

A user-friendly GUIDE TO

# Utility Assistance

FOR FAMILIES in Macomb County



## About This Book

This *Small Book* is designed to assist families in locating free or low-cost community services in Macomb County and is designed to be user-friendly.

The book first lists a "SITUATION" followed by a short descriptive phrase about each of the known services listed for that situation, an explanation of the services and eligibility requirements (if applicable), and finally, the telephone number for the service.

This book lists services by a service category, not by agency. This helps to speed the finding of needed services. For the most part, only Macomb County resources are listed. Exceptions to this are out-of-county resources included if a Macomb County facility is filled or county or state services that may be accessed in Macomb County.

To aid you in your use of this book, you will notice the following format: Each "*Situation*" is enclosed in a black box to differentiate it from other situations.

The symbol (~) is placed in front of each new service under that category. All known services for a situation are grouped under it regardless of what agency offers those services.

As names of agencies and programs frequently change, please note that the former name is indicated in brackets { }.

Every effort has been made to assure that the information is up-to-date and accurate. Due to the dynamic nature of organizations, information changes often.

We hope that you enjoy this resource and that you are able to locate help more quickly. For your information, *Small Books* are available on the following topics:

Adoption	Literacy
Child Abuse	Mental Health
Child Care	Parenting
Dementia	Recreation/Leisure
Dental	Runaway Services
Domestic Violence	Senior Citizen Services
Employment & Training Services	Sexual Assault
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder	Special Needs
Financial Assistance	Substance Abuse
Food	Suicide Prevention
Gambling Addiction/Problems	Support Groups
Resources	Teen Pregnancy Service
Health	Transportation
Homeless Services	Utility Assistance
Housing	Vision and Hearing Services
Legal Issues	Glossary

## Table of Contents

A person/family would like help in lowering their energy costs	1
A person/family/senior needs help in managing their energy bills	1-3
A low-income person/family has received a notice of a utility company shut off	3-5
A person/family has a medical emergency and a shut off notice	5
A member of the military called to full-time active duty needs protection from a utility shut off	6
A low income household needs help with telephone bills	6
Notes	7
Acknowledgements	8

## UTILITY ASSISTANCE

**SITUATION: A person/family would like help in lowering their energy costs.**

**“More Than 100 Ways to Save on Your Energy Bill”**  
[www.consumersenergy.com/gashelp](http://www.consumersenergy.com/gashelp) or call (800) 292-9555

- ❖ **Weatherization of homes is available for low income persons/families**, including caulking, weather stripping and insulating. Available from Macomb County Community Services Agency Action Centers:

Central Community Action Center*	Mt. Clemens	(586) 469-6964
North Community Action Center*	New Haven	(586) 749-5146
South Community Action Center*	Warren	(586) 759-9150

**SITUATION: A person/family/senior needs help in managing their energy bills.**

- ❖ **Fixed monthly payments (“Budget Plan”)** with the same costs for gas and electric services year round despite changes in the weather is available from Consumers Energy, (800) 477-5050.
- ❖ **Help to pay your winter heating bills** is available for seniors, low income individuals/families (110% of poverty guidelines), those receiving public assistance, or those receiving unemployment compensation by filing a home heating credit. Forms are available from the Michigan Department of Treasury (800) 367-6263 or at [www.michigan.gov/treasury](http://www.michigan.gov/treasury) or at Consumers Energy bill payment offices. The form may be filed as early as January but before September 30<sup>th</sup>.

- ❖ **Special tax benefit for low income people who work full or part-time.** Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may get a credit, but must file a tax return to do so. Individuals may apply for an Earned Income Credit\* with the U.S. Department of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service by filling out Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EIC form. Application forms can be requested from the IRS at (800) 829-1040 or at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).
  
- ❖ **Protection of shut offs for low income customers (200% of poverty guidelines) during the winter months (November 1 - March 31).** Enrollment in this program begins November 1. Qualified customers pay 1/12 of their past due amount. They will be billed 1/12th of the past due amount plus 6% of their estimated annual bill. In order to receive shutoff protection, the customer must pay the 6% amount each month. Although the company may bill the 1/12th overdue amount, they cannot shut off service if the customer fails to pay it each month. When the plan ends March 31, the customer must pay their full monthly bill, plus part of the amount owed from the winter months. For more information, contact:

Consumers Energy	(800) 477-5050 <a href="http://www.consumersenergy.com">www.consumersenergy.com</a>
Detroit Edison	(800) 477-4747 <a href="http://my.dteenergy.com">my.dteenergy.com</a>
SEMCO Gas Company	(800) 624-2019 <a href="http://www.semcoenergygas.com">www.semcoenergygas.com</a>

- ❖ **Protection of shut offs for seniors 65 and older during the winter months (November 1 - March 31).** Enrollment in this program begins November 1. An eligible senior citizen participating in the program are not required to make any specific payments during the winter months of November 1 - March 31.

They are encouraged to pay whatever they can during the winter so that their bills will not be unmanageable when the protection period ends. When the protection period does end on March 31, they will also be required to pay the 9% budget amount or the full monthly bill and a portion of the amount owed from the winter months. For more information, contact:

Consumers Energy	(800) 477-5050 www.consumersenergy.com
Detroit Edison	(800) 477-4747 my.dteenergy.com
SEMCO Gas Company	(800) 624-2019 www.semcoenergygas.com

**N.B.** *Between November 1 and March 31, customers cannot be shut off or charged a late payment fee if they fail to pay an estimated bill by the due date. However, if their subsequent bill is based on an actual reading of the meter, the normal late charges and shutoff can occur if they fail to pay that bill. Therefore, late payment charges and shut offs will apply only when the bill is based on an actual meter reading and not an estimated bill.*

**SITUATION: A low-income person/family has received a notice of a utility company shut off.**

**If a person/family has received a shut off notice from a utility company, they should first contact the utility company to negotiate a payment plan to stop the shutoff.**

- ❖ **If the person is an eligible low-income customer whose service has been shut off for non-payment of their bill before applying for Winter Protection, they may enroll in the program by paying 1/2th of any past due amount. They will not be required to pay a security deposit or fee for restoring their service.**

The 6% required monthly payment will be billed to them on their next monthly bill. Although the company may bill the 1/12th overdue amount, they cannot shut off service if the customer fails to pay it each month. A customer cannot have their energy shut off if they pay at least 6% of their estimated annual bill each month. When the program ends on March 31<sup>st</sup>, the customer must begin to pay the full monthly bill plus a portion of the amount owed from the winter months or they may choose to pay a budget amount of 9% of their estimated annual bill. Payments must be made each month from April 1 through November 30. For more information, call about the "Winter Protection Plan" through your local energy company:

Consumers Energy	(800) 477-5050 www.consumersenergy.com
Detroit Edison	(800) 477-4747 my.dteenergy.com
SEMCO Gas Company	(800) 624-2019 www.semcoenergygas.com

**If the utility company will not work with the family, then the following resource is the starting point to prevent the shut off:**

- ❖ In Macomb County, the person/family must FIRST go to their local Department of Human Services (DHS) office to get help or a referral to any other Macomb utility assistance programs, even if the family does not qualify for any DHS services.

**Department of Human Services\***

<p><b>Mt. Clemens District</b> <b>(586) 469-7700</b> serving Chesterfield Twp., Clinton Twp., Harrison Twp., Mt. Clemens, St. Clair Shores, Selfridge ANG Base.</p>	<p><b>Sterling Heights District</b> <b>(586) 254-1500</b> serving Armada, Memphis, New Baltimore, New Haven, Richmond, the Macomb County section of Rochester, Romeo, Roseville, Utica, Washington.</p>	<p><b>Warren District</b> <b>(586) 427-0600</b> serving Center Line, Eastpointe, Fraser, Roseville, and Warren.</p>
---	---	---

**SITUATION: A person/family has a medical emergency and a shut off notice.**

- ❖ **Assurance of no service shut off for 21 days from Consumers Energy for persons with a qualifying, documented temporary medical emergency** (written proof from a doctor that a medical emergency exists is required). Customers whose service was shut off before the medical emergency may have their service restored for up to 21 days with no required payment, restoration fee or deposit. Medical emergencies can be extended for up to 63 days.

Consumers Energy	(800) 477-5050 <a href="http://www.consumersenergy.com">www.consumersenergy.com</a>
Detroit Edison	(800) 477-4747 <a href="http://my.dteenergy.com">my.dteenergy.com</a>
SEMCO Gas Company	(800) 624-2019 <a href="http://www.semcoenergygas.com">www.semcoenergygas.com</a>

**SITUATION: A member of the military (or their spouse) called to full-time active duty needs protection from a utility shut off.**

- ❖ **Shut off protection for up to 90 days (extensions may also be requested) for a person in the military or their spouse** called to full-time active military service by the President or the Governor during a time of declared national or state emergency or war is available from:

Consumers Energy	(800) 477-5050 www.consumersenergy.com
Detroit Edison	(800) 477-4747 my.dteenergy.com
SEMCO Gas Company	(800) 624-2019 www.semcoenergygas.com

**SITUATION: A low income household needs help with telephone bills.**

- ❖ **Affordable basic telephone assistance for low-income families (150% of the poverty guidelines).** The benefits vary depending on telephone service providers. On average, most customers save about \$100 off their annual telephone bills and approximately 50% off their local telephone installation charge, and have the option of blocking outgoing long distance calls free of charge. For more information, contact the local telephone company and ask for the *“Lifeline Telephone Assistance Program.”*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet has been developed from *"Making the Right Connection"*, a project of the Macomb County Inter Agency Council and its Youth Council Subcommittee.

For the complete Resource Directory, please go to [www.misd.net/connection](http://www.misd.net/connection)





GREAT PARENTS MACOMB\*  
Serving families with children birth to age 5

For information on other resources for families of children  
age birth to 5 years, please call:

1.866.4MACOMB

1.866.464.2662

\* This document was printed through the State of Michigan Great Parents grant  
awarded to Macomb Intermediate School District.  
Agencies throughout Macomb County are program partners.