



**REVISED- Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) Steering
Committee Minutes of Meeting Held on April 5, 2018**

Attendance in Springfield

Members: *DCEO; Mindy Browning, ERBA; Donna Cain, DCEO; Deirdre Coughlin, DCEO; Leslie DeVore, DCEO; Leslie Ann Lesko, DCEO; Kathy Walk, CEFS;*

Guests: *Angela Baldwin, DCEO; Tammy Harter, DCEO; Janet Hawes-Davis, DCEO;*

Attendance in Chicago

Members: *Maria Gallardo, DCEO; Jennifer Schmidt, CEDA*

Guests: *Cassandra Vaughn, DCEO; Brigitte Hunter, DCEO; Nathalie Solis, DCEO.*

Attendance via Telephone

Members: *Melanie Brown, Ameren; Aimee English, Citizens Utility Board; Jennifer Fenske, Nicor Gas; Joan Howard, IL Commerce Commission; Karen Lusson, Attorney General's Office; Lauren Pashayan, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance; Ashley Miller, DuPage County Dept. of Community Services; Barb Richardson, Legal Assistance Foundation; Aarian Smith, ComEd; Martha Strawser, Rockford Human Services; Michelle Machay, Peoples Gas;*

Guests: *Grace Brigando, ComEd; Deborah Bursey, Ameren; Deb A. Hozzian, Peoples Gas; Arely Vázquez, Nicor Gas.*

Call to Order

Leslie DeVore called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections from the January 11th minutes. Kathy Walk made a motion and seconded by Jennifer Schmidt. Minutes were approved by all.

There was a revision for the October 5th minutes. Jennifer Schmidt said that the following statement: "If you've already made your appointment please disregard this notice" as CEDA doesn't take appointments, was not made by her but was suggested. The minutes were revised. Motion to revised was made by Mindy Browning and seconded by Kathy Walk. The revised minutes were approved by all.

Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) Discussion Items

Maria Gallardo provided the program update. She said currently the program is obligating a total of \$24.8 million annually on behalf of 25,583 customers that are currently enrolled in PIPP. There has been an average of PIPP benefits of \$970 for those that are enrolled. A total of 2,025 drops since July 1st, 2017. A total of 962 missed payments status statewide. New enrollments stopped on December 31st.

True-Up Adjustments

The recertification period will start in July or earlier due to moves or other reasons. Maria stated that OCA is working with the Kestner Consulting, Inc. regarding the webinar getting it ready for the agencies in preparation for the PIPP recertification in July. The training will be sometime in early May as a refresher for the agencies. As for the policy manual, there have been items gathered that need clarification or needs to be updated. We are doing the same for the LIHEAP manual. The True-Up Adjustment benefit will be added to the policy manual. Maria also stated that there will be clarification as to who can receive furnace assistance. Kathy stated that she had some questions about the True-Up Adjustments. She had one that did not go through, but Mindy's are going through. If the customer is owed a benefit, the LAA will drop that person in STARS and a pledge will be sent to the utility company, when the customer is eligible for this benefit.

Development of Non-Service Related (NSR) Definition in PIPP Program Manual

Maria reiterated from the previous meeting by saying the manual currently does not have a definition for NSR charges. It says that a customer's outstanding balance less any identifiable Non-Service Related (NSR) charges, including On-Bill Financing, becomes the customer's pre-program arrearage that can be addressed in the PIPP because of customer payment by the bill due date. Maria and Leslie Ann asked the utilities to explain what is included in their definition of NSR charges and to provide examples. Also, the Benefit Comparison screen will also show, in a separate field, any Non-Service Related (NSR) charges the customer may have associated with his/her account. Melanie Brown said Ameren does not a formal definition but could get the list from programming. She gave examples such as: reconnect fees, bounce check fees, and construction type fees. Aarian Smith said ComEd's examples are similar to Ameren but she gave one example of outside lights. Michelle Machay indicated that Peoples Gas examples were like Ameren and ComEd. Maria asked the utilities to provide further examples via email so more details can be added in the manual. Nicor Gas said their examples were similar to Ameren but they have Warranty charges that are not related to Nicor Gas. It was asked if any of the utilities count alternative supplier charges under NSR charges. All the utilities indicated the supplier charges are not part of NSR charges. Melanie explained that it is determined by one of the billing methods. Jennifer Schmidt added that CEDA's PIPP customers do it due to the purchase receivable arrangement between the utility and the supplier.

Martha Strawser asked why the gas leftover supplier charges are included in the NSR charges instead of that balance to be put on the customer's Pre-Program Arrearage (PPA) so the customer can pay the balance off over the time. Aimee English indicated that currently the Gas Utilities do not have Purchase of Receivables (POR) arrangement with the gas suppliers and this is why these charges become an arrearage when the customer drops with the supplier. She indicated that these charges should drop off from the customer's bill after 45 days. She indicated that this could happen in the near future as Peoples Gas will start doing POR arrangements with the gas suppliers starting in calendar year 2019. The group agreed that this is an issue

that needs to be further discussed at a later time. In the meantime, the LAAs reach out to these customers who switch back to a utility and they explained the process of re-enrollment in PIPP and work with them.

Pre-Program Arrearage (PPA)

Maria reiterated from the previous meeting the discussion brought by Karen Lusson concerning whether reconnection fees should be included with the utility charge and therefore, covered by the PIPP benefit. In other words, can disconnected customers receive PIPP benefits? Currently, households who are in imminent threat of disconnection or in connected status could qualify for PIPP. However, households who are disconnected are being helped through the Direct Vendor Payment (DVP) and/or Reconnection Assistance (RA) funds. Melanie Brown pointed out that it is not a charge but a fee being charged on the account. She gave an example of there being a \$50 charge if the customer wants reconnection after business hours.

Kathy Walk added the program already serves through PIPP customers in imminent disconnect status that are not disconnected. She said they call the utility company and get them enrolled in PIPP. She went on to say that there are people wanting PIPP that aren't disconnected making it hard to serve those who are, without running out of funds.

Jen Schmidt said the FERC program administered a few year ago gave disconnected customers DVPs and RA and then put them on PIPP. The difficult part was getting the customers to come back once reconnected which made it hard to use these funds. The goal of this program was to reconnect these customers first and then we would enroll them in PIPP, so they could keep their energy services throughout the year.

Auto-Drop Clock Move

LAAs suggested during the last meeting we should go back to drop customers sooner than the 60 days auto drop as they are currently seeing customers who are missing two payments and pay on day 57 or 58 and in the meantime the next bill comes in making the customer to pay three bills. If the next bill (3rd payment) is not paid very soon the customer will still be in danger of dropping from PIPP because of the 3rd bill is late. Martha Strawser suggested the LAAs have the ability to manually reset the clock in these situations so that it does not continue counting the days from missed payment that have been paid and/or override the drop.

During the last meeting, Lauren Pashayan said the discussion should also consider what the Energy Assistance Act can allow. She doesn't believe the Act allows for subsequent or add-on subsequent defaults. Maria asked Lauren to explain what she meant by subsequent or add-on subsequent defaults. Lauren explained by saying if a payment is missed after 45 days, they are in default 45 days. Martha Strawser agreed with Lauren stating she has been asking for a manual adjustment to the clock because she disagrees with the clock after the payment has been satisfied. Leslie DeVore (with that example) thought that with PIPP, the purpose is being defeated if the customers continue to get an extension and will not make timely payments. If a customer has gone a full 60 days and 2 payments behind, a letter is sent and you must address both issues and they must be current. After the payments are made, the clock stops. If a customer isn't current with payments, they will be dropped on day 60.

Maria went back to the discussion about changing the auto-drop clock from 60 days to 55. Lauren pointed out that it cannot be done due to the statutes. Examples are given needing more clarification and the discussion continues.

Leslie Ann Lesko addressed Lauren explaining the flexibility of changing the days were already done stating they have the authority to do so. Leslie DeVore stated that the agencies can intervene if they have other options to assist the customers. Also, the due date shown in the Final Notice letter is providing the very last day to the customer to make a payment and in some cases, the utility could send out the missed payment message via STARS by before the customer makes the payment at the end of the day. Leslie Ann said that needs to be corrected.

Maria checked with Kestner to see if the clock could be changed and he said it was a simple change, however, it is tied to the letters. She went on to ask if the proposal was worth changing the proposal after the discussions regarding the clock. Jen Schmidt from CEDA said that 1\3 of the customers had missed three payments before they dropped and were not current. It was clear that the customer would have to start over. The members agreed to keep the clock at 60 but change the date on the letter to avoid customer confusion. Aimee English asked if anyone knows how many customers this will affect. Maria said around 1/3 of the them. Barb Richardson thought it can be a technical issue and agree with Lauren about 45 days. Leslie Ann said we are complying. Mindy said the intent is to get the customers to make regular payments on time. Aarian Smith from ComEd questioned how if the utilities came together to figure out ways to help the customers without dropping them would be beneficial. Kathy agreed with her and indicated her agency works very closely with Ameren in helping customers before they could get dropped. Maria stated that the 60-day auto drop will remain and that OCA will change the date in the letter to help these customers pay on time by before they could be dropped on day 60 for non- or partial payments.

Development of Customer Educational Material Update

Maria said she met with a small group of local agencies and updated the verbiage of around 10 PIPP letters because some of them had confusing verbiage and/or could be made more customer friendly. She also said was in the process of meeting with Kestner to put the updates in STARS so they can be updated in the STARS system.

Future Meeting Agenda Items for Members Timeframe

Maria asked the committee if they would respectfully send any future agenda items they would like to discuss three weeks prior the next meeting, so the agenda could be prepared and OCA is fully prepared.

Other Business

Kathy Walk said she had an issue where someone should have had a True-Up Adjustment and was not showing on the new report. She put it on STARS e-help. Maria explained that if there are no customers showing on the report means the customer was not dropped with a True Up Adjustment. Jen Schmidt asked when does True-Up Adjustment end. Maria said the True-Up Adjustment comes from the PIPP budget and that the budget ends on June 30. Melanie Brown also indicated that Ameren has never received True-Up Adjustments and Leslie Ann said we will check with the LAAs and send a reminder.

Meeting Schedule

The next quarterly meeting of the PIPP Steering Committee will be held on July 5, 2018.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.