



## Ohio Administrative Code

### Rule 122:5-3-03 Procedures for verifying customer eligibility.

Effective: February 15, 2015

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(A) One-stop application and eligibility determination process.

(1) Local agency. To the extent practicable, the director shall maintain a one-stop application and eligibility determination process for customers administered by the office of community assistance. Applications may be accepted by the office of community assistance and, at the local level, by a local agency. The eligibility determination process shall include periodic verification of continuing eligibility to participate in the PIPP plus program. The office of community assistance and local agencies designated by the director to accept applications for the PIPP plus program shall collect information from customers in the form required by the director from time to time. The director may also require such local agencies to use such computer programs and web-based applications as the director may provide in connection with the administration of the PIPP plus program.

(2) Referrals. All requests by customers to participate in the PIPP plus program shall be referred for eligibility determination to the office of community assistance or a local agency designated by the director to accept applications for the PIPP plus program. The director shall provide information about the referral process to electric distribution utilities and to the commission. The director shall also make reasonable efforts to make referral information generally available to the public, including by publication on the development services agency website. Customers may not be enrolled in the PIPP plus program directly by utility companies. The requirement that utilities refer customers to the office of community assistance or a local agency for PIPP plus enrollment is not intended and should not be interpreted to impose on electric distribution utilities different or additional requirements for establishing customer accounts for electric service or for processing service transfers (changes of service address within the utility's service territory) for PIPP plus customers. Consistent with the commission rule set forth in paragraph (A) of rule 4901:1-18-15 of the Administrative Code (or any successor rule of substantially the same effect), a PIPP plus customer who is current on his/her payment of monthly PIPP plus installment amounts shall not be denied a transfer of service to a new address based solely on the customer's accrued arrearages. PIPP plus customers relocating within the service territory of an electric distribution utility are not required to re-enroll or re-verify eligibility



to participate in the PIPP plus program as a condition for transferring electric service.

(B) Eligibility determination.

(1) Application. The director shall identify the customer-level information necessary and useful for purposes of determining customer eligibility and administering customer participation in the PIPP plus program. As provided for in rule 122:5-3-07 of the Administrative Code, the director shall prepare a form of application, which may be a single combined application for all low-income customer assistance plans. The director shall make applications for the PIPP plus program available to customers at various locations and through various publication channels throughout the state, including at local agencies, by request to the office of community assistance and by publication on the development services agency website. The application form may be updated from time to time by the director.

(2) Submission of applications. Applications for the PIPP plus program may be submitted by customers to local agencies designated by the director to accept such applications or by mail to the office of community assistance.

(3) Income verification. Income eligibility determinations shall be made based upon income information provided by an applicant and reviewed using the same income verification procedures employed by the director for the home energy assistance program. The director shall review the verification procedures annually and shall publish such procedures in the annual energy assistance guidelines. The director shall provide copies of the annual energy assistance guidelines to the local agencies and shall make the guidelines available to the public, including by publication on the development services agency website.

(4) Notice of eligibility. The office of community assistance or the local agency, whichever accepts a customer application to participate in the PIPP plus program, shall notify such applicant in writing of the eligibility determination and, if the applicant is determined to be eligible, such customer's monthly PIPP plus installment amount. If a customer is determined not to be eligible to participate in the PIPP plus program, the office of community assistance or the local agency shall include in the notice a reasonably detailed description of the reason for that determination. The office of community assistance shall notify electric distribution utilities about eligibility determinations



through electronic data transfers made each business day. Electric distribution utilities shall update customer records promptly to reflect customer enrollment information and return to the office of community assistance an electronic file confirming that customer account records have been updated to reflect enrollment and/or noting any exceptions for PIPP plus account files that could not be processed or reconciled with customer account records and specifying for each exception the proper exception code from the list of exception codes provided by the office of community assistance. Electric distribution utilities will work with the office of community assistance to resolve any exceptions, including the correction of any error in the customer information. Electric distribution utilities shall not unilaterally change a customer's monthly PIPP plus installment amount from the amount provided in the office of community assistance electronic data transfer. Electric distribution utilities are not required to send PIPP plus customers separate written notices of PIPP plus enrollment or monthly PIPP plus installment amounts following enrollment, but electric distribution utilities shall reflect a PIPP plus customer's monthly PIPP plus installment amount on such customer's bills as required by applicable commission rules.

(5) Request for reconsideration. Any customer who disputes his/her eligibility determination, including the results of the income verification or evaluation of any other eligibility factor, and/or the calculation of the monthly PIPP plus installment amount, may request reconsideration by the office of community assistance or by the local agency that made the initial determination or installment calculation. Requests for reconsideration may be made verbally or in writing but, in either case, must provide a reasonably detailed basis for the dispute and such supporting documentation as may be reasonably requested by the office of community assistance or the local agency. Requests for reconsideration must be made within sixty days after the date of the disputed determination or installment calculation, and shall be considered and resolved promptly by the office of community assistance or the local agency receiving the request. Responses to requests for reconsideration shall be made to the customer in writing.

(C) Continuing eligibility.

(1) Annual verification of income eligibility. Income eligibility will be subject to annual verification at or about twelve months from the PIPP plus customer's most recent PIPP plus re-verification date. The director will use reasonable efforts to notify PIPP plus customers in advance of annual verification deadlines. PIPP plus customers will be required to submit then-current application



information to the office of community assistance or a local agency. The director shall use such application information to determine continuing income eligibility. Local agencies and electric distribution utilities will cooperate with the director to facilitate the income verification process. If a PIPP plus customer fails to submit information sufficient to verify continuing eligibility within sixty days after the customer's annual verification date, the customer will be ineligible to continue in the PIPP plus program, and the office of community assistance will send the affected utility by electronic data transfer a drop file to remove such customer as an active PIPP plus customer. PIPP plus customers who have been dropped from the PIPP plus program for not meeting the terms of the program, including failure to re-verify their income, may re-enroll in the program after all missed PIPP plus installments have been cured and monthly charges for any months the customer was not enrolled in the program but maintained services (less any payments made by the customer) have been paid. This includes PIPP plus payments for any months that the customer was disconnected. The amount due shall not exceed the amount of the customer's arrearage.

(2) Updating customer records. The office of community assistance or the local agency, whichever re-verifies a customer's continuing eligibility to participate in the PIPP plus program, shall notify such PIPP plus customer in writing of the re-verification determination and, if the PIPP plus customer continues to be eligible, the monthly PIPP plus installment amount based on re-verified income. If a customer is determined not to be eligible for continued participation in the PIPP plus program, the office of community assistance or the local agency shall include in the notice a reasonably detailed description of the reason for that determination and the customer may request reconsideration as provided in paragraph (B)(5) of this rule. The office of community assistance shall notify electric distribution utilities about re-verification determinations through electronic data transfers made each business day. Electric distribution utilities shall update customer records promptly to reflect customer re-verification information and return to the office of community assistance an electronic file confirming that customer account records have been updated to reflect re-verification and/or noting any exceptions for PIPP plus account files that could not be processed or reconciled with customer account records and specifying for each exception the proper exception code from the list of exception codes provided by the office of community assistance. Electric distribution utilities will work with the office of community assistance to resolve any exceptions, including the correction of any error in the customer information. Electric distribution utilities shall not unilaterally change a customer's monthly PIPP plus installment amount from the amount provided in the office of community assistance electronic data transfer. Electric distribution utilities



are not required to send PIPP plus customers separate written notices of changes to monthly PIPP plus installment amounts following re-verification, but electric distribution utilities shall reflect a PIPP plus customer's monthly PIPP plus installment amount on such customer's bills as required by applicable commission rules. Promptly after receipt of notice that a PIPP plus customer is not eligible to continue in the PIPP plus program, the electric distribution utility shall remove the affected customer from PIPP plus billing and notify the customer about any payment plans or other utility-sponsored programs for which the customer may be eligible as a former participant in PIPP plus. The customer notice sent by the office of community assistance or the local agency as provided in this rule will also suggest that such customer contact his/her electric distribution utility for information about other payment plans and utility-sponsored programs that may be available to the customer.