

# City of Columbus ARP

## Utility Assistance Program



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## Program Overview

Families living at or below 80% of the Columbus Metro area median income for a Georgia family, are economically insecure. At times, they must choose which basic needs they will fulfill for their family.

The primary objective of the City of Columbus American Rescue Plan (ARP) Utility Assistance Program is to extend support to vulnerable low-income households by addressing their immediate home energy needs in response to the challenges posed by the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This program intends to temporarily alleviate the cost burden lower income households experience with rising utility costs.

Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG) has allocated \$1,500,000 to assist low-income households, that pay a higher proportion of household income for utility expenses. This assistance targets the costs of electricity, natural gas, and water to residential dwellings.

(CCG) has partnered with Enrichment Services; and is pleased to develop and administer *The City of Columbus American Rescue Plan - Utility Assistance Program*.

## Funding Source

Funding for this grant program is provided under the American Rescue Plan Act through the U.S. Department of Treasury.

## Funding Amounts

The ARP-Utility Assistance Program has been allocated \$1,500,000 in local ARP funds. Qualified households will have the opportunity to receive a one-time utility assistance benefit to help mitigate the financial burden of utility costs.

**Electric** - \$500 Benefit

**Gas** - \$500 Benefit

**Water** - \$300 Benefit

## Appointment Scheduling Period

The ARP-Utility Assistance program will begin accepting appointments for a 7-week period beginning August 14, 2023, and will be accepted on a rolling basis, until funds are exhausted, and will be accessible directly through Enrichment Services' website.

The ARP-Utility Assistance Program application is appointment based. To make an appointment, the appointments will be available online at:

<https://www.enrichmentservices.org>

Click the link that says:

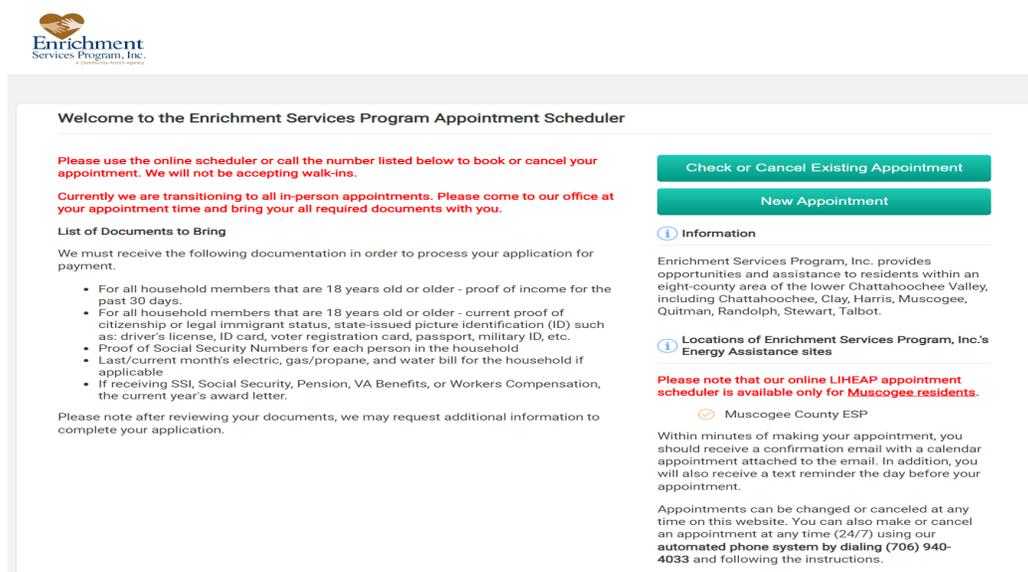
“CLICK HERE FOR AN ENERGY ASSISTANCE APPOINTMENT IN MUSCOGEE COUNTY”



The screenshot shows the top navigation area of the Enrichment Services Program website. On the left is the logo for Enrichment Services Program, Inc., with the tagline "Helping People. Changing Lives. Building Families." and "A Community Action Agency". To the right are social media links for Facebook and Twitter. Further right is the logo for "community Action PARTNERSHIP" with the tagline "Helping People. Changing Lives." and "MUSCOGEE COUNTY, HES AND COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY". Below the navigation bar are four blue buttons with white text: "CLICK HERE FOR A HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START APPOINTMENT", "CLICK HERE FOR AN ENERGY ASSISTANCE APPOINTMENT IN MUSCOGEE COUNTY", "CLICK HERE FOR A WATER ASSISTANCE APPOINTMENT IN MUSCOGEE COUNTY", and "CLICK HERE FOR RESORCES FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE FACING HARDSHIPS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)". At the bottom is a horizontal menu with links: HOME, ABOUT US, SERVICES, PORTALS, NEWS & EVENTS, CAREERS, GIVING, CONTACT.

Click the link that says:

“NEW APPOINTMENT”



The screenshot shows the "Welcome to the Enrichment Services Program Appointment Scheduler" page. At the top left is the Enrichment Services Program, Inc. logo. The main heading is "Welcome to the Enrichment Services Program Appointment Scheduler". Below this are two red text blocks: "Please use the online scheduler or call the number listed below to book or cancel your appointment. We will not be accepting walk-ins." and "Currently we are transitioning to all in-person appointments. Please come to our office at your appointment time and bring your all required documents with you." Below these is a section titled "List of Documents to Bring" with a list of requirements: "For all household members that are 18 years old or older - proof of income for the past 30 days.", "For all household members that are 18 years old or older - current proof of citizenship or legal immigrant status, state-issued picture identification (ID) such as: driver's license, ID card, voter registration card, passport, military ID, etc.", "Proof of Social Security Numbers for each person in the household", "Last/current month's electric, gas/propane, and water bill for the household if applicable", and "If receiving SSI, Social Security, Pension, VA Benefits, or Workers Compensation, the current year's award letter." Below the list is a note: "Please note after reviewing your documents, we may request additional information to complete your application." On the right side of the page are two green buttons: "Check or Cancel Existing Appointment" and "New Appointment". Below these are two sections: "Information" and "Locations of Enrichment Services Program, Inc.'s Energy Assistance sites". The "Information" section contains text: "Enrichment Services Program, Inc. provides opportunities and assistance to residents within an eight-county area of the lower Chattahoochee Valley, including Chattahoochee, Clay, Harris, Muscogee, Quitman, Randolph, Stewart, Talbot." The "Locations of Enrichment Services Program, Inc.'s Energy Assistance sites" section contains a note: "Please note that our online LIHEAP appointment scheduler is available only for Muscogee residents." and a radio button selected for "Muscogee County ESP". Below this is text: "Within minutes of making your appointment, you should receive a confirmation email with a calendar appointment attached to the email. In addition, you will also receive a text reminder the day before your appointment." At the bottom is text: "Appointments can be changed or canceled at any time on this website. You can also make or cancel an appointment at any time (24/7) using our automated phone system by dialing (706) 940-4033 and following the instructions."

## Program Eligibility

To be qualified for ARP Utility Assistance Program funds issued through Enrichment Services, the family's income must be less than or equal to 80% of the Columbus Metro FMR area median income for a Georgia family.

Household Size	80% Columbus Metro Area Median Income
1 Person	\$40,050
2 Persons	\$45,800
3 Persons	\$51,500
4 Persons	\$57,200
5 Persons	\$61,800
6 Persons	\$66,400
7 Persons	\$70,950
8 Persons	\$75,550
9 Persons	\$80,150
10 Persons	\$84,750

## Required Documents

The following documents are required, in addition to other eligibility requirements, to complete an application for ARP Utility assistance:

- ◆ Legible, valid state-issued photo ID for all members of the household over the age of 18
- ◆ Legible Social Security cards for all household members
- ◆ Proof of income for ALL household members for the past 60 days prior to the application date, along with supporting income documentation
- ◆ Electric; and or Gas; and or Water Bills

## Income Documentation

To be qualified for this program, households will need to provide income documentation that when annualized deems the household eligible for services.

To determine household, eligibility income documentation review will include the following:

- ◆ Proof of income for ALL household members for the past 60 days maximum prior to the application date.
- ◆ If the applicant has earnings or wages, they will need to provide their pay stub (examples are monthly, semi-monthly, bi-weekly, and weekly)
- ◆ If the applicant receives Social Security, insurance, pensions, or retirement, they will need their current year benefit award letter.
- ◆ If the applicant is a business owner or is self-employed, they will need the current tax year statement (example: Schedule C or C-EZ with all pages signed and included).

NOTE: Income includes, but is not limited to:

- ◆ Child support (a signed statement by the payer if support is voluntary or a statement from the court if it is court-ordered)
- ◆ TANF/AFDC/Monthly Utility Check
- ◆ Unemployment Insurance
- ◆ Alimony
- ◆ Monthly stipends
- ◆ Adoption subsidies

## **Application Review**

Applications will be completed by the applicant and the Enrichment Services Case Manager on the appointment date. Upon completion of the application at the appointment, formal notification will be made to confirm both approval and declination. Upon approval of the application payment will be made directly to the applicants' utility provider. Payments will not be made to applicants.

For more information about this program, please feel free to contact the Community Reinvestment Department, at [garcia.mary@columbusga.org](mailto:garcia.mary@columbusga.org) with any questions that you may have about the processes or requirements described above.

For specific information about this program, please feel free to contact Enrichment Services, at [communityservices@espcaa.org](mailto:communityservices@espcaa.org) with any questions that you may have about specific applications.

The City of Columbus, The Community Reinvestment Department and Enrichment Services look forward to your submission.



## **American Rescue Plan (ARP) Utility Assistance Program FAQs**

### **Common Program Questions**

What is the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Utility Assistance Program?

Who is eligible for ARP?

My primary heating fuel is not electric or natural gas (i.e., oil, wood). Can I still apply?

Which household members should I include on my application?

How long will it take to process my application?

When will I get my benefits?

Should I pay my bill or wait until I get my benefits?

I do not have a computer, a mobile device, or internet access. I am not able to make an appointment.

### **Citizenship Requirements**

What are the program rules related to citizenship?

### **Income Information**

How do I provide my income information?

Do food stamps count as income/TANF?

Does child support count as income?

## Common Program Questions

### What is the American Rescue Plan Utility Assistance Program?

- The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Utility Assistance Program is offered to help economically insecure low-income households alleviate utility cost burdens associated with housing costs. An ARP grant may assist households that have fallen behind on their utility (electric, gas, and water) payments, and the program is funded by the United States Department of Treasury, through the Columbus Consolidated Government, through the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress in 2021. ARP benefits are paid directly to your utility.

### Who is eligible for ARP?

- The American Rescue Plan Utility Assistance Program is available to eligible individual households that pay for their own electric, gas, and water and meet low-income requirements. The ARP program is not available for business accounts, estates, or property management companies.
- The monthly household income must be at or below 80% Area Median Income (AMI) for the Columbus GA HUD Income Limits:

Household Size	80% Columbus Metro Area Median Income
1 Person	\$40,050
2 Persons	\$45,800
3 Persons	\$51,500
4 Persons	\$57,200
5 Persons	\$61,800
6 Persons	\$66,400
7 Persons	\$70,950
8 Persons	\$75,550
9 Persons	\$80,150
10 Persons	\$84,750

### My primary heating fuel is not electric or natural gas (i.e., oil, wood). Can I still apply?

- The ARP Utility Assistance Program is only available for households that use natural gas or electric service for their primary heating fuel.

### **Which household members should I include on my application?**

- All household members, including the applicant, must be listed in the household member section of the application.
- At a minimum, one household member, the applicant, needs to be listed in the Household Member section of the application.

### **How long will it take to process my application?**

- Your application should be processed within 30 days of your appointment and/or your completed application.

### **When will I get my benefits?**

- Your application should be processed within 30 days of your appointment and/or your completed application. All payments will be made directly to the utility provider. It can take up to 30 days to be applied to your account, depending on your utility's bill cycle.

### **Should I pay my bill or wait until I get my benefits?**

- Keep paying your bill every month, as much as you can.

### **I do not have a computer, a mobile device, or internet access. I am not able to make an appointment.**

- Call Enrichment Services Program, Inc.'s automated appointment line at 706-940-4033.

### **What are the program rules related to citizenship?**

- At least one member of the household must be a U.S. citizen.
- Social Security Number is required for all U.S. Citizens in the household Income Information

### **How do I provide my income information?**

- You must bring income documentation for each household member to your appointment.

### **Do food stamps count as income/TANF?**

- No, food stamps are not income.

### **Does child support count as income?**

- Yes, Child support counts as income.