



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Chesterfield County, VA

Program Title: Third-Party Notification Program for Chesterfield County Utilities Customers

Program Category: Customer Service

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Elizabeth A. Brooks

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Title: County Administrator

Signature: Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.

Digitally signed by Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D.  
DN: cn=Joseph P. Casey, Ph.D., o=Chesterfield County, ou=County Administration,  
email=caseyjoe@chesterfield.gov, c=US  
Date: 2023.06.27 12:50:03 -04'00'

## **Third-Party Notification Program for Chesterfield County Utilities Customers**

### **The Overview:**

At the beginning of 2022, the Chesterfield County Utilities Department improved a Third-Party Notification Program for relatives, friends, or guardians of elderly and disabled customers to prevent possible service disconnection. The program was called Concern About Relatives and Elders, also known as CARE.

Over the last ten years Chesterfield County's population increased 15% and the population of persons 65 years and over increased 19%. It is important we show kindness and concern for our elderly and disabled customers, especially those living alone, to make sure their water and wastewater services are not interrupted. For 2021, the population of persons 65 and up in Chesterfield County was 15.8%. There are 25,899 veterans living in Chesterfield County, and 8.8% of the County's population under the age of 65 are living with a disability.

This new brochure was a result of continuous monitoring of our processes and programs, implementing changes through recommendations and needs. We focused on listening to our customers and co-workers through suggestions and other means to improve processes.

### **The Challenge:**

In our industry, we are known not only for the quality of our water and wastewater services, but also for the way we treat our customers. Chesterfield County has programs such as "Aging and Disability Services" and "Chesterfield Triad," however Utilities felt there was a need for the elderly and disabled to have someone else be notified in case there is a situation where they are not able to pay their bills because of declining health and/or memory. The Utilities Department

works with the Health Department, Social Services and Permits, when an account is disconnected and no one has attempted to pay the disconnection fee to restore services. The Utilities Department also verifies that the property appears to be occupied and will notify the other departments to do a welfare check on the property.

The program's objective is to notify friends and relatives not living with the account holder on behalf of the elderly/disabled customer to avoid interruptions of service for health reasons. The Chesterfield County Utilities Department thrives on quality service. We strive to obtain a personal relationship between the customer and our employees.

**The Program Description:**

When the need for this program was initially discussed, we reviewed our policies and determined there was indeed a need for such a program. In early 2022, we identified improvements to our processes from our elderly or disabled customer's point of view. We identified changes to processes and how we will respond to our aging customers who may need assistance. Prior to the changes, we had a similar program, but it was not fully advertised or readily offered to our customers. We reintroduced the program to our customers by making the brochures visible to our walk-in customers and updated our process to encourage our Front Counter Customer Service Representatives (CSR) to inform customers this assistance is available and how it works. Elderly and/or disabled customers calling or coming in for assistance are given the opportunity to include a relative or friend to receive past due account information if the customer bills are not paid timely.

The concepts of the program are as follows:

1. Giving guidance to our elderly and disabled customers regarding the program.
2. Notification is given to the individual listed on the “Third-Party Notification”.
3. Ensuring our elderly and disabled customers have uninterrupted service.
4. Becoming part of a welfare check for customers at risk.
5. The program is advertised on the Utilities webpage and individual brochures are provided to customers by mail or in person.
6. Information about the program is offered to all customers inquiring about the program. The program is pushed by the call center team to make sure everyone is aware of the program.
7. The designated individual will automatically receive a copy of the past-due bills or disconnection notices.
8. The third-party representative is never under any obligation to pay the bill.

The CSRs serving both walk-in and call center customers are instructed to offer the program to all customers they think may need the CARE program.

**Execution of the Program:**

We utilized continuous-improvement tools including brainstorming, collecting data, and interviewing other utilities, departments, and agencies. We developed a plan including tasks to complete the project. Then, we assigned the tasks to the process action team members.

We made sure we understood what we wanted to accomplish by reviewing our current walk-in process and making applicable modifications to create the new process:

1. We identified the need for the program. We reviewed the process and held discussions to identify improvements. The existing processes for the notification were revised to include customers having difficulty paying their bills and to notify an individual to avoid disconnection of water service. We created the brochure to include those customers currently needing assistance as well as to inform customers who may need assistance in the future. We continuously strive to improve our processes daily.
2. After identifying the processes pertaining to the third-party notification, we updated the existing brochure, added the notification to our webpage, and ensured it became part of our notification ad in our local newspaper, such as adding another individual to the customer's account for notification purposes only requires diligence on the relative or friend in case there is a need. This process also became part of our communication method. We were able to ensure that there is someone aware of the customer accounts and being notified before the account is due for collection.
3. We are monitoring of the progress of the program through number of calls related to the program and number of brochures taken from the lobby and mailed out.
4. The call center and lobby supervisors reinforce with the CSR's the importance of the program.

**The Results:**

Under the Third-Party Notification Program, a family member, friend, clergyman, or anyone else designated by the customer will automatically receive a copy of any past-due bills or disconnection notices through the mail. The brochure was created with the intent of providing an additional health, safety, and welfare opportunity for our customers. The Utilities website was updated with a description of the program on our billing information page and the third-party notification form.

Website:


### Third-Party Notification Program

Under the third-party notification program, a family member, friend, clergy member or appointed designee by the customer will automatically receive a copy of all past-due bills or disconnection notices. If you or someone you care about is interested in participating in the third-party notification program, please print and complete the [third-party notification form \(PDF\)](#) and mail to:

Chesterfield County Department of Utilities  
P.O. Box 608  
Chesterfield, VA 23832

For additional information, please contact [804-748-1291](tel:804-748-1291).

Brochure:



### Third-Party Notification Program

Chesterfield County Department of Utilities offers a third-party notification program to prevent service disconnection.

Sometimes those we care about can't always care for themselves. Perhaps because of declining health or disabilities, some customers may occasionally misplace their water and wastewater bills or forget to pay them.

At the Chesterfield County Department of Utilities, we care about our customers and do not want to see them lose their service because of a past-due bill. That is why we are offering a special service.

Under the **Third-Notification Program**, a family member, friend, clergyman, or anyone else designated by the customer will automatically receive a copy of any past-due bills or disconnection notices. This person may help the customer with the bill or offer advice on preventing disconnection. The third-party representative is never under any obligation to pay the bill.

If you or someone you care about is interested in participating in the Third-Party Notification program,

### Chesterfield County Department of Utilities Third-Party Notification Program

#### Customer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Third Party

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Our Commitment:**

The team identified our elderly and/or disabled customers sometimes need additional help remembering to pay bimonthly bills. Our priority is giving all our customers the best customer service they deserve. We reviewed the existing third-party notification process for elderly and/or disabled customers and concluded the notification process needed to be enhanced. In today's fast paced environment and in a time when many of our customers find answers electronically, we tend to forget some customers may require additional assistance. We wanted to enhance this personal service. Our elderly and/or disabled customers want understanding, responsiveness, recognition, and kindness from our staff at the front counter and call center. We use our best judgement to give our customers the appropriate solutions to their problems and enhancing the Third-Party Notification process gives this audience and their caregivers peace of mind. When the account is past due, we call the person on the notification contact card to avoid disconnecting service to the customer. The third-party is mailed a copy of the past due bill and disconnection notices.

We concluded third party notifications had a positive effect on our elderly and/or disabled customers. It minimized frustration of customers, and the individuals receiving the third-party

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notifications. When customers request help understanding and paying their bill, we learned to explain the CARE program and encourage customers to participate. Utilities will continue to work with customer suggestions to improve the CARE program and take pride in having a positive customer relationship.

As we move forward, we will continuously look for ways to improve programs for our customers. Our key objectives are to continue achieving and improving the level of customer service and encouraging each employee to do an excellent job to make our customers, especially the elderly and/or disabled customers, our main priority. Providing quality customer service sets us apart from other utility departments.

We will review the program on a yearly basis to ensure improvements implemented from customer suggestions are working as planned and meet the needs of our customers.

In conclusion, the program will be a big help for both the customer and the department. Our collective challenge is to continue to achieve the highest levels of customer service for all our customers. Exceeding customer expectations has been and will continue to be our goal. Helping our elderly and/or disabled customers ensure bills are paid and avoiding disconnection is an asset to all involved. We will continue to maintain our customer service core values and improve our processes.