

Schedule 35  
TEMPORARY COVID-19 RESIDENTIAL BILL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(N)

**PURPOSE:**

Implement a temporary residential bill assistance program (“Big HEART grant” or “program”) to help with financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as required by Commission Order No. 20-401. The Big HEART grant is intended to help prevent bad debt accumulation on customer accounts by identifying, waiving, and managing residential customer arrearages.

**AVAILABILITY:**

Applies to any customer receiving natural gas service for domestic purposes under the Company’s Rate Schedule 101, general residential service, within the Company’s service territory and who has a household income up to 300 percent (300%) of the Federal Poverty Level (“FPL”).

**ENROLLMENT:**

Eligible customers may receive a Big HEART grant by calling Cascade’s Customer Service at (888) 522-1130 during business hours (Monday – Friday, 7:30 A.M. – 6:30 P.M.); or by reaching out to their local Community Action Agency (“CAA”).

**BILL ASSISTANCE OPTIONS:**

1. Automatic Hardship Grant

Customers with a documented history of low-income program eligibility in which the customer has received energy assistance within the previous 24 months will automatically receive a one-time Big HEART grant equal to the amount of their outstanding balance (all past due charges) not to exceed \$1,500 and not to result in an account credit.

2. Financial Hardship Grant

For customers who have not received energy assistance within the past 24 months but express financial hardship due to COVID-19 to Cascade, either verbally or in written form, may qualify for the Big HEART grant. Cascade will work with customer to determine which payments or arrangements can be made before a grant credit is provided for the remaining balance. Any payments made by the customer will be deducted from the customer’s account balance to be paid with a Big HEART grant.

For customers who apply for energy assistance with CAAs and have not received energy assistance within the previous 24 months, but verbally expressing financial hardship due to COVID-19 to CAA employees during the application process. CAAs will attempt to qualify the applicant for traditional bill pay assistance (LIHEAP, WEAFF, OLIBA, and Winter Help) before utilizing the Big HEART grant.

Whether through Cascade or CAAs, a benefit curve based on household size, monthly income, and account outstanding balance (all past due charges) will be used to determine the Big HEART grant amount. Monthly income would be provided verbally by the customer where documentation is not required and shall be the combined current income amounts of all adult household members. The grant shall not exceed \$1,500, nor result in an account credit.

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**FUNDING:**

Funding to be distributed is one percent (1%) of the Company’s Oregon retail revenues, not to be increased without prior OPUC approval, as determined by the Company’s recent general rate case in Docket UG 390, which the amount is \$707,517. Majority of the funding will be to assist customers for bill and debt relief with a portion of the funding used to promote the availability of financial assistance throughout the Company’s service area. This outreach may include, but not be limited to, emails, print, and digital advertisements.

**TERM:**

The Big HEART program, as described above, will be in operation from April 2021 through September 2022, or until the Company reaches its spending limit, or until the OPUC closes the program. Funding not spent by September 30, 2022, will be used to reduce any remaining residential bad debts starting in chronological order from oldest to most recent balance, then any remaining funds will be rolled into the Company’s low-income program.

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