

Customer Affordability Observations

Discussion with Customer Service Reps

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Customer Calls

- Customer affordability calls are usually from seniors and people with health issues.
- Hard to make a true assessment of need:
 - Some customers don't appear to budget their money well.
 - Some customers may just want to complain.
 - Some customers appear to have legitimate issues.
 - Some customers are repeat callers or may be trying to game the system.
- Impossible to say what percentage of customers with affordability concerns might qualify for a program.

Care To Share

- Needs to be better advertised.
- There is a sensitivity issue in offering it – don't want to be presumptive and offend anyone.
- Usually only bring it up if the customer asks about available assistance.
- Some customers don't want to bother with the paperwork and some don't want to share their personal financial info.
- St. Vincent de Paul calls about twice a month to sponsor a specific customer's water bill.
- Current option is not seen as sufficient. "Water generally isn't available for assistance like food or shelter."

Suggestions

- Consider reducing or waiving the shut-off fee; \$65 is sometimes equal to what is owed.
- TVWD shouldn't be doing the assessments; link it to something where the vetting has been done already (e.g. food stamps, Medicare, etc.)
- Consider expanding beyond the two tiers for rates and include a low income rate.
- Support for monthly billing vs. bi-monthly
- Support for levelized billing.