



**ELECTRIC WATER SEWER STORMWATER**

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PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **CARES Act Funding Available for HBPW Utility Customers**

August 28, 2020— Safe, reliable utilities are vital to protect public health and safety. Sanitation and hygiene are critical for citizens to protect themselves, their families, and their businesses against COVID-19, making access to clean, hot, water essential. Electric, water, and sewer services are critical for citizens in their homes, and essential for shuttered businesses to reopen, and remain open.

Marion County Commissioners have allocated \$90,000 of CARES Act Funds to HBPW to provide economic support through a utility assistance program to its customers. Starting September 1, 2020. Douglass Community Services has partnered with HBPW and will be administering the application process.

Eligibility for the program: customers receiving funding must live in (or business located in) Marion County, and have utility arrears dating no further back than March 1, 2020. Any residential or commercial customer that is having trouble paying their utility bills due to impacts from COVID-19 are encouraged to apply for assistance.

According to Stephanie Cooper, Douglass Community Services CEO, "Families and businesses have a need, now more than ever. We are seeing an increase of new families requesting assistance and unfortunately, we do not have the funding to assist them all. Last month alone, we turned away about 65 families that were requesting financial help. This funding will help us serve families and businesses that have been impacted by COVID."

This program is unlike traditional income driven utility assistance programs; it is designed not to neglect citizens and businesses that are unable to receive other types of assistance from agencies with income restrictions. Funds will be distributed in the same order as applications are approved to customers who show they have been adversely impacted financially, due to COVID-19. Eligible customers can receive up to two payments on their account from the program through December 2020, or until all funds have been dispersed. Case managers at Douglas Community Services will work with each applicant to assure eligibility.

We are thankful to Douglass Community Services for partnering with us to help our customers in need of financial assistance through this unprecedented time, and to the Marion County Commissioners for the opportunity to better serve.

If you have been impacted by COVID-19 and need help paying your utility bills, contact Douglas Community Services at 573-221-3892.

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