

City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities MetroCare Assistance Program: Help with Your Utility Bills

A Plain Language Guide for Department of Public Utilities Customer¹

What is this about?

If you're struggling to pay your water, wastewater, or natural gas bills, Richmond's MetroCare Assistance Program can help. This program offers financial help to qualified low-income households to make utility bills more affordable.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. You may qualify for MetroCare if you meet ALL of these requirements:

- You have an active DPU water, wastewater, or natural gas account in your name
- The service is for your home (residential service)
- You actually live at the address where service is provided
- Your total household income is at or below 225% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for your family size

2. How much money can I get?

- Water/Wastewater: Up to \$500 credit on your water and wastewater bills
- Natural Gas: Up to \$500 credit on your natural gas heating bills
- Payment Plan Incentive Credit: Up to \$500 when funding is available
- Maximum total: \$1,500 per year across all services

3. What is the Payment Plan Incentive Credit?

If you owe past-due bills and set up a payment plan with DPU, you may be eligible for an extra \$500 credit when you sign up for the agreement — BUT you must make every payment on time to keep this credit. If any payment is more than 30 days late, the credit will be removed and added back to your balance. This incentive is only available once per fiscal year when funding is available.

4. What documents do I need to apply?

Bring these items when you apply:

- Valid photo ID (driver's license, state ID, or any other form of government issued ID)
- Current utility bill showing your name as the customer or as an authorized user
- Proof you live at the address (utility bill serves this purpose)
- Proof of household size (birth certificates, school records, etc.)
- Proof of income (recent paystubs, tax returns, benefit letters)

5. Where do I apply?

Visit an approved MetroCare intake location. These agencies will help you complete your application and determine if you qualify. Contact DPU for a list of current intake locations (see contact information below).

¹ This plain language guide is prepared in accordance with Section 2.02 of the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) Public Notice, Comment, and Hearing Procedures. The complete proposed regulation and additional information are available for public inspection as required by Richmond City Code Section 28-26.

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6. How long does it take to get approved?

Applications are reviewed in the order they are received. If two applications come in the same day, priority goes to households with income furthest below 225% of poverty guidelines. You will be notified once your application is approved or denied.

7. Can I apply more than once?

- One time per fiscal year: You can only receive assistance once during each fiscal year (July 1 - June 30)
- Denied applications: If your application is denied, you must wait 3 months before reapplying unless you can show good cause for reconsideration

8. How is the money applied to my account?

Credits are applied directly to your utility account. They cannot be used for:

- Utility deposits
- Bills older than one year from your application date

9. Can I lose my assistance after it's approved?

Yes. The Director can revoke your assistance if:

- You no longer meet the eligibility requirements
- You commit any unlawful act related to your utility service
- You fail to pay your utility bill and it has a past due notice

Important to Know

- ✓ **Income limits are based on Federal Poverty Guidelines:** Your total household income must be at or below 225% of the federal poverty level for your family size
- ✓ **Applications processed in order received:** First-come, first-served
- ✓ **Funding is limited:** Assistance is subject to available funds
- ✓ **Keep your information current:** Notify DPU of changes in income or household status

Tips for a Successful Application

- ✓ **Gather all documents first** - Have everything ready before you visit an intake location
- ✓ **Make sure bills are current** - Bring your most recent utility bill
- ✓ **Include all household members** - Count everyone living in your home
- ✓ **Report all income sources** - Include wages, benefits, and any other income
- ✓ **Ask questions** - Intake agency staff are there to help you

For Questions About this Public Notice:

Call: (804) 646-5209

Email: Lee.Crowell@RVA.Gov

Website: <https://www.rva.gov/public-utilities/rulesandregulations>

Your participation in this process helps DPU create better assistance programs!