



NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION

State LIHEAP Agencies Actions to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In addition to the health threat of COVID-19, the pandemic is also affecting the economic stability of households around the country. A recent survey by the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA) found that Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) offices are ensuring that households that cannot afford to pay their energy bills have a place to get help. While each LIHEAP administers its program differently, there are common modifications states are making to their programs to meet the growing need. States are continuing to adjust their programs to adapt to this fast-moving situation. This document will be updated as more information becomes available.

Application Processing – modifications to applications to accommodate shelter-in-place requirements:

- a) Waiving the requirement for an in-person interview.
- b) Expanding processes for applications by phone, by mail, or online.
- c) Setting up drop boxes, socially-distanced interviews, appointment-only interviews, and other provisions to ensure safety for customers who wish to submit their applications in-person.

Eligibility Requirements – revisions to eligibility requirements to reach those affected by the pandemic:

- a) Waiving the requirement for a customer to have received a shut-off notice in order to be eligible for crisis assistance or including state-declared emergency provisions to their crisis program.
- b) Revising income requirements to allow households who have been laid off due to the pandemic but would not be eligible based on their prior income.
- c) Expanding the program to include payment for a second source of energy for households that heat with natural gas or delivered fuels but use electric air conditioning in the summer.
- d) Loosening documentation requirements for customers that are unable to provide proof of income, social security number, paper signature, or other documents.
- e) Lifting benefit caps in order to provide additional payments to customers

Program Timeline – States that do not regularly have processes in place to assist customers during the spring and summer are adjusting their programs to accommodate the pandemic.

- a) Extending application deadline through the end of April, May, or June
- b) Expanding or instituting summer cooling programs to prepare for the coming months

Application Volume - The survey asked states if they have seen an increase in applications. Responses were mixed, with some states saying they have been getting more calls, and others reporting a decrease due to customers adjusting to new remote application processes and utility shutoff moratoria.

Administrative Costs – States reported almost universally that their programs needed additional administrative funds to help local agencies adjust to remote application processing, and staffing costs related to extended program timelines.

Purchase/Installation of Air Conditioners – It is imperative that elderly and disabled customers are able keep their homes at safe temperatures while they shelter in place. States have mixed policies on air conditioning installation. Some offer new air conditioning units; others will repair or replace existing units. Others do not have an air conditioning program. NEADA is working to develop a nationwide air conditioning purchase program to address this critical need.

State-by- State Responses

LIHEAP state offices were asked the following four questions. Their answers are below.

- 1) What modifications are you making to your program (including extending application deadlines)?
- 2) Have you seen a change in the number of applications received?
- 3) Is it important to increase admin to 15% and how would those funds be spent?
- 4) Does your program include cooling assistance and/or purchase of AC units?

Alabama

- 1) *Program Changes*: moved from face-to-face appointments to mail-in applications; may expand crisis definition to include households impacted by disaster (natural, state or national declared)
- 2) *Application Volume*: increase in calls and emails at state and local levels; not tracking number of applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: support an increase in admin; CAPS are asking if they can have more since they are stretched very thin
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: cooling program typically ends 9/30 but may extend to 10/31; allows for AC purchase in crisis program but only if it's a life-threatening situation and agencies require strong documentation

Alaska

- 1) *Program Changes*: no final determinations or changes yet; if more funding is received, planning to extend season to make it year-round and to issue supplement payments to families that have already been approved for benefits
- 2) *Application Volume*: there have been additional questions from clients that have not previously applied; state has been doing more outreach and expect additional applications to come in the next 30 days
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: an increase in admin would help with the increased costs of extending the season
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: no cooling program; not an issue in Alaska

Arizona

- 1) *Program Changes*: applicants that can demonstrate a decrease or sudden loss of income due to COVID-19 will be allowed to apply; agencies can extrapolate their present situation to their prospective income for the coming 30 days and use this figure instead of their income from the trailing 30 days; household eligible up to \$800 of LIHEAP and \$1000 of LIHEAP Crisis benefits up from \$800 of LIHEAP and \$800 of LIHEAP Crisis; also allowing telephonic signatures for electronically received applications; will not be counting the stimulus payment; Arizona agencies are allowing categorical eligibility using TANF and SNAP information
- 2) *Application Volume*: all utility companies have a moratorium on issuing disconnection notices and fees; Arizona has not seen an increase yet, but interest in utility assistance will increase after the moratorium is lifted
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: Arizona could benefit from an admin increase; with an increase in the admin cap, CAA could hire more intake workers to assist with the processing of Crisis and Disaster applications
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: Arizona runs a year-round assistance program; has a cooling program and allows for purchasing of ACs; weatherization visits vary among agencies

Arkansas

- 1) *Program Changes*: extending Winter Crisis program to close in conjunction with opening a supplemental/COVID-19/CARES Act Crisis program with some new rules to accommodate people newly out of work; policy changes for Winter Crisis program: increasing benefit amount from \$500 to \$1,000; adjusting the definition of "crisis" to include shut-off notices with no requirement for shutoff date in relation to application date and to allow past due amounts on utility bills to be defined as a crisis; allowing a second crisis application during Winter program
- 2) *Application Volume*: currently applications are down somewhat, due to the suspension of shutoffs by utilities, but anticipating increases once shutoffs resume
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: additional admin would be helpful for enhancing ability of staff to work from home and to process mailed/online/dropped off applications as opposed to face-to-face applications; for preparing offices to allow safe access by applicants as well as the substantial cost of drop boxes/drop slots; for hiring additional staff to administer new programs with requirement to track LIHEAP supplemental funds separately; and for funding software updates
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: Summer cooling assistance is an annual program; currently, there is no purchase of A/Cs, but Arkansas fully intends to implement such a program for Summer 2020; please include Arkansas in the possibility of reaching out nationally to A/C manufacturers regarding availability and pricing

California

- 1) *Program Changes*: many CAPS weren't prepared with equipment for staff to work from home; most are working with minimal staff and a couple have had to shut down completely; the CAPS are transitioning from in-person applications to collecting applications online or through mail; activated Severe Weather Energy Assistance and Transportation (SWEAT) program so agencies can provide additional emergency payments to clients impacted by shutoffs and disconnections; HVAC units are provided in California's Emergency program as well as Weatherization
- 2) *Application Volume*: no increase in applications because agencies are working with smaller staffs or closed completely; absolutely expect increase in applications once the shelter in place order is lifted
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: not a big issue for the state but it would be very helpful for the CAPs
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: year-round program; can provide AC units when there's an emergency

Colorado

- 1) *Program Changes*: extended winter heating assistance from 4/30 to 8/31; additional COVID-19 money to be used to pay client's secondary source (electricity)
- 2) *Application Volume*: four weeks ago, applications were up 20% compared to last year; three weeks ago – 8%; two weeks ago – 42%; last week – 37%; most are online applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: the biggest obstacle for county offices is that the staff are part-time, temporary workers with no health insurance; as the program expands those workers will become health insurance eligible, which is a huge administrative cost increase
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: winter heating assistance only

Connecticut

- 1) *Program Changes*: extended fuel deliveries to 4/30; extended application period to 6/1; waived self-employment requirement for notarized statement; applications may be completed by phone or mail instead of face-to-face

- 2) *Application Volume*: no major increase in the number of applications; probably due to the move to mail-in application process
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increase in admin would help as agencies learn to do mail-in applications or work remotely
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: heating assistance; cooling assistance in state plan but hasn't been used for years; years ago, the state provided 2,000 window AC units but hasn't since then

District of Columbia

- 1) *Program Changes*: contacting applicants who had in-person appointments to switch to online applications; accepting mail-in applications from homebound applicants; may change crisis definition to allow high bill documentation; working with utilities to identify high bills and put additional funds in their account automatically
- 2) *Application Volume*: reduction in applications because clients are adjusting to online process
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: (will ask Kenley to respond)
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: (Kenley will provide information later)

Delaware

- 1) *Program Changes*: has modified intake process to complete intake without walk-in appointments; has a year-round crisis and activated disaster epidemics module; disaster policy states that Delaware switches over to 60% SMI during the disaster, which has been done; no extension to application process since year-round crisis is already in place
- 2) *Application Volume*: not at this time
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: needs 15% admin because Delaware is one of the smallest grant awards; 10% is not sufficient to operate and maintain software system, much less to cover the additional administrative burdens of additional funds; our software M&O contract says that we only get Keep-The-Lights-On for the software because that is all we can afford; we cannot afford fixing any defects regularly or do any minor changes to the system that have to be paid with administrative costs
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: has summer cooling electric program and summer cooling AC program

Florida

- 1) *Program Changes*: issued information memorandum IM-20-01 which allows subrecipients to assist clients up to \$2000 in any combination between LIHEAP and CSBG; normally, LIHEAP allows a maximum of \$750 under crisis; Florida LIHEAP program is structured to provide a maximum of two crisis assistance in a year: Winter Crisis and Summer Crisis
- 2) *Application Volume*: yes, currently receiving around 4 to 5 times the typical number of calls from potential clients inquiring about LIHEAP assistance
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increase in admin will allow agencies to hire additional staff to handle the additional client intake processing influx
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: yes, under crisis; the crisis allows for Summer Crisis to augment cooling assistance; the subrecipient contract stipulates purchase and repair of AC units within the allowable maximum under Summer Crisis

Georgia

- 1) *Program Changes*: has extended the heating season until all funds have been exhausted; has waived signatures on applications; applications are being completed via conference calls
- 2) *Application Volume*: increase in number of applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increase in admin will help with completing applications

- 4) *Air Conditioning*: has a Cooling Assistance program that pays a benefit towards the electricity bills only

Hawaii

- 1) *Program Changes*: a separate COVID-19 Disaster category is being added to the year-round crisis program; applicants that can demonstrate a decrease of income due to COVID-19 will be tested at 60% SMI instead of 150%, will be eligible for up to \$1000 instead of \$650, and will be eligible for Energy Credit program, which is not allowed under current rules. However, they will be tested against current EC income guidelines (150%FPL); also allowing telephonic signatures for electronically received applications and deferred verification submission for hardship cases; will not be counting the stimulus payment. SNAP and Financial programs may be exempting State UIB as well as the UIB created under CARES
- 2) *Application Volume*: All of Hawaii's utility companies have a moratorium on issuing disconnection notices; inquiries have increased, and CAAs can work with utility companies to get the disconnection notice that is not being mailed out; anticipating a spike in applications once the moratoriums end
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: Hawaii has a small allotment annually, and admin monies go very quickly. With an increase in the admin cap, CAA can hire more intake workers to assist with the processing of Crisis and Disaster applications now, and running the annual Energy Credit program in June
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: Hawaii has a cooling program but does not purchase ACs; weatherization partners are not doing home visits, but they along with Hawaii Energy are on board if AC units become a component of the program

Idaho

- 1) *Program Changes*: Idaho already has a year-round crisis program; has raised the eligibility threshold from 150% FPL to 60% of SMI and applicants are no longer required to have a disconnect notice to receive crisis benefits; any income-eligible applicant in arrears at their utility (gas, electric, bulk fuel) is eligible for crisis assistance
- 2) *Application Volume*: no increase at this time, but projects an increase in inquiries and applications as time goes on
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: anticipates an increased workload in direct services, but has not seen an increased need in administrative funding at this point
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: no, Crisis Assistance can be used to repair/replace existing cooling systems

Illinois

- 1) *Program Changes*: creating policies to allow for more flexibility documentation; creating presumptive look ahead at income for the newly unemployed
- 2) *Application Volume*: reduction in applications because new remote application process is being set up
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: there are definite technology needs for remote operations for the State and local agencies
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: just extended heating program; haven't addressed AC issues yet

Indiana

- 1) *Program Changes*: recommended extending season from 5/15 to 7/31 with most assistance targeted to electricity; loosened some requirements for documentation

- 2) *Application Volume*: have started to see increase in applications, especially from new applicants who have never applied before; increase in number of calls based on website resource list
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: operating well with current admin at the state level but Subgrantees don't have the technology in place to run the program sufficiently remotely
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: in the past, there was an AC program, but only for households without air conditioning and with documentation of medical needs; these households would receive a window unit – not room units

Iowa

- 1) *Program Changes*: loosened documentation requirements and are allowing for verbal "signatures" if necessary; allowing crisis to include service continuity as well as disconnections
- 2) *Application Volume*: have been hearing about more people applying and expect a substantial increase in applications over the next few weeks
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: extending the application period will result in higher admin costs
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: no separate cooling program but cooling component is part of crisis assistance; with a note from health care provider confirming that someone in the household would benefit, household would receive a window AC unit up to a cost of \$300 or repair of central AC

Kansas

- 1) *Program Changes*: program ended 3/31; may do 2-3 week online-only application window to allow those with lost income to apply
- 2) *Application Volume*: application volume was less than last year overall
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: has a state-administered program that hires temporary staff who are limited to 999 hours in a calendar year; if they work more than 999 hours they have to be re-hired through a temp agency which costs \$5-6 more per hour
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: heating assistance only; no air conditioning program

Kentucky

- 1) *Program Changes*: Normal program ended 3/31; reopened application period on 5/1 and will remain open through 5/29
- 2) *Application Volume*: application volume is less than last year overall
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: need more admin to support agencies and their efforts to improve technology
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: plan can provide AC but most offices don't purchase them

Louisiana

- 1) *Program Changes*: heating ended 3/15; cooling start date was delayed two weeks and opened 4/14; offices are closed to the public, and agencies are accepting applications via email, mail-in, and drop-box; no other significant modifications at this time
- 2) *Application Volume*: no change in application volume so far; increase in phone calls and emails only due to the closures
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: support systems and additional staffing are necessary for the increased level of activity anticipated
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: cooling beings 4/1 each year and runs year-round as long as funds remain available; crisis is also year-round which may include the repair or replacement of heating or cooling units

Maine

- 1) *Program Changes*: all Subgrantees are still taking applications, including increased support for taking applications via phone; Grantee has implemented temporary changes in protocol to include allowing self-attestations for certain documentation when absolutely necessary; extending the period of time a household has to submit documentation if their application was initially denied for lack of/missing documentation; taking into consideration a household's current income situation when a household has had decrease in income such as less hours or laid off (zero income) due to COVID 19; Maine will take regular HEAP applications through July 15 and energy crisis intervention program applications through April 30
- 2) *Application Volume*: Subgrantees continue to set application appointments and process applications; there have been no reports of any significant decrease in applications taken; some Subgrantees report that they may be starting to see a slight increase in program inquiries and applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: additional admin. would support Subgrantees with increased costs associated with adaptations made to accommodate COVID 19, including staffs working remotely, increased postage expenses, etc.
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: heating assistance only

Maryland

- 1) *Program Changes*: year-round program so no major changes; also have state funding
- 2) *Application Volume*: significant decrease in applications over the last two weeks of March; in the first seven days of April there's been a 78% increase in online applications (SNAP and LIHEAP combined numbers); overall pending application rate increased by 20%; call center has been overwhelmed
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: call center needs assistance with technological tweaks – they've been overwhelmed
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: year-round program with some state funds; has a replacement program for heating/cooling systems (heating gets priority and if there's funding left over the agency can do a cooling job request); already have a waiting list of 300 for cooling system assistance; program replaces like for like rather than installing new systems

Massachusetts

- 1) *Program Changes*: waived face-to-face meeting requirement and notarization for self-employment; waived in-person signature for application
- 2) *Application Volume*: no significant increase in applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: agencies need more admin – they weren't prepared for this
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: there is no cooling program for AC units

Michigan

- 1) *Program Changes*: eliminating the interview requirement for crisis applications; considering telephone signature process; can call community partners to obtain assistance with online application process
- 2) *Application Volume*: increase in applications; last week received 50,000 more applications than in the last two months combined
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: additional admin funds would be immensely helpful for making technological improvements
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: year-round crisis assistance; LIHEAP does not pay for AC units but the state does have local offices with discretionary funds that can be used to purchase a window unit if there is a medical statement

Minnesota

- 1) *Program Changes*: may complete applications with verbal consent as a last resort; increased crisis maximum from \$600 to \$1,200; households only need to provide one month of income proof rather than three months; crisis eligibility for past due bill, rather than requiring a disconnection or disconnect notice; application deadline extended from May 31 to July 1; adjustments to heating system repair/replacement program to ensure staff/household safety, e.g. remote inspections
- 2) *Application Volume*: as Stay at Home orders implemented, saw a decline in applications received; number of applications is rebounding – combination of policy changes, households and service providers adjusting to the “new normal,” outreach activities
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: admin funds will assist state and local service providers with staff, equipment, and technology expenses related to COVID-19 related program changes, including teleworking
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: no cooling program; would consider adding some type of cooling assistance either through LIHEAP or through collaboration with WAP

Mississippi

- 1) *Program Changes*: plans to issue supplemental energy payments to clients who have been served during the last year; this will free up appointment time for new clients who have been impacted by COVID-19; some eligibility items have been waved until further notice
- 2) *Application Volume*: no increase in applications yet; because the state is on stay at home, most agencies are working remotely and taking phone applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increase in admin would help with the expenditures that have and will be incurred in order to safeguard offices and the public; more equipment such as laptops are needed to enable staff to work remotely
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: regular program includes heating, cooling, and AC units; the CARES funds will be used for heating and cooling only

Missouri

- 1) *Program Changes*: changed crisis eligibility to include threat of disconnection without disconnect notice; extended program to from 3/31 to 5/31; updated zero income guidelines
- 2) *Application Volume*: decrease in applications because of shelter in place; people aren't aware they can apply
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: all costs for agencies have increased and more admin is needed (health insurance, employee salaries, etc.)
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: energy assistance program runs from 10/1 to 3/31 but may extend to 5/31; year-round crisis program; contractor allowed to use funds for repair/replacement and purchase portable units, but units are only distributed once every three years; the aim is to get one room cool; other agencies in the state provide AC units so we focus on bill assistance

Montana

- 1) *Program Changes*: extending the time period for vendors to apply 2019-2020 season benefits through the summer months; not planning to extend the last date for applications (4/30); preparing to issue a matrix adjustment allowing approved LIEAP households to receive an additional benefit of \$250 or \$500 based on poverty level; preparing to begin an emergency

benefit on 5/1 for applicants not previously approved; benefit would have a 1-month look back period and is designed for those whose income has been most effected by COVID-19

- 2) *Application Volume*: no increase at this time
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increasing admin would help the local agencies in processing the COVID-19 Emergency Energy Benefit application processing; normally the local agencies do not retain all their staff during the summer months; would also assist with system changes needed for the matrix adjustment and COVID-19 Emergency Energy Benefit, developing and implementing any Emergency Rules needed and/or updating the FY20 LIHEAP State Plan
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: does not provide cooling assistance unless medically necessary

Nebraska

- 1) *Program Changes*: broadened crisis assistance and can use discretion for households affected by the pandemic; can use agency discretion to increase cap of \$500
- 2) *Application Volume*: since application forms cover all economic assistance programs, it's hard to say whether there's been an increase in LIHEAP applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: additional administrative funding would be helpful
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: any household eligible for cooling may receive a window AC unit; repair/replacement of central AC is allowed with a \$750 limit (on LIHEAP funds)

Nevada

- 1) *Program Changes*: runs a year-round program and all applications are received by mail, fax, email, or in a drop box; working to modify application to allow electronic signature; Nevada's arrearage component is a once in a lifetime benefit; an exception to this program rule can be made by the Program Manager or Chief under certain conditions, such as COVID-19
- 2) *Application Volume*: since the Nevada stay at home orders began (3/16/20), the EAP has seen a reduction in the number of submitted applications; many energy providers have suspended disconnections due to COVID-19; when energy providers remove suspension, the EAP may begin to see an increase of applications for benefits and arrearage payments; the EAP program serves individuals at or below 150% of the federal poverty limit, individuals who are receiving unemployment benefits with the additional amount may not meet the income requirements for the program; if Nevada's economy does not recover quickly and individuals exhaust their unemployment benefits, there may be an increased need for energy assistance
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increase in admin would be beneficial to Weatherization Program as they utilize sub-grantees
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: yes, Nevada's EAP is a year-round program and Weatherization Program does provide cooling system assistance

New Hampshire

- 1) *Program Changes*: extended application period to 5/29; eliminated face-to-face interview requirement; reduced documentation requirements; allowing e-signatures and verbal signature authorizations
- 2) *Application Volume*: reduction in applications overall because of relatively easy winter; expect things to get busier
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: staffing is an issue in the agencies – some counties only have one staff person working for the entire county
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: heating assistance only; no cooling program

New Jersey

- 1) *Program Changes:* has not decided yet whether to extend the application deadline beyond July 31; started allowing remote submission of applications and documents by email, fax, drop box, electronic signatures, accepting applications over the phone with a verbal authorization to submit such application on behalf of the applicant; sent out notices to applicants who were denied earlier for being over income but have lost income to provide new income information to re-evaluate their applications; have flexibility to adjust income levels to 60% of SMI to provide assistance to more people, on a case by case basis
- 2) *Application Volume:* change in the number of application is not that significant as there is currently a suspension on termination of utility services in New Jersey; once the suspension of termination ends, we expect a significant increase in number of applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds:* increase would be helpful as we expect the CAP agencies and CBOs to hire more hands (even if it is temporary) once suspension of termination of service is lifted; we are encouraging the agencies to plan for aggressive outreach activities post COVID-19 to ensure that all needing assistance are reached
- 4) *Air Conditioning:* provides cooling assistance and purchase of AC units on a case-by-case basis

New Mexico

- 1) *Program Changes:* offers LIHEAP payments year around; had previously waived the face-to-face interview unless it was a household without a current COE; if the household has no current COE, a telephone interview is scheduled only if information provided is questionable
- 2) *Application Volume:* LIHEAP staff has seen an increase in call volume; many households that have never applied for LIHEAP are calling to inquire on the application process or where they can apply online; based on current application status, comparing households that applied and received a benefit in March there was a slight decrease in application from March 2019 to March 2020; New Mexico did not start seeing the effects of COVID-19 until the week of March 22; currently, there are approximately 66,000 New Mexicans that have applied for unemployment
- 3) *Administrative Funds:* does not feel that there is a need for an increase in admin; would prefer that funds be made available to customers for benefits
- 4) *Air Conditioning:* program currently includes cooling assistance but does not provide AC units

New York

- 1) *Program Changes:* suspended in-person interviews; extended the regular and emergency components through 6/30; provided additional benefits for households facing life threatening or crisis emergencies; required agencies to remain open to accept in-person paper applications; encouraged mail in, online, and telephone application; encouraged certifiers to modify or request Case Supervisory Review process to ease program administration
- 2) *Application Volume:* increase in number of email inquiries, telephone calls, and applications from recipients and first-time applicants
- 3) *Administrative Funds:* NYS would welcome the ability to provide administrative relief to its county social services districts and weatherization sub-grantees
- 4) *Air Conditioning:* eligible households may receive portable or window air conditioning units; vendors are responsible for purchasing appropriately sized units based on the cooling space; job scope requires vendors to measure the square footage of the cooling room, determine the proper unit, test circuitry for load capacity, and if required, a return visit to install the unit and register the warranty; energy star rating is required (usually 6000 BTU or higher); revised policy

limiting the provision of cooling assistance from once per ten year period to once per five year period

North Carolina

- 1) *Program Changes*: no longer requiring applicants to have a disconnect notice to apply for crisis funds; applicants must have a final notice or past due utility bill and have a health related or life-threatening emergency to be potentially eligible to receive assistance; no longer requiring applicants to apply in person; applicants can apply by mail, fax, email or drop-off an application at their local Department of Social Services
- 2) *Application Volume*: no increase at this time; applications have consistently stayed the same since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increasing admin could help retain more staff to help with application processing once COVID 19 funding is received
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: North Carolina has a year-round heating/cooling crisis assistance program; funding can be used to purchase AC units

North Dakota

- 1) *Program Changes*: loosening some of the requirements of the emergency program such as allowing telephonic applications and verbal signatures; increasing the seasonal cap above \$500; allowing client statement as acceptable income verification for emergency assistance
- 2) *Application Volume*: no increase in applications currently however, an uptick is expected depending on duration of crisis
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increase in administration cap applicable to all emergency funds would be helpful to address additional state and subgrantee costs, such as equipment to work remotely, wages, etc. associated with the state's response to pandemic
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: Cooling Program is available for households with elderly member or medical need; the program consists of purchasing cooling devices (window AC units and/or fans) or repairing existing central air units for qualifying households; the cooling program does not assist with the payments of electricity bills

Ohio

- 1) *Program Changes*: extending winter crisis program from 3/31 to 5/1; this aligns with Ohio's Public Utilities Commission extension of their winter reconnect order, which requires regulated utilities to allow customers to make a payment of \$175 for a disconnection notice to be removed; extending "regular HEAP" program, which provides a one-time credit towards a customer's main heating source; program was slated to end 3/31 and is now available until 6/1; now reviewing 30 days of income for households that are self-employed, but maintaining the requirement of 12 months of documentation; all stimulus checks and additional unemployment benefits (Title III) are excluded from income; already had online application, but now also allowing phone interviews; no documentation requirements have been waived
- 2) *Application Volume*: given the extension of the crisis program, there are some additional applications because traditionally customers could not apply right now; will have additional data in the coming months
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: increase in admin would help providers hire additional staff to meet the needs of changing programs and extended timeframes; some agencies hired temp staff to cover only certain periods, which is not enough at this point

- 4) *Air Conditioning*: yes, currently reviewing ways to expand cooling program that is slated to start in July, including expanding eligibility for the program and the amount of time the program is available

Oklahoma

- 1) *Program Changes*: no local offices open to visitors; applications taken over the phone (customer 1-800 number); has used an online application since 2017; providing postage paid envelope for mail-in apps; don't require cut-off notice in hand for crisis
- 2) *Application Volume*: steady increase in applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: need admin to increase number of agents and to support IT programming for some automation
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: provides a rebate program for the purchase of air-conditioning units for eligible households; AC fixing and repair is offered through weatherization component

Oregon

- 1) *Program Changes*: CAPS coping with contactless intakes (phone, email) and equipment is a problem
- 2) *Application Volume*: too early to tell whether number of applications will increase
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: CAPS are having a problem with phones and laptops and technology as they work remotely
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: year-round program but it primarily focuses on heating assistance; allows crisis funds for ductless heat pumps and fans

Pennsylvania

- 1) *Program Changes*: regular season closed 4/10; looking to reopen a recovery program in the near future to assist people that have recently experienced a job loss or a reduction of income due to the COVID-19 crisis
- 2) *Application Volume*: N/A; season is currently closed
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: no
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: no; the recovery program can include payment of electric bills but will not be exclusive to cooling or electric; plan to allocate 15 percent of LIHEAP funding to the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for Crisis weatherization purposes; will do repairs on central cooling systems, but will not provide or do repair work on window unit ACs

Rhode Island

- 1) *Program Changes*: waived face-to-face interview for new applicants; accepting applications through drop boxes, by mail, or by telephone; extending the heating season for new and crisis applications from 5/1 to 5/31
- 2) *Application Volume*: no significant increase in applications yet
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: CAPS could use additional admin for staffing
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: no cooling program but the largest utility as an AC replacement program

South Carolina

- 1) *Program Changes*: creating online application process but there is a literacy issue
- 2) *Application Volume*: overall reduction in applications, but anecdotally many households that have never applied before are soliciting help; some local agencies have closed

- 3) *Administrative Funds*: agencies are facing issues with literacy and with creating on-line applications
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: year-round crisis assistance; we recommend certified contractors for AC units; this may now become an issue with the liability of going inside a home to install

South Dakota – No data available

Tennessee

- 1) *Program Changes*: digital, electronic, scanned or photographed copies of signatures are allowed for applications and all forms; verbal verification via phone for application signatures and form verification; zero income can be determined at the time of application and projected forward rather than using the past 30 days; stimulus benefit payments due to COVID-19 are excluded from income for LIHEAP; households within 60% of State Median Income can receive assistance; maximum income eligibility will be updated to 60% of SMI in THO; households that are within the 126% Federal Poverty Guidelines and 60% SMI will receive 15 priority points
- 2) *Application Volume*: have not noticed an increase yet
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: if Tennessee adds water assistance, then yes, an increase in admin would be helpful; if not Tennessee doesn't add water assistance, no increase is necessary
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: yes, has a cooling program and are about to launch a crisis AC/HVAC repair or replacement program

Texas

- 1) *Program Changes*: allowing self-certification of citizenship for the next four months; considering flexibility on making multiple payments (gas and electric in the same month)
- 2) *Application Volume*: no great increase in the number of applications yet
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: need additional funding – whether it is for admin or programs
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: year-round energy assistance but primarily a cooling program; can provide both window and stand-alone AC systems in rare circumstances (life threatening); potential issue of paying increased electric bills if households receive AC units where none has been used before

Utah

- 1) *Program Changes*: disregarding income for emergency assistance; will disregard stimulus and UI stimulus from income calculation; accepting applicant statement as verification of layoffs and reductions in hours if no documentation is available; allowing signature waivers for intake including email applications with electronic signature; agencies implemented drop boxes for paper applications
- 2) *Application Volume*: increase in online applications; doing outreach through the Dept. of Workforce Services' website for COVID-19 resources
- 3) *Administrative Funds*:
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: was planning to move to year-round program in 2021 but will do it now; already have a year-round crisis program; have transferred funds to weatherization but don't know how many AC units have been installed or their success

Vermont

- 1) *Program Changes*: Regular Fuel does not require a face-to-face interview; waived face-to-face interviews for Community Action Programs; allowing self-declarations for business that have closed when we are unable to verify

- 2) *Application Volume*: Seasonal Fuel Applications are up slightly from last month (5% statewide); crisis Fuel would normally be winding down at this stage since we are coming out of winter; there is currently a moratorium on Utility shuts offs until the end of April; at that stage, we anticipate many Vermonters will come in for assistance with their electric bills
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: additional admin would help state and CAPS
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: no cooling assistance; limited funding is far more useful for providing heating

Virginia

- 1) *Program Changes*: stopped accepting applications for Crisis Assistance on March 16 and could not extend the application period because it is in Virginia's State Code (thought is continuing to make payments for cases that were approved for these components and will do so through April 30); pursuing approval to begin the Cooling Assistance application period earlier than set start date of 6/15; hoping to use CARES Act funding to make a supplemental payment to Fuel and Crisis recipients from this season; accepting client statements for verifications that the client cannot provide and the worker is unable to gather through a third party source; looking to raise income limit from 130% FPL to 150% FPL; no interview requirements for any application components; clients can submit applications by dropping off at a local department of social services (120 across the state that process applications), mail, fax, phone, or online.
- 2) *Application Volume*: no increase in applications yet, most likely due to the moratorium on disconnections until 6/14 for regulated electric, natural gas, and water service
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: would be useful for implementing IT changes, allotting more funds for local departments that process the LIHEAP applications
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: purchased over 2,500 units last year during Cooling Assistance; pay for repairs to central AC units, heat pumps, some purchases of fans (including ceiling or whole house fans); Lowes and some smaller local vendors provide AC units; clients can pick up the units and install on their own, program can pay for the installation, or Lowes can do installation; a disconnection is not required in order to provide Cooling Assistance, but the household contain at least one vulnerable person (age 60 or over; under age 6; or disabled); currently evaluating the impact of removing that requirement for this year

Washington

- 1) *Program Changes*: changed state plan to include national emergency; added contingent benefit for anyone affected by pandemic; provided a secondary \$500 benefit; changed income eligibility from 3 months to 1 month; expanded program for rental assistance; coordinating with tribes to see if they need assistance; working with utility partners to use same eligibility for their funds as LIHEAP; accepting electronic signatures and self-declarations as a last resort; providing waivers for 3 bids for weatherization work
- 2) *Application Volume*: increase in applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: additional admin for CAPS would be helpful
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: have not done AC units; mostly installed ductless heat pumps

West Virginia

- 1) *Program Changes*: will revise definition of crisis and will not require termination notice but just past-due balance; may add cooling component
- 2) *Application Volume*: no application intake program at the present time
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: additional admin would help state and CAPS

- 4) *Air Conditioning*: heating program only but may expand to summer and provide AC for elderly and disabled through emergency component

Wisconsin

- 1) *Program Changes*: extended issuing regular program benefits through 9/30; removed requirement for zero income statements to be notarized; change the income test period from 3 months to 1 month; allowing bank statements as proof of income; created a self-attestation form for those whose income was not direct deposited and employer is no longer in business
- 2) *Application Volume*: slight reduction in applications, likely due to the moratorium extension; expect the numbers to increase next week
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: agencies need additional admin; they have lost staff due to illness and some agencies aren't equipped to work remotely
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: have a crisis program, but not a cooling program

Wyoming

- 1) *Program Changes*: has extended crisis season and will re-open heating assistance program to provide emergency supplemental benefits; application form is for LIHEAP and Weatherization; those who applied for weatherization after heating program ended on 2/29 will also be approved for heating supplemental assistance; utilities providing spreadsheets during moratorium so state can gauge what the bills will be when the moratoriums end
- 2) *Application Volume*: increase in number of calls, beginning to see increase in applications
- 3) *Administrative Funds*: state is alright for now, but agencies will be moving from temporary staffing over the winter months to full-time staffing throughout the year for at least the duration of the crisis; this will increase admin costs significantly
- 4) *Air Conditioning*: will extend crisis season; AC issues are handled through weatherization and consists mostly of a tune and repair program; supplemental benefit may help with A/C related electricity costs