City of Austin’s Annual Customer Assistance Program

AFFORDABLE ENERGY SUMMIT
Customer Assistance Program

Who are we?
The Customer Assistance Program (CAP) encompasses all of the City of Austin sponsored programs designed to assist moderate to low-income customers in regards to their utility bill.

What do we do?
The goal of the Customer Assistance Program is to maximize the participation of eligible City of Austin utility customers by better promoting and presenting these programs to utility customers, civic, public, and private organizations.

Why are we here?
Austin Energy promotes programs designed to provide assistance to customers in the areas of financial support, case management, dispute resolution, energy efficiency improvements and water conservation.
Customer Assistance Programs

- Discount Program
- No Cost Weatherization
- Arrearage Management Program
- Refugee Program
- Financial Support Plus 1 Program
- Medically Vulnerable Registry
- Community Connections Resource Fair
- Affordable Energy Summit
Understanding Our Customers

Poverty Proportion by Zip Code (Dark-High; Light-Low)
Understanding Our Customer Households

• Median Income- $87,200*
• Median Home Value - $332,700*
• Renters / Homeowners*
  • 45% of residents are renters
  • 55% are homeowners
  • Average Rent- $1,349
  • 60% of Discount participants are renters
  • 45% of renters spend 30% or more of their income towards housing*

• 83% of households reported choosing between paying for food and utilities in past 12 months**

*Data from 2017 American Community Survey for City of Austin
**Data from 2014 Hunger in America Report for Capital Area Food Bank of Texas, Inc.
Understanding Customer Behavior

• Detailed analysis of Austin Energy and community data
• Data provides community-wide overview of customers’ daily struggles
• Identify high priority target zip codes based on internal and external data
Behavioral Patterns

Broken Payment Arrangements with DNP by Zip Code FY 2017 (Dark-High; Light-Low)

Pledge Received Accounts by Zip Code FY 2017 (Dark-High; Light-Low)
FY19 Reaching Our Customers

- Over 77,000 Phone Calls Made
- Over 18,000 Mailers Sent
- Over 20,000 Email Campaigns
- Over 8,000 Community Connection Attendees
Evaluating Our Services

• Focus Groups
• Yearly phone surveys to CAP participants and the Community Partner Network (CPN)
• Satisfaction surveys for both customers and CPN
• Meeting expectations
Focus Groups

• Purpose
  • Obtain customer and partner experiences and evaluate programs

• Customers
  • Expressed appreciation towards their utility provider and other agencies for providing the monthly bill reduction assistance
  • Were very aware of the discount programs that the City had to offer

• Community Partner Network
  • Displayed great appreciation towards Austin Energy and the multitude of financial assistance they provided
  • Staff background in social service to be relatable and commendable
Overall Satisfaction

- Somewhat Satisfied: 12%
- Satisfied: 10%
- Very Satisfied: 63%

85% Overall Satisfaction
Rating Customer Assistance Staff

- 65% Excellent
- 10% Good
- 12% Very Good

87% Overall Satisfaction
82% Overall Satisfaction

Meeting Customer Need

- Excellent: 64%
- Very Good: 7%
- Good: 11%
Meeting Customer Expectations

84% Overall Satisfaction

- 63% Somewhat Satisfied
- 13% Satisfied
- 8% Very Satisfied
Customer Assistance Programming
• Outreach
• Network Building
• Community Building
• Customer Segmentation

• Emergency Assistance
• Weatherization
• Medically Vulnerable
• Arrearage
• Discounts

Wrap Around Support Services
• Evaluations
• Case Management
• Education
Discount Program

Provides discounts to City of Austin utility customers on low or fixed incomes who participate in certain state, federal, or local assistance programs. These discounts appear on the customer’s bill monthly.
Discount Eligibility

A customer may be eligible if she/he or someone in the household participates in one of these programs:

- Medicaid Program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- Telephone Lifeline Program
- Travis County Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)
- Medical Access Program (MAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)
Potential Discounts

Potential waivers and discounts could include*:

- Electric Service Customer Charge waiver
- Discount on total electrical usage
- Discount on Community Benefit Charges
- Water Service Customer Charge waiver
- Water Tiered Fixed Charge waiver
- Water Volume Charge discount
- Wastewater Service Customer Charge waiver
- Drainage Fee 50% discount

*Discounts are dependent on the customer’s utility services
### ELECTRIC SERVICE

- **Read Date:** 01/01/2018
- **Consumption:** 1000
- **Total Consumption in kWh:** 1000

#### Customer Charges
- **$10.00 - Electric Customer Charge**
- **$1.72 - Community Benefit Charge**
- **$9.00 - 10% Electric Usage (CAP Portion Only)**

### WATER SERVICE

- **Read Date:** 01/01/2018
- **Consumption:** 100

#### Customer Charge
- **$7.10**

#### Tiered Fixed Charge
- **$6.05 - 1000 Gallons**
- **$6.25 - 1500 Gallons**
- **$6.50 - 2000 Gallons**
- **$6.75 - 2500 Gallons**
- **$7.00 - 3000 Gallons**

#### Water Volume Charge
- **$10.00**

#### Total Current Charges
- **$80.38**

### WASHER SERVICE

- **Read Date:** 01/01/2018
- **Contribution Charge:** $10.30

#### Reduced Payment (GCVAP/CAF Discount)
- **$10.30 - WASHER Customer Charge**
- **$1.50 - Community Benefit Charge**
- **$10.06 - WASHER Volumetric Charge**

### DRAINAGE SERVICE

- **Read Date:** 01/01/2018
- **Contribution Charge:** $10.60

- **Monthly Drainage Charge:** $9.30

### Discount Monthly Savings
- **$79.01** (average bill)

### Additional Charges
- **$5.32 - 50% Drainage Fee (based on impervious cover)
Discount Program

FY18 Data
Applying for Discounts

• Call the CAP Contact Center at 855-319-6630 for an application
• Customers can download application from www.austinenergy.com
• Application should be submitted with qualifying documents
• Customers must recertify every 12 months
  • Sent letter and application 30 days before enrollment end date to recertify
Discount Process

• Auto enrollment based on address, name and ID match for some qualifying programs – no application needed
• Self enrollment by filling out application is option for residential customers
• Customers can opt out of the Discount Program by calling (855) 319-6630
• Discounts follow when customers transfer service
• No waitlist
Enrollment Exceptions

Income verification required

- Home Site Value over $250K
  - Home site value is defined as the value of the structure not the property
- Multiple Properties
  - Any customer that has 2 or more properties in their name, regardless of value
Austin Energy No Cost Weatherization

Offers home energy improvements to qualifying low income customers. These improvements lower energy costs and improve indoor comfort and air quality, making homes healthier and safer.

Some of the possible improvements include:

- Air Infiltration
- Attic Insulation
- Duct System Improvements
- Solar Screens
- LED Lighting
- Life Safety
- A/C Tune Up
- Water Conservation
Average Cost Per Household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average Cost Per Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2015</td>
<td>$3,454.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2016</td>
<td>$3,803.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2017</td>
<td>$4,202.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2018</td>
<td>$4,058.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FY18 Data
No Cost Weatherization Eligibility

Automatic Enrollment
- 200% FPIL
- Discount Enrolled*

Self Nomination
- 200% FPIL
- Non-Discount Enrolled

Premise
- ≤ $300K
- ≤ 2,500 sq. ft.
- ≤ 4 units
- Not weatherized in the last 10 years

*Education, Case Management, Follow Up
No Cost Weatherization Program

FY 2015
- Referred: 290
- Homes Completed: 424*
- Education: 149

FY 2016
- Referred: 326
- Homes Completed: 214
- Education: 213

FY 2017
- Referred: 371
- Homes Completed: 170
- Education: 137

FY 2018
- Referred: 601
- Homes Completed: 434
- Education: 345

*Multiple referral process
Arrearage Management Program

Arrearage Management Program (AMP) is a payment matching program designed to help qualified customers to reduce and eventually eliminate past due utility balances they owe to the City of Austin.

• Eligibility:
  • Customer engagement with their assigned account case manager
  • Customer attends the Community Connections Education Course
  • Customer is a residential customer with an active account
  • Customer is enrolled in the Customer Assistance Program
Community Connections Education

CAP Weatherization and AMP participating customers attend a one-time class to learn tips on how to get the most out of the programs.

- Subjects covered:
  - Understanding your Bill
  - Energy and Water Conservation
  - Indoor Air Quality
  - Budgeting
  - Sources of Energy and Water
  - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
  - Safety Hazards
  - Tenant Rights
Community Connections Education Completion

FY 2015: 149
FY 2016: 213
FY 2017: 137
FY 2018: 454

FY18 Data
Refugee Program

Designed to assist refugees and other displaced persons resettling into the Austin Energy service territory. The program provides education on how to start and maintain their City of Austin Utility Services.
Refugee Program

• Two agency collaboration
  • Refugee Service of Texas & Caritas

• Worked within the confines of our service regulations
  • Potential customers were vetted by federal government
  • Utilized I-9 ID’s as a temporary ID
  • 6 weeks later social security number is provided

• Account case managed by Austin Energy
  • Accounts in customer’s own name
  • Accounts are managed until social security numbers are provided

• Customer case managed by Referring Agency
  • Understanding a utility bill
  • How to manage and pay their utility bill

• Early Deposit Refund (6 months good pay history)

• Account initiation fees waived
Financial Support Plus 1 Program

Designed to assist those City of Austin utility customers who are having financial difficulties and are unable to pay their utility bill due to unexpected emergencies. The City of Austin has partnered with local churches and non profits to help identify assistance recipients.
Financial Support Plus 1 Eligibility

• City of Austin residential customers are eligible for up to $1,500 in Plus 1 funding in a 12 month period
• Each agency can assist the same customer twice in a 12 month period
• The Plus 1 pledges cannot be applied if:
  • Meter tampering
  • Unpaid deposit
  • Exceeds the Plus 1 pledge limit
  • Pledge will create credit
Funding is distributed by a network of local social service agencies.

- Network is comprised of 55 members
- Open and closed referral agencies
- Screen applicants
- Determine eligibility
- Ensure funding is applied to the customer’s utility account

Customers should contact one of these agencies to apply

*Must be a current client of these agencies to receive Plus 1 utility assistance.
Financial Support Plus 1 Funding Over the Years

FY 2010: $339,723
FY 2011: $341,500
FY 2012: $376,500
FY 2013: $628,750
FY 2014: $960,750
FY 2015: $1,186,688
FY 2016: $1,334,688
FY 2017: $1,564,157
FY 2018: $2,223,903
The City of Austin offers the Medically Vulnerable Registry for customers with life support equipment, a critical illness or serious illness. Eligible customers receive additional time to pay their bills in addition to one-on-one case management.
## MVR Qualifiers

**Life Support – Requires Yearly Recertification**
A resident who is sustained by a life support system that has been registered with and approved by the City and that requires uninterrupted electric or water service.

**Serious Illness – Requires 90 Day Recertification**
A resident who is being treated by a licensed physician for a disease or ailment of long duration or frequent recurrence where bodily function or organs would be seriously impaired without hearing or air conditioning.

**Critical Illness – Requires Yearly Recertification**
A resident who is being treated by a licensed physician for paraplegia, hemiplegia, quadriplegia, Multiple Sclerosis or Scleroderma, and such medical condition requires heating or air conditioning.

**Medically Indigent – Deposit Waiver – No Recertification**
A resident who is not able to perform 3 or more of the activities of daily living defined as bathing, dressing, grooming, routine hair and skin care, meal preparation, feeding, exercising, toileting, transfer/ambulation, positioning and range of motion. Must be enrolled in CAP Discount Program to qualify.
MVR Benefits

• Utility aware of MVR household locations
• Home visits
• New enrollments
• Ongoing yearly visits

• Referrals to other social service providers
• One-on-one case management
• Manual collections process*
• Third party notification

*Customers on this registry are not exempt from their financial responsibilities if the account becomes delinquent, nor are they exempt from termination of services according to established policies. Furthermore, the registry does not guarantee priority utility service restoration due to any unplanned outages.
MVR Requests

• Request the registry by calling 512-494-9400 and providing the patient’s name and physician’s name, address and phone number
• Registration forms will be mailed or faxed directly to the customer's physician
• A copy may be sent to the customer as verification that it was sent to the physician but it must be certified by the physician
Outreach
Community Connections Resource Fair

- Utility meets customers at community level
- Holistic approach to customer service
- One-stop shop to reach basic needs services
- Targets low to moderate income customers
- Focuses on high poverty zip codes
- Over 1,208 participants with over 103 community agencies represented
## Community Connections Resource Fair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Exhibitors</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
<th>Overall Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Millennium Youth Entertainment Center</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Metz Recreation Center</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Gus Garcia Recreation Center</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Montopolis Recreation Center</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>1,219</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Webb Middle School</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1,330</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Mendez Middle School</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Dobie Middle School</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1,372</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Travis High School</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1,208</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Affordable Energy Summit

- Introduces utility changes to the community
- Communication avenue for community partners
- Avenue for community input and feedback
- Targets local social service providers
  - Non-profits
  - Faith-based groups
  - Government agencies
  - Advocacy groups
  - Low income housing representatives
Affordable Energy Summit

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>AT&amp;T Conference Center</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Sheraton Hotel</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Palmer Events Center</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>AT&amp;T Conference Center</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Norris Conference Center</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>144</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>AT&amp;T Conference Center</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>131</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>AT&amp;T Conference Center</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>AT&amp;T Conference Center</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Outreach Activities

• CAP educates community about programs through many outreach events:
  • Women’s Resource Fair
  • Feria Para Aprender
  • Juneteenth
  • Boo the Flu
  • Harvest Fest
  • National Night Out
Questions?