**Polk County Iowa assistance programs.**

Below you will find information on how to get financial assistance and help for paying bills, rent, and other expenses. There is free food or healthcare, grants to pay for heating bills or security deposits, and free furniture or school supplies from churches in Polk County. Or get emergency assistance for a mortgage, energy bill, or long term support such as case management, car payment assistance, or even free Christmas gifts from various local Des Moines and Polk County charity organizations, churches, or government assistance programs.

**Heating bill assistance program**

Thousands of Polk County residents participate in a federally funded low-income home energy assistance program. The heating bill assistance program is available to all Polk County families and individuals, except those who live in the city of Des Moines.The program is managed by the Ankeny office of **Red Rock Area Community Action Program Inc.**, (phone number (515) 961-6271) and the organization pays for a portion of home heating costs for participants who fall within set income guidelines and the programs criteria.There is a tremendous need for assistance in today’s challenging economy. Participation in this federally funded heating program is sky high, and the number of applicants and participants greatly increases each and every winter according to community action. A five-county area in central Iowa is served by Red Rock officials.Assistance comes in the form of a one-time payment. The amount of the payment will be determined by factors such as gross income, type of home, and family size. The funds are grant based, and do not need to be repair.

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One of the primary goals is to ensure service is not disconnected. The energy bill assistance program will protect participants from having their heating service disconnected by government-regulated utilities, such as Alliant Energy and MidAmerican Energy during the cold winter months. Find additional information on getting [utilities turned on if you have no money](https://www.needhelppayingbills.com/html/utilities_turned_on_with_no_money.html).

The heating bill assistance program was created to give a boost to people who are elderly, low income, disabled or those who have temporarily fallen into tough times. It is not a welfare program for the perpetually unemployed but is meant to provide short term relief.

The amount of aid provided can be substantial. A large family who owns a home may receive almost $800 in assistance, while an elderly woman who just rents an apartment, and does not own it may receive $400. Even renters can qualify for help with heating bills. Contact the **Red Rock Area Community Action Program's** for more information or to apply to the low-income home energy heating assistance program. Call 965-0433 for an appointment or visit the office, which is located at 406 S.W. School St., Suite 305, Ankeny

**Additional utility bill programs**

In addition to the heating program above, the **Red Rock Area Community Action Program**offers several other energy assistance programs and partnerships with local agencies. They include:

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* **Emergency Crisis Intervention -**This program provides assistance for the repair, replacement, or tune up of heating units and furnaces. Funds are offered to repair or purchases heaters, blankets, fans and air conditioners for a qualified homeowner.
* **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance -**The government funded program provides cash that is used to help pay winter heating bills as well as summer air conditioning bills.
* **Partnerships with Iowa utility and gas companies** - Utility company customer contributions help low-income customers pay their home utility bills
* **Weatherization -**Workers that work with the agency will perform free home energy audits and weatherize homes. The program is free, and it provides insulation, inefficient appliance replacement and furnace repair and replacement, and caulking.

**Emergency rent assistance and homeless prevention**

**Catholic Charities** is an organization that offers assistance programs in Polk County Iowa. They offer information, referrals, outreach, and more to the less fortunate. For details on their services, the main website is [www.catholiccharitiesdm.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesdm.org). Two housing programs run by the community action agency as well as other agencies include **Homeless Prevention**and **Rent Help** in the form of a one-time rental payment. The primary goal is to allow a struggling individual or family to remain in their home or apartment. In addition, the housing program provides assistance to someone with an eviction notice, and it can also provide cash grants to individuals with a utility disconnect notice through direct payments to a person’s landlord or vendor.

**Polk County financial assistance for paying bills**

Another of the places to turn to is the **Salvation Army**. They provide family services and material assistance, which means that qualified families can get help with the following expenses. Mortgage, rent and deposit assistance, clothing, or get free food and groceries.

The Christian charity may also offer utility and heating bill assistance, Prescription and medical assistance, and free furniture as well as school supplies or Christmas toys from Angel Tree. They also run an infant center which can provide diapers, formula, and other child care products. Phone number is (515) 282-3599.

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**West Des Moines Human Services** offers information, outreach and referral services, including limited financial aid.

* Homeless prevention includes partial emergency utilities assistance, security deposits, or funds for paying rent or your mortgage. LIHEAP is run from the office. Water bill assistance is offered from H20 Plus.
* Non-financial assistance and case management includes transitional housing, food pantries, and free fans or air conditioners. Weatherization can also help people in Polk County save money on their heating bills.
* Other assistance offered, that is not really cash based, includes meals and toys around Christmas. A personal pantry can provide school supplies, clothes, items such as diapers, and household goods.
* In some cases, loans may be issued by Human Services instead of cash aid. This can be effective too.
* Seniors can also receive transportation to an appointment, or a handyman service to older people and the disabled in Polk County.

Human Services is at 318 Fifth Street, West Des Moines, Iowa 50265, (515) 222-3660.

**City of Des Moines Community Development Department** also runs a number of resources and assistance programs, including those below. Call (515) 283-4182.

* Energy bill help, which is wide ranging. The low income heating assistance program, or LIHEAP, focuses on paying heating bills for those faced with poverty, and it runs during the winter. Social workers can also help you explore payment options and plans with utility companies, such as Mid American Energy.
* Look into resources that operate during the summer, which include a fan/air conditioner program. Qualified people, mostly those with medical conditions or families with young children, may receive a free or low cost central air conditioning or a window unit air conditioner. The emergency cooling bill assistance program, or (ECAP), will offer fans or financial help as well, even for people who rent.
* Free debt reduction services are offered in Des Moines. This is done in partnership with non-profit credit counseling agencies.
* Other repair and conservation programs include weatherization, furnace repairs, and the emergency home repair program. This offers help with matters such as dangerous wiring, roof leaks, housing foundations, and major plumbing problems.

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**Aging Resources of Central Iowa** provides Basic Need Assistance. The office is at 5835 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312-1437. The non-profit agency can help meet the emergency needs of low-income persons age 60 years and older. Funds are limited for material assistance, but the Resource Center can help with home cleaning, emergency needs such as prescription drugs, furnace or water heater repair, assistive devices, and referrals to financial help in Polk County. This may include dental expenses, utility and heating bills, eye glasses, extermination, and even plumbing and electrical work. Other expenses can be paid for on a case-to-case basis, and usually a grant is provided. Call (515) 248-6212.

**Polk City Home Improvement Program** can help homeowners within the city. Financial assistance is offered for activities such as basic structural repairs (roof and walls), electrical, plumbing, Handicap Accessibility, and also energy conservation upgrades. Telephone (515) 273-0770

**Polk County Commission of Veterans Affairs** supports former members of the military, their spouses, and children. They help veterans apply for government benefits, and there may be emergency financial aid or no-interest loans. The money can be used for rent or mortgage payments, eyeglasses, food, and even funeral costs. Address is 2309 Euclid Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50310 or dial (515) 286-3670.

**Thanksgiving and free Christmas programs** - Seniors, children, and the homebound in the area are the main beneficiaries. They can receive free meals, Christmas toys, turkey dinners, or gifts around the holiday seasons, and many Polk County agencies provide this support. There are a number of **religious organizations and churches in the Des Moines** Iowa region. Each tends to offers several resources, but faith based groups do have limits as to what they can or can’t provide. The agencies generally assist thousands of families per year, but applicants need to live within parish boundaries. Some of the services they offer at a church may include:

* Emergency food boxes and free food for families in need - The agency can provide an emergency food box which contains a small week’s supply of nonperishable food items. The aid is not unlimited as a family may receive an emergency food box only once a month.
* Infant Formula and Diapers- Families may receive an emergency supply of free diapers and/or baby formula.
* Free clothing - Access to the “closet program” is available to anyone in Polk County.
* Call for more information about what you need to bring with you to receive an emergency food box and/or infant care items.
* Several other social services are available in Polk County. they include assistance for immigrants, Family Services, employment counseling, and other aid.

**Capax Infiniti Housing, Inc.** is a non-profit that assists qualifying low-income persons in Polk County with emergency security deposit or rental assistance. 6401 Douglas Avenue, Suite 5, Urbandale, IA 50322.

**Family Unification Program (DMMHA)** can help families in which the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in their separation. Funds for rent, energy bills, and other housing resources are offered. Applicant must be involved with the Child Protective Services Unit or leaving foster care. (515) 323-8950

**City of Des Moines Community Action Agency** will only support people that live in the city itself. However, a number of programs are available to those that qualify. Examples include, but are not limited, the following.

* Energy bill assistance - A combination of federal government and state of Iowa grants can be used for paying heating water or utility bills. Another key service is weatherization for saving money and furnace repairs.
* Food include groceries from a Des Moines pantry as well as Thanksgiving and Christmas meals.
* Other self sufficiency includes credit counseling, budgeting, and foreclosure assistance.

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The non-profit can also provide referrals and information. For example, very low income families, including the disabled, may be able to get access to low income apartments or public housing. Much more is available as well.

**Salvation Army** runs programs such as Project H2O. This is offered in partnership with Des Moines Water Works to help pay water bills. Other Polk County Salvation Army services include rent help, shelter, and thrift stores. Free food, holiday assistance, meals, and assistance for senior citizens is available as well. 1326 Sixth Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50314. Call (515) 282-3422 for intake.

**Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)** is an assistance program that is focused on helping homeless and unstably-housed Veterans and their immediate families. Temporary financial assistance is offered for paying moving expenses, rent, security and utility deposits, transportation, and child care costs. Also work with case managers and get help in obtaining VA and other public benefits, register for free legal aid, get employment and job training referrals too. 1200 University Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50314. Call (515) 248-1531.

**DMARC - Des Moines Area Religious Council** runs a food pantry. There may be groceries for short term emergency situations. The charity may also be financial help for utility bills, rent, and security deposits. Another service can help people impacted by the death of a loved one.

The organization operates this program in partnership with the Salvation Army as well as Social Service Department in the county. All cash grants from DMARC are limited. The address is 3816 36th Street, or call (515) 277-6969.

**Proteus, Inc.** and the Des Moines center provide help to income qualified migrant and seasonal farm workers only. Grants can be used for rent and utility or heating bill assistance. (515) 271-5303

**Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church, Cross Ministries** is an outreach program that offers emergency aid. Find resources to help with paying expenses such as rent, mortgage, security deposits, utility bills, and more. Vouchers can help with other basic needs such as bus tokens, laundry, hygiene items and storage costs. Other services include free school supplies, and an onsite food pantry. The program is run from 1050 24th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50311, call (515) 279-9998.

**Des Moines St. Vincent De Paul Society** offers a general relief program. It assists families who cannot afford to pay their utilities, rent or mortgage payments, food, clothing, or furniture. Job training and education services include GED, ESL and computer classes in both Spanish and English. Telephone (515) 282-8327. The local Polk County Saint Vincent and its churches offer additional resources as well. The true focus of the charity is on ensuring residents have the tools they need to overcome challenges, find a job, and emerge from poverty in the future. So counselors offer GED preparation, job training, and provide information on employment programs. Numerous adult literacy, budgeting, and credit repair workshops are also held across Polk County Iowa.

Des Moines area is supported by the **Community Action in SE Iowa**. They focus on 4 key services, including assistance in applying for prescription drugs, LIHEAP, weatherization, and Family Self-Sufficiency and Head Start for low income parents.

**Polk County General Assistance** – Financial and medical assistance includes vouchers for personal items, burial assistance, prescriptions, and rent. (402) 747-5431

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**Low income medical and dental care**

If you need help with medical and dental bills, the **Des Moines Health Center** is a privately run, not for profit community health center that has as its mission the goal of providing low cost or free health and dental care to low income and uninsured patients in Des Moines and Polk County Iowa. It is also supported by the United Way. Call the clinic at (515) 244-9136 to learn more or make an appointment.

**Maple Street Baptist Church Free Clinic** (phone (515) 262-1931) is another center for free or low cost medical care. There are several other free healthcare programs and services in the county. They help the poor, immigrants, seniors, and very low income. Some take private insurance and others take Medicaid. Adults and children can get free care too.

**Food pantries and soup kitchens in Polk County**

**Downtown Food Pantry** is available for residents of central Des Moines. Low income and people who need help can only use this facility at most every 30 days. Telephone (515) 243-1381

**Caring Hands Outreach Center** works with Polk County relief and churches to provide food to families in the SE Polk School District. Call (515) 967-4533

**Grimes United Methodist Church Food Pantry**. People can also pick up dry goods as well as vouchers for perishable goods. 801 West First Street, Grimes, IA 50111, telephone (515) 986-4036

**The Narrow Gate** is another local food pantry. Canned groceries, formula, meals, and other food assistance is available. (563) 556-4215