

# *LIHEAP 2019-2020 Winter Season*

## **Help Available to Low-Income Home Heating Customers**

**The cold weather is already upon us. Energy prices are high and thousands of customers of regulated utilities are either without service or have received shut-off notices. However, there are a number of steps low-income households can take to ease some of the hardships expected this winter.**

**LIHEAP**, the Low-Income Home Energy Program, for cash or crisis grants, and crisis interface will open for new applications on **November 1, 2019**. Application season will close on **April 16, 2020**. There are three types of LIHEAP assistance for which energy customers may be eligible. In some cases an individual household may be eligible for all three. As in past years, DHS may extend or shorten the program year depending on the availability of funds.

**Apply for LIHEAP benefits online or you can download an application at <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/Apply-for-Benefits.aspx> or at your local county assistance office.**

- **Cash Grant** – ranges from **\$200 to \$1,000** based upon an individual’s household size, income, and fuel type. If you are without heat before November 1<sup>st</sup> and a cash grant alone is insufficient to restore your heat you may apply for a “Crisis Exception Payment.”
- **Crisis Grant** – ranges from **\$25 to \$600**, and is for those who are without heat or in immediate danger of being without heat. *An applicant can get more than one crisis payment.*
  - Crisis Emergency Situations include:
    - Broken heating equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced,
    - Lack of fuel,
    - The main heating source or the secondary heating source has been completely shut off,
    - Danger of being without fuel (i.e. less than a 15 day supply), or
    - Danger of having utility service terminated.
- **Crisis Interface** – DHS will refer eligible applicants (those with a heating system which needs to be repaired or replaced) to the local weatherization office. The weatherization provider will then conduct a home visit and perform appropriate remediation, as well as install additional weatherization measures as needed
- **Details on Pennsylvania’s Low Income Energy Assistance Program can be found on the Department of Human Services website at: [www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/heatingassistanceliheap](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/heatingassistanceliheap)/<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/LIHEAP.aspx>**

**UTILITY PROGRAMS**

Call your regulated utility such as NFG, Penelec, UGI, and Penn Power, to apply for services they each offer:

- **Discounts** for low-income customers through Customer Assistance Programs;
- **Usage reduction** and conservation services; and
- **Hardship** emergency funds.

**Termination Notices** – Utility customer who receive shut-off notices from their public utility company are eligible for LIHEAP Crisis Grants. If you receive such a notice take it to your LIHEAP provider. The Department of Human Services will then provide a notice to you about the status of your application.

**Winter Termination** – A household living in the NWLS service area, in which the income of the adults does not exceed 250% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, is protected from the shut-off of utility service **between December 1 and March 31 each year**. To be sure you get this protection, inform your utility company about your household income level **NOW**.

**Medical Certificate** – If anyone in your household is ill or has a medical condition which will be aggravated by the loss of utility service, you can be protected from shut-off. You must request your licensed physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner to write a letter to the utility company and you will need to contact your utility company for a payment plan. The certificate must be updated every 30 days to continue to receive the benefits. This protection may end if you fail to make the agreed upon payments.

**Change of Income** – If the income of the adult household members has dropped by 10%, you may be eligible to get a second payment agreement for your utility company.

**Protection from Abuse Order** – Call your utility company to inform them about your PFA so that you can receive the special procedures and protections afforded to you by law. Your utility company may require that you provide them with a copy of your PFA order. Some of the protections you can receive include:

- Your service cannot be turned off during the winter without approval from the PUC
- Depending on your income, a special payment arrangement may be available.
- You service cannot be terminated the day before a weekend or holiday.
- You may not be held responsible for a bill in someone else's name.
- You may not be required to pay a security deposit. If you are required to pay a security deposit, you may qualify to spread the amount due over three payments.

**For assistance obtaining LIHEAP benefits, call NWLS at**

**1-800-665-6957 (New Client Line) or 814-452-6957 (In Erie County), or apply online at [www.nwls.org](http://www.nwls.org).**

Disclaimer: We have attempted to insure the accuracy of the information in this pamphlet at the time it was created or revised. However, the law does change, sometimes quickly and unexpectedly. Therefore, you should consult an attorney before taking or refraining from any action based on the information in this pamphlet.