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## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mayor and Council Members

**CC:** Spencer Cronk, City Manager

**FROM:** Jackie A. Sargent, General Manager *JAS*

**DATE:** November 9, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Response to CM Tovo Budget Rider #6 – AE Medically Vulnerable Registry

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This memo follows up on Austin Energy's response to the Council resolution passed during the FY23 budget process. The resolution directed the city manager to develop and implement recommendations for making information about the Medically Vulnerable Registry (MVR) available to a broad range of customers. Possibilities might include utility bill inserts and providing information to area hospitals and networks of medical practitioners.

In response to this resolution, Austin Energy has initiated or enhanced several outreach efforts to increase customer awareness of the Medically Vulnerable Registry. These efforts began last August 22, 2022, and will continue throughout FY23 as described below. In broad terms, these efforts encompass the following:

- Education outreach with community agencies and medical administrators
- Marketing/ media outreach
- Direct customer communication

As a first step, Austin Energy engaged with our network of Plus 1 community partners to reach potential customers in the MVR program. This is a network of 59 non-profits, churches and community groups that provide direct services to our customers with over 85 locations throughout our service territory. Austin Energy meets regularly with its partners to educate them on Austin Energy's programs to assist vulnerable customers. On August 22, 2022, Austin Energy held its 14th Annual Affordable Energy Summit, which included a 60-minute training and question-and-answer session on MVR enrollment and services.

Additionally, Austin Energy is connecting with the Social Service Case Management Network, which is a network of social service professionals in Travis County/ Austin Area. There are over 250 individual case managers, representing 90 different entities, who provide direct support services to our community. The members in the network represent every aspect of the social service delivery system and engage in cross-collaboration discussions monthly. In addition, the network sponsors training and educational opportunities for the members. Austin Energy is part of the network, and we have provided educational presentations on our services to get more customers into our programming. This connection to the network ensures these providers can recommend MVR to potentially eligible customers. This includes the medical case managers from the major hospitals in our area. This connection is imperative for patients who are being discharged from the hospital.

Recently, AE has partnered with the Capital Area Trauma Regional Advisory Council (CATRAC) to further expand education on MVR in the medical community. This group of regional hospitals and trauma facilities focuses primarily on emergency planning but includes hospital administrators throughout Central Texas. On September 16, 2022, Austin Energy presented MVR information to 26 attendees and encouraged them to spread the word through their hospitals so that patients discharged with eligible conditions could be encouraged to register. Our team continues to participate in regular CATRAC meetings, and AE has agreed to exchange zip-code level information about MVR enrollment to help in emergency planning.

Finally, to promote Austin Energy's overall Customer Assistance Programs (CAP), Austin Energy is developing a comprehensive marketing campaign that will launch in December 2022. Austin Energy will use several marketing strategies to reach all possible participants. These measures include

- English/ Spanish flyers and posters will be distributed to agency partners, who, in turn, will distribute them to their clients. The flyers and posters will be disseminated to housing authority properties and schools, who, in turn, will hand out flyers to students, eventually reaching many households in the City of Austin.
- Street banners will be placed in targeted areas of town to market Austin Energy-sponsored outreach events.
- Print advertisements will be placed in the Austin American Statesman, the Austin Chronicle, along with other publications such as Community Impact, El Mundo, La Prensa, soulciti and The Villager.
- TV advertisement will be done through Univision, KLRU-PBS and KEYE. We will also send out postcard mailers to all residential customers living in zip code areas 78702, 78704, 78741, 78744, 78747, 78721, 78617 and 78719.
- We will use in-house marketing channels, which may include branch signage or bill messages and inserts as available.
- Lastly, we will deliver door hangers to all multi-family properties in target zip code areas of 78702, 78704, 78741 and 78744, which historically have been areas demonstrating the most need for assistance.

These are just a few of the marketing strategies we will use to target our community. Additionally, customers who call into the Utility Contact Center (UCC) or Austin 311 struggling with a medical issue within the household are referred to our specialized CAP team, who contacts the customer and makes a home visit to begin the process of enrolling them in the MVR program. Once enrolled, these customers are fully managed from billing to collections by our specialized team to provide one-on-one case management and account management.

Austin Energy is committed to increasing awareness of the MVR program and will continue to seek opportunities to partner with Austin Public Health, maintain a presence at community health fairs, and explore additional ways to communicate with healthcare providers who can identify customers in need.

If you have any questions, please contact Jerry Galvan, VP, Customer Care Services, @ 512-505-3552.