

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Prepared by DHHS-DSS

I. Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is defined by Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (PL 97-35). It was established to assist low income households that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their immediate home energy needs.

The block grant is allocated to states, territories, and Indian tribes and tribal organizations that wish to assist low income households in meeting the costs of home energy. Congress established the formula for distributing funds to States based on each State's weather and low income population. Home energy is defined by statute as a source of heating or cooling in residential dwellings.

The President may release additional funds referred to as contingency funds to assist with the home energy needs arising from an emergency situation. They may be allocated to one or more grantees, or to all grantees, based on criteria appropriate to the nature of the emergency. In the past, the President generally has released these funds in response to emergency situations arising from extreme weather conditions or energy price increases. Generally, funds have been distributed based on the degree to which specific States are affected by the weather or energy price situation that led to the release of contingency funds.

The authorization provides that an eligible household's income must not exceed the greatest of 150 percent of the poverty level or 60 percent of the State median income. Grantees may not set income eligibility standards below 110 percent of the poverty level, but they may give priority to those households with the highest home energy costs or needs in relation to income.

All fifty States, the District of Columbia, five territories, and about 140 Tribes and Tribal organizations receive LIHEAP grants each year. State and federally recognized Tribes (including Alaska native villages) may apply for direct LIHEAP funding.

II. North Carolina's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Block Grant Plan

The Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services applies for and receives NC's grant annually. Upon receiving the award notification, the Division of Social Services creates a plan that is reviewed and approved annually by the General Assembly. NC funds three programs through the LIHEAP Block Grant:

A. Low Income Energy Assistance Payments for Heating (LIEAP)

Funds are used to provide a one-time payment in early February to eligible households to help pay heating bills.

B. Crisis Intervention Program (CIP)

Funds are used to assist low-income persons when a heating or cooling related crisis occurs. Allocations are provided to county departments of social services for: Direct payments, vendor or voucher payments, the purchase of in-kind services, payment of home repairs, or bulk buying.

C. Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), and Heating & Air Repair Replacement Program (HARRP)

Funds are available through the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity, to make repairs to dwellings so families can have more energy efficient homes.

For Federal Fiscal Year **2007**, NC received a total of \$36,318,661 in LIHEAP Block Grant funds and \$8,837,547 in emergency contingency funds.

For Federal Fiscal Year **2008** NC received a total of \$36,327,611 in LIHEAP Block Grant funds and \$4,569,931 in emergency contingency funds.

For Federal Fiscal Year **2009** NC received a total of \$121,050,820 in LIHEAP Block Grant funds and \$9,120,746 in emergency contingency funds.

III. The Social Services Commission has established the following eligibility criteria for the FFY 2008-2009 Program

A. Low Income Energy Assistance Payments for Heating

Households must have income at or below 110 percent of the current poverty level, have assets of \$2200 or less, and be subject to pay energy costs related to heating. Those households with the lowest income and highest relative energy costs and needs are targeted.

B. Crisis Intervention

Households must have income at or below 150 percent of the current poverty level and be experiencing a life-threatening or health related emergency. Annual assistance cannot exceed \$600.00.

C. Weatherization

Households must have income at or below 150 percent of the current poverty level.

IV. Non-State, Non-Federal Energy Assistance Resources for Families

NC has four community based funds that assist families with energy cost which are not funded through LIHEAP Block Grant funds. Those funds are:

- A.** Helping Each Member Cope- Haywood Electric Company - \$114,277 in SFY 2008.
- B.** Share The Warmth- Piedmont Natural Gas - \$40,745 in SFY 2008.
- C.** Round Up- Wake Electric Company - \$24,000 in SFY 2008.
- D.** Energy Neighbor- Progress Energy - \$417,352 in SFY 2008.