

Utilities

AIDS Services of Austin

Any Baby Can

Arc of the Capital Area

Austin/Travis County
Mental Health & Mental
Retardation

Austin Tenants Council

Austin/Travis County
Health & Human
Services Department

Capital Area Food Bank

Caritas of Austin

Catholic Charities of
Central Texas

Community Action
Network

Eastside Community
Connection

Episcopal Church of the
Good Shepherd

Family Eldercare

Foundation Communities

Foundation for the
Homeless

Goodwill Industries of
Central Texas

Housing Authority of the
City of Austin

Meals on Wheels and
More

Micah 6

SafePlace

Salvation Army

St. Louis Parish Social
Ministries

Sustainable Food Center

Texas Rio Grande Legal
Aid

Travis County Health and
Human Services &
Veterans Service

Trinity Center

United Way Capital Area

Did you know...?

- **Approximately 350-500 Austin-Travis County residents** have their utilities cut off each day because of non-payment (*Austin Energy*).
- United Way's information and referral line, 2-1-1 Texas, cites electric bill assistance as the number one need among its callers. In 2005, 7,107 callers requested electric bill assistance, an 8% increase from 2004 (*2-1-1 Texas*).
- **The Travis County Health and Human Services Department provided more than \$965,494 in utility assistance to 3,400 households during 2005** but was unable to meet the demand for services (*TCHHS*).
- In FY 2004, Caritas of Austin provided 1,350 clients with rent or utility assistance, but had to turn away 17,364 requests due to lack of funding (*Caritas*).
- **Low-income families spend proportionately more on utilities than everyone else.** Families with incomes below 125% of the poverty guidelines (\$24,187 for a family of 4) spend 11.6% of their household budget on home energy compared to 4.3% for the average family. High-energy costs can force families to choose between basic necessities—paying a utility bill versus medication or food (*Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs*).
- The Passages collaboration, which serves homeless families, reports 58% of families in shelters had outstanding utility debt exceeding \$300. High utility debt not only puts families at greater risk of homelessness but also prohibits them from obtaining permanent housing.
- **In Texas, where temperatures reach 100 and above, utility service termination increases risk for heat related illness or death.** Those at greatest risk include older adults (65+), children, and people with certain medical conditions (*Center for Disease Control*).

Who is most affected?

- Persons on a fixed income
- Families with small children or with chronically ill members
- Anyone experiencing a financial crisis

Utilities

About Basic Needs

What's being done?

- Through its Best Single Source (BSS) project, the Basic Needs Coalition has developed a more efficient, user-friendly service delivery system. Best Single Source provided \$173,219 in utility assistance to 438 clients in 2005.
- The Community Action Network and the Basic Needs Coalition are working with Austin Energy to raise awareness of these issues and increase donations to Austin Energy's **Customer Assistance Program (CAP)**. **CAP funding is used to help families with utility assistance on an emergency basis.**
- Travis County and Austin Energy provide free weatherization services to eligible low and moderate income families. Home energy improvements such as insulation in attics, sealing or replacing ductwork, and adding weather stripping around doors help reduce energy use and costs.
- **Family Eldercare collaborates with more than 40 community partners to provide fans and air conditioners** to low-income community residents in central Texas.

How can you make a difference?

- It's easy to help! **Make a donation to the Customer Assistance Program (CAP) by including an extra \$2, \$3, or more with your City of Austin utility bill payment each month.**
- Spread the word! **Encourage your friends, neighbors and coworkers to contribute to the CAP Program.** You can even include an article about CAP in the newsletter for your company, neighborhood, or place of worship to help raise awareness.
- **Donate directly to local helping agencies**—money, time or goods. See www.basicneeds-ctx.org for more information.

www.basicneeds-ctx.org