

**DATE:** September 19, 2018

**OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM # 18-09-04**

**SUBJECT:** 2018-2019 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)  
Policy, Procedures, and Form Changes

**TO:** Executive Directors  
LIHEAP Coordinators

**FROM:** Inez Titus  
Director  
Bureau of Operations

**PURPOSE**

To provide County Assistance Offices (CAOs) with LIHEAP policy, procedures and form changes for the 2018-2019 program year.

**BACKGROUND**

As in previous years and prior to the start of LIHEAP, staff is provided with an Operations Memorandum that provides policy, guidance, procedures, and form changes that concern LIHEAP for the upcoming season.

Below is a timeline for this year's LIHEAP:

- Week of September 24, 2018: Phase I mailing of bar-coded applications and COMPASS postcards to households who received LIHEAP during the previous program year. Pre-season COMPASS and paper applications will be accepted and the eCIS system will be open for processing.
- Week of October 1, 2018: Phase II mailing of bar-coded applications and COMPASS postcards to households who received LIHEAP during the previous program year.
- Week of October 8, 2018: Phase III mailing of bar-coded applications and COMPASS postcards to households who received LIHEAP during the previous program year.
- October 15 - 31, 2018: Paper applications shipped to CAOs, vendors, and other organizations.

- November 1, 2018 - April 12, 2019: LIHEAP Cash & Crisis components open to all Pennsylvania residents.

Pre-season mailings are divided into three equal phases. Households are included in each phase depending on their approved program request date from the previous program year. For example, Phase I sends pre-season applications to the households that applied earliest last season.

Instead of receiving a bar-coded application, certain households will receive a postcard in the mail that enables them to apply for LIHEAP on COMPASS or the myCOMPASS PA mobile app. Households that receive a postcard will have a unique COMPASS Registration Number that, along with the social security number of the payment name, will let them apply on COMPASS or myCOMPASS PA beginning September 24, 2018. The registration number can only be used to submit one application. The following groups will receive the COMPASS postcard instead of the bar-coded application:

- Households that have applied previously for any benefit through COMPASS or that have a "My COMPASS" account (MCA) and received LIHEAP during the previous program year. Households with an MCA may also receive an email with their COMPASS registration number.
- All households in the following counties that received LIHEAP during the previous program year:

Bradford	Lancaster	Tioga
Columbia	Pike	Washington
Cumberland	Susquehanna	Wayne

Households who reside in one of the above-listed counties and do not wish to apply for LIHEAP on COMPASS can receive a paper application at any time. A paper application can be obtained from either the LIHEAP Helpline at 1-866-857-7095 or their CAO. The household's bar-code number must be written on the application when it is provided to the applicant. This bar-code number, found on the mailing lists in DocuShare, will be used to register the completed application when it is received. CAOs in these counties will be supplied with paper applications during the week of September 24, 2018, but staff should encourage applicants who come into the CAO to use the COMPASS kiosk available in the lobby before giving a paper application. A household's COMPASS registration number can also be found on the mailing lists. For all other households in the state who receive a postcard, if they wish to have a paper application instead they must wait until November 1, 2018 to apply.

Clients are instructed on the postcard to contact the LIHEAP Helpline if they have any questions completing the application. The LIHEAP Helpline will have access to the

mailing lists on DocuShare for both the postcards and bar-coded applications if the client misplaces the postcard or application and does not have their COMPASS Registration Number.

Households that receive bar-coded applications will also have a COMPASS Registration Number printed in the red box below the name and address. This allows them to apply on COMPASS or myCOMPASS if they choose.

## **DISCUSSION**

LIHEAP has two main components: Cash and Crisis. Following is the specific information regarding this LIHEAP season:

### **I. Parameters**

#### **Income Guidelines**

The income eligibility limit is set at 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIGs).

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Limit</u>
1 person	\$18,210
2 persons	\$24,690
3 persons	\$31,170
4 persons	\$37,650
5 persons	\$44,130
6 persons	\$50,610
7 persons	\$57,090
8 persons	\$63,570
Each additional person	\$6,480

#### **Minimum Cash Benefit Amount**

The benefit tables were revised to reflect the updated Cash component benefit amounts and income eligibility limits. The minimum Cash benefit is set at \$200.

### Maximum Cash Benefit Amount

The maximum Cash benefit amount is set at \$1,000.

### Minimum Crisis Benefit Amount

The minimum Crisis benefit is set at \$25. Households who require less than \$25 to resolve their home-heating emergency will not be eligible to receive a Crisis grant.

### Crisis Benefit Amount

The maximum Crisis benefit amount is \$600.

### Policy Clarifications and Alignments

- The State Plan has the following policy revisions for this year:
  - Eligibility-driven supplemental Cash benefits will remain disabled in eCIS.
  - The definition of Primary Heat Source has been modified to *The **central heating system used most by the household** or, if the residence is not centrally heated or the central heating system is inoperable, the heat source used most by the household.*  
This was modified for situations where a household has two heating sources using different fuel types which can each heat the entire household. In these situations, the primary heat source is whichever source is used most by the household. Their primary fuel type will be based on that heat source and cannot be changed for the duration of the season.
- Pre-season LIHEAP applications can now be completed on the myCOMPASS PA mobile app. The LIHEAP application will be available on the app for any households who are eligible for LIHEAP pre-season by using their COMPASS registration number or linking their existing My COMPASS Account. The myCOMPASS PA LIHEAP application does not allow users to change the known household composition; applicants who need to report those changes must apply through regular COMPASS or with a paper application.

## II. Cash Component

### Application of the Cash Grant

A household can only receive one Cash benefit during the LIHEAP program year. The Cash benefit will be applied to the account associated with their primary heating source by default, or the household can choose to have the Cash grant applied to their electric account if it qualifies as a secondary fuel type.

## III. Crisis Component

### LIHEAP Crisis Policy

**CAOs may begin issuing Crisis payments to households without heat when the LIHEAP Cash component opens on November 1, 2018. A household is in a home-heating crisis if:**

- it is out of fuel;
- it will run out of fuel within 15 days;
- it has had its utility service stopped; or
- it has received a written notice that its utility service will be shut off within the next 60 days.

**To apply and be eligible for a LIHEAP Crisis benefit, a household must:**

1. Meet the general LIHEAP eligibility requirements of income limit, responsibility for heating costs, Pennsylvania residency, and citizenship (or lawfully admitted non-citizen status).
2. Be without heat or in imminent danger of being without heat because of a weather-related or energy-supply-shortage emergency.
3. Be eligible for a Crisis benefit that, alone or combined with other resources available to the applicant household, will resolve the home-heating emergency. Any existing credit, including the LIHEAP Cash component that has been authorized and not yet received, is considered to be available and must be used first for the resolution of the crisis.
4. Provide proof of the home-heating emergency.

### **Application of the Crisis Grant**

A household may receive more than one Crisis benefit during the program year, subject to the minimum and maximum amounts allowed under the current LIHEAP State Plan. The amount of a Crisis grant cannot exceed the amount necessary to resolve the crisis.

### **Crisis Weatherization Referrals**

CAOs can begin making Crisis referrals to Weatherization agencies when LIHEAP opens on November 1, 2018. Please refer to Section II (L) of the [LIHEAP User Manual](#) for procedures related to Crisis Weatherization referrals.

When referring an applicant for Crisis Weatherization services, CAOs will scan both the HSEA-40 and fax confirmation sheet to verify the CAO acted timely. If the referral is emailed, the CAO should retain the email for one year.

### **Off-Hour Coverage**

Federal policy mandates that the Crisis component must be available 7 days a week, 24 hours daily. For procedures related to after-hours Crisis requests, please refer to Section III (G) of the [LIHEAP User Manual](#).

## **IV. Forms**

### **HSEA 1 - LIHEAP Application Form (Changes)**

The HSEA 1 was revised as follows:

- The questions regarding using income on file were combined into one question that reads “If you are currently receiving Cash, Medical Assistance, or SNAP benefits, may we use the income you have on file?”
- A tip has been added to page 3 above the income section to indicate income does not need to be reported for any person who chooses to use the income on file. A similar message previously located at the bottom of page 2 has been removed.

## V. Vendors

### LIHEAP Vendor Unit

The LIHEAP Vendor Unit is available to help CAOs and vendors resolve any issues pertaining to LIHEAP payments. The vendor helpline can be reached by email at [RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov](mailto:RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov) or by calling 1-877-537-9517, Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Participating LIHEAP vendors have the option to receive Treasury payments and/or Remittance Advices (vouchers) electronically. Vendors wishing to sign up for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) to initiate direct deposit must complete the PWEA 41, which is available on DocuShare. If vendors have any questions concerning EFT or wish to sign up for Electronic Remittance Advice, please instruct them to contact the LIHEAP Vendor Unit.

Payments to vendors are made by Treasury on the 13<sup>th</sup> calendar day after the close of the Voucher. Vouchers close on Thursday evening, therefore LIHEAP payments should normally be received by vendors on a Wednesday. In addition to the option of receiving Voucher by mail or electronically, vouchers are also posted to each vendor's PROMISE account where they are available for view on Monday, four days after the close of the voucher.

### NEXT STEPS

1. Implement the policy, procedures and form instructions in this memorandum for the 2018-2019 program year.
2. This Operations Memorandum will become obsolete on June 30, 2019.