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## Agency Dealing With More Who Struggle To Pay Monthly Bills

Posted: Jan 15, 2009 09:36 PM CST

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - A Nashville agency has found that more people are turning for help as they struggle to pay their monthly bills.

Many people complain are concerned about the slow economy and their sinking retirement funds.

"No matter what you do there's no way to can't make ends meet," said one woman.

The Metro Action Commission is finding that more people requesting assistance are employed.

They are *\*not\** who you think they are. Many of them have never asked for help before in their lives.

"I kind of do feel a sense of like a loss of pride," said one client.

"You almost feel like your hands are tied. What can you do? You're going to work. What else are you supposed to do?" said another woman.

More requests are coming from working families, more single-parent families, MAC spokeswoman Lisa Gallon said.

Over the past year, that's led to a 22 percent increase in assistance requests. Some people need help paying utility bills. Others need to pay the rent.

Though thousands receive help from MAC each year, some people such as Cynthia Childress fall through the cracks.

"I had a full-time job but I got laid off," she said. 'I've tried everything, but I don't know. I'm just in bad shape right now."

The Metro Action Commission said a family of four making less than \$26,600 a year is eligible for most of its aid programs. To receive rent and mortgage assistance, applicants must prove they've recently lost income through a layoff or a loss of hours. They said the best thing people can do is apply for help as soon as they fall on tough times.



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