we're coming up on 12:00 o'clock and I know you may have some closing remarks. So the next question, if a customer accrues additional charges after the initial application is submitted, but still within the \$1,000 limit, is the additional amount eligible for reimbursement?

**A54** It will not be. In the way that we're setting up this program it's a one-time service to each customer so that we can insure that we serve as many customers as possible. So if they've come into the program and they've received a benefit already, they're not going to be eligible to receive a subsequent benefit later, regardless if it's under the \$1,000.

**Q55** Can CSD's agreement with utilities be structured to require that late fees be removed from any arrearage balance paid by the program?

**A55** That is something we will take under consideration.

**Q56** Will the CSD use CORE or a similar database to track benefits, and do you anticipate assigning separate allocations to LSPs for direct payments and agency payments, similar to UA versus WPU?

**A56** Yes. We are going to use our existing systems to get the client detail information and payment amounts, which is through our CORE system, for those of you who are not familiar with that, following the same process as we do for LIHEAP utility assistance.

**Q57** Can any customer apply for the State Water Board and LIHWAP simultaneously, or are there are opportunities to share data between the two programs so customers are automatically enrolled?

**A57** At this time we do not have assistance set up to do an automatic enrollment program, and the Water Board Program is being designed differently. It has different requirements and it doesn't necessarily focus on low income customers. So it's something we definitely want to work with the Water Board to see how best we can coordinate each of our programs. So we'll take that feedback under consideration.

**Q58** All right. Can a customer that receives a bundled bill from multiple utilities receive a larger benefit greater than \$1,000, for instance, to cover both electric and water charges if that is needed to prevent the disconnection of services?

**A58** The guidance from HHS is we're able to pay -- if providing a benefit to cover the water service and wastewater service, if that's not sufficient to prevent disconnection, that we are able to pay a larger amount to prevent the disconnection if there's other services on the bill.

**Q59** And just to add that would -- all the bundled services would need to all be covered by the \$1,000 maximum that you can provide feedback on that.

**A59** Right now, we're at \$1,000 maximum based on what we know as the arrearages, the average arrearages within the state seem to be sufficient. But if you are aware of data, and perhaps with the bundled services it may require a larger amount. So that's something we would have to take back -- take under consideration, if we need to allow a larger benefit if we're paying bundled services.

**Q60** Will each water supplier need to be contacted to confirm documents every instance of a past due applicant balance?

**A60** If we are able to obtain the bill from the customer, then we're able to work with the bill to determine what the past due amount is. If we -- and that's if we get a current bill. If we get a older bill then the LSP may need to contact the vendor to confirm the amount that's due, like the amount that's needed to, you know, prevent disconnection or restore services.

So it will not be in each and every instance, but there will be some level of frequency as needed, based on what the customer's able to supply to us.

**Q61** All right. Does an arrearage have to carry a risk of termination of service to be eligible for payment? If a water utility has a policy of no disconnections or if a non-water utility has no ability to disconnect water service for nonpayment, is that arrearage eligible for payment through LIHWAP?

**A61** If they're past due they're eligible to receive payment, even if they're not disconnected.

**Q62** Would a family where there is a mix of U.S. legal residents and non-legal residents be eligible for this program?

**A62** Yes.

**Q63** When will total benefit amounts for each LSP be allocated and will there be any opportunities to reallocate funds during the implementation of the program? For example, is there turnarounds to be a discrepancy in geographic need and available remaining funding?

**A63** So each of our local service providers will receive an allocation of funds, and they'll need to know what their allocation of funds are to effectively implement and operate the program up front. And any reallocation -- we don't envision reallocating to other geographic areas.

Again, the funds are limited and even under our LIHEAP Program we're only able to serve six percent of the eligible population. So similarly, under the LIHWAP Program we only expect to serve probably a similar percentage.

So we want to insure that funding is dedicated to -- you know -- we have to provide a statewide program and we want to insure funding is dedicated to each of the areas of the state to provide services to the low-income customers in that area.

**Q64** Will application intake forms be provided by CSD and will they be different from UA forms?

**A64** We want to work with the LSPs. I know there's -- definitely want to be able to streamline the intake process. So to the extent that we can use the existing intake form, that seems to be a good strategy to be able to incorporate the LIHWAP Program as part of that sort of intake process.

**Q65** Does the \$1,000 limit include multi-dwelling units such as duplexes for \*1:26:35 properties, and is there a program only for single-family residential?

**A65** So we're able to -- under the LIHWAP Program we're able to provide services to people that rent in multi-unit complexes if they're directly responsible for the bill, meaning if the customer gets a bill directly from the water supplier, then we can provide services to that customer.

If the utility's included in rent, at this time we're not able to assist those customers, because the landlord is paying the utility bill. And under this program we're required to pay the water supplier directly. We can't pay a landlord.

So in those instances we are currently -- our strategy is currently to refer them to the State Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

**Q66** All right. This will be the last typed question. Unfortunately, we're not going to be able to get to all of

them, but I want to give time for Rebecca to see if there's any hands raised and leave cogent remarks, but, please, this is over at 12:00.

So the one bill payment rule applicable to both sources of federal funding or each? Is there one program contract or two?

**A66** I'm sorry. Could you repeat that again?

**Q67** Yeah. Well, oops. Is the one bill payment rule applicable to both sources of federal funding or each, and is there one program or contract or two?

**A67** I can answer that. I think that this is referring to the two different buckets of federal funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan, I believe. And so in that case we -- as California, we're allocated just -- it's under one contract from HHS, even though originally there's two sources of federal funding. So it's one benefit payment per each household, no matter where the money originally came from.

FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay. And I'll -- Deidra, I think you said you're wrapping up the questions. I due not that we're almost to noon, our cutoff time for this meeting. So yeah, I just did want to thank everyone for participating.

We will go through any remaining questions that we were not able to answer verbally, and make sure that we are addressing those and answering those questions. And

all of the questions and comments that we've received from today, as well as earlier input sessions we will be summarizing in the state plan to note the public input that we've received, and so we will make sure that everyone has access to that.

And any additional comments that you weren't able to provide today or during this session, please go ahead and email the contact that we have listed on the screen, and those are due by the close of business today by 5:00 p.m. So with that, we will -- we can go ahead and end this session.

Thank you all again for attending. We really appreciate your input as we're developing this plan.

FEMALE SPEAKER 2: Thank you for your attendance today and your questions and comments, and we look forward to moving forward and launching this program in California and really helping serve low income Californians who have a tremendous need in assistance and relief.

(Proceedings concluded.)