

## **I CARE Fall Meeting – Conference Call Minutes Thursday October 29, 2020**

### **Attendees:**

Denise Ramos	Community Action of Eastern Iowa
Wendy Anderson	Community Action of Eastern Iowa
Paula Morgan	Community Action Agency of Southeast IA
Dolly Stancil	Community Action Agency of Southeast IA
Dan Rause	HACAP
Sandy Gilbert	HACAP
Dylan Becker	IMPACT
Rhonda Wilson	IMPACT
Arleen Weerheim	Inter lakes Community Action
Sheri Wolf	Matura
Danna Buls	Matura
Julie Colling	Mid Sioux Opportunity
Mary Greving	New Opportunities
Amy Hoffman	North Iowa Community Action
Karen Henry	Northeast Iowa Community Action
Darci Bultje	Rural
Lisa Collins	SEIDA
Dianna George	Upper Des Moines
Shelly Charapata	Upper Des Moines
Wendy Mueller	West Central
Ivy Nielsen	West Central
Christine Taylor	LIHEAP
John Burnquist	LIHEAP
Marie Jean Blanc	IUB

### **MidAmerican Representative in attendance:**

Connie Bleuer, Credit Specialist, Davenport IA  
Sarah Schutters, Credit Representative, Davenport IA  
Kelly Reardon, Credit Supervisor, Davenport IA  
Eric Rogers, Credit Supervisor, Davenport

**Kelly Reardon** welcomed the group and Roll call was taken.

### **Approval of minutes from last meeting**

Kelly Reardon reminded that the previous meeting was what MidAmerican would be doing post LIHEAP due to COVID and no minutes were taken, ICARE information was sent to everyone via email.

### **State of the Fund:**

Connie Bleuer provided the state of the funds report that included I CARE agency contributions for 2018 and 2019 graphs and data regarding customer contributions as far back as 2006 and 2020 until September. Contributions were down \$13,806.57 between 2018 and 2019. Also provided were the individual agency yearly totals for 2018 and 2019 and January – September for 2020. As well as the Iowa, ICARE annual report that is filed with the Iowa Utilities Board by September 30<sup>th</sup> each year, which

is data for 2018-2019, and for 2019-2020 reporting July 1<sup>st</sup> – June 30<sup>th</sup>. A reminder was given to council members to have their monthly distribution reports sent to MidAmerican by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month regardless of whether funds were distributed or not. Connie Bleuer reminded everyone to be sure to include both Connie and Sarah Schutters in on any emails sent.

### **I CARE Fundraisers and Promotions:**

Connie Bleuer discussed the ways that MidAmerican promotes and raises funds for the I CARE program.

1. The annual soup/bake fundraiser was held on Feb 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020 which raised \$1,300.00 with the company match. MidAmerican will not be able to do our normal fundraiser this year in Feb due to COVID we will see how things go and if restrictions are lifted possibly do something in spring or summer.
2. For Iowa we have a check box on the customer bill stub in November & December if they wish to contribute to ICARE continuing or just do a 1x contribution
3. Other states have a check box on the bill year round
4. Included in our quarterly newsletter is a clip out which customers can use to mail in a contribution
5. We also promote ICARE through our website

### **I CARE Eligibility**

Connie Bleuer reviewed the I CARE eligibility guidelines with the group. There were no changes made to the requirements and Connie asked members to contact Julie or Connie if they have any exceptions they would like to have reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

#### I CARE Emergency Heating Funds Eligibility Requirements

1. Applicant must live within MidAmerican Energy Company service territory, but does not have to be a customer of MidAmerican Energy Company.
2. Applicant must be facing an emergency created by heating costs.
3. Applicant must have made a reasonable effort to make payments to his or her fuel vendor.
4. Applicant must have exhausted all other resources for heating assistance funds.
5. Applicant may receive up to a maximum of \$500 assistance only once per year. It is anticipated that the amount of I CARE assistance will effectively alleviate the emergency situation.
6. Only owner-occupied housing will be eligible for weatherization assistance.
7. Applicant's annual income must be at or below state LIHEAP guidelines.
8. Applicant may also be eligible if they experience a special hardship in the household.

### **Credit Timeline:**

Connie Bleuer reviewed the credit timeline with the group going into LIHEAP season. She explained a LIHEAP approved customer will only receive a friendly reminder not a disconnect notice. If no customer contact will start tagging in Iowa on November 1<sup>st</sup>. Reminder: no tags in South Dakota.

### **Credit Timeline:**

- Day 1 Bill mailed
- Day 22 Bill Due Date
- Day 27 Friendly reminder/disconnect notice mailed
- Day 39 Disconnect notice due date
- Day 41 Eligible to cut (outbound credit call list)
  - Day one IVRU Credit outbound call
- Day 42 Day two IVRU Credit outbound call

Day 43 Auto-Issue cut-out-order

Day 44 First Day cut-out-order is scheduled to the field

Temperatures are checked daily in the morning and cut out orders will be rescheduled if falls below guidelines

Sarah Schutters reviewed payment agreement options, LIHEAP pending and LIHEAP promises

### **Payment Agreement Review**

A document detailing the payment agreement options by state was provided to all attendees.

Sarah Schutters reviewed the Payment agreement options with the group. Due to COVID through the end of the year MidAmerican will be offering a New Original Payment agreement if none has been set up since 06/01/20. Customer also has the option of endless reinstate if missed payment(s) are made up and the service is not already disconnected for non-payment.

### **Iowa**

Payment agreement Review

Iowa Payment agreement: A payment Agreement is a payment option that we can offer to our customers that are having a hard time paying their current and past due bills

Original Payment Agreement:

- A minimum of 12 months will be offered to customers but they may choose up to 18 months. They cannot have less than 12.
- Customers always have the option to pay them off early
- On a rare occasion, depending on the circumstance, a review can take place to see if a 24 month Payment Agreement can be offered. However, they are far and few between.
- No upfront payment is required however, if service has been cut out, an upfront reconnect fee may be required. (In Iowa, only the first electric cut-in fee will be waived each calendar year they do not get a free waiver for gas ) Typically, first, we try to cut the electric at the meter, then if we cut at the meter we would try to cut at the pole then last if the first two are not an option or in some areas where we serve gas only then we would cut the gas at the meter

Renegotiated Payment Agreement:

- Customers who have default an original Payment Agreement will qualify for a renegotiated Payment Agreement if they have made two consecutive full monthly payments on their original payment agreement prior to its default. LIHEAP payments are counted towards the 2 consecutive. In addition, if MidAmerican received a LIHEAP *approval* while the Original was active that grant amount will count towards the two consecutive payments.
- Terms will be set up for the same number of months as the original payment agreement
- With that being said the Upfront 1<sup>st</sup> instalment is one equal instalment of the past due (for example if they had a 12 month Original they would need 1/12 upfront same goes for an 18 month original
- If service has been cut out, an upfront reconnect fee may be required.

*Note: The first electric cut-in fee will be waived each calendar year.*

### Renegotiated Payment Agreements Exception

Customers in default of an original payment agreement may still be eligible for a renegotiated payment agreement even if they have not paid the two consecutive full monthly payments.

- The upfront payment or “first installment” would be 1/3 of the past due balance
- Terms will be set-up for the same number of months as the original payment agreement.
- If service has been cut out, an upfront reconnect fee may be required.

*Note: The first electric cut-in fee will be waived each calendar year.*

### Iowa Reinstate Payment Agreements

Customers can reinstate a defaulted payment agreement as many times as they'd like; as long as:

- The service has NOT been cut-out and
- The customer pays the total amount obligated from the previous defaulted payment agreement plus any additional charges that may have been billed after the default date.

Important!

SOMETIMES CUSTOMER HAS A MORE AFFORDABLE OPTION TO PAY OFF A PREVIOUS PA TO BE ELIG FOR AN OPA RATHER THAN REINSTATE AND THAT IS ALWAYS AN OPTION AS WELL

- There is no limit to the number of times an Iowa reinstate payment agreement may be offered

### **LIHEAP Pending**

This is a 30 day protection period used when a customer of record, spouse or account agent with written authorization advises he is seeking LIHEAP assistance during the winter moratorium:

- Iowa – Nov.1-April.1
  - Illinois- Dec.1-March 31
- IMPORTANT-** There is **no** LIHEAP pending for Nebraska or South Dakota
- Iowa Only- LIHEAP Pending can be added to more than one account in a customer's name if he advises the person residing at the premises will be seeing EA
  - We do not enter a new PA for a LIHEAP approved customer. However, it is ok to reinstate.
  - If you let us know the customer is seeking LIHEAP with you, we will add the LIHEAP pending at that time.

### **LIHEAP Pre-moratorium**

- Prior to Nov. 1- MidAmerican will NOT consider LIHEAP promises before taking credit action. Protection begins November 1<sup>st</sup>.
- During moratorium-November 1 – April 1: When a LIHEAP promise is sent electronically, called into the credit line or entered on the EAC website the account is protected from credit action.

We are encouraging residential Iowa customers to apply for the IEDA program. There is no protection for this, and they are not removed from collections.

**Kelly Reardon discussed the EAC and MEC website:**

Kelly reviewed that the Energy Assistance Center (EAC) website is a great tool for the agencies to obtain account information and view the credit status of their accounts. Agencies also have access to customer bills through the EAC website. Kelly also advised that brochures are available; Budget Billing, Energy Efficiency, etc.

### MidAmerican Energy Company Website

Kelly Reardon went over information on the online the MidAmerican Energy website that customers can access. She reviewed different features of website including:

- Customer service features, where customer can find payment options, pay stations, customer office locations and Kiosks.
- Start and stop services
- Billing Options which tells about your bill, and budget billing.
- How to donate to I CARE.
- Energy Efficiently Tips and Rebates can also be found on the website.
- Outage information and how to report an outage.

### Council Members

Connie Bleuer requested that everyone review their agency contact information to ensure it is accurate. Many times, there are name changes or staffing changed. If Changes are needed, please email both Connie Bleuer [Connie.Bleuer@midamerican.com](mailto:Connie.Bleuer@midamerican.com) and Sarah Schutters [Sarah.Schutters@midamerican.com](mailto:Sarah.Schutters@midamerican.com).

### Open Discussion

Question was asked if agencies could see LIHEAP Pending on the EAC website?

Yes, you can see this on the **Account Summary** top section. It will show you LIHEAP pending end date.

Example:

LIHEAP/Weatherization:	No
LIHEAP Pending End Date:	3/13/2021

  

LIHEAP/Weatherization	No
:	
LIHEAP Pending End Date:	12/23/2020

### Adjourn

Kelly Reardon thanked everyone for calling in and asked for a motion to adjourn. Mary Greving, New Opportunity made a motion and it was seconded by Arleen Weerheim, Inter-Lakes Community Action. All approved, the motion carried and the meeting was adjourned.