

LIHEAP Program Basics (The Assurances)

PART 1

2022 NEADA Training Conference
September 20, 2022

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Session Objectives

After this training session, you will have a better understanding of:

- LIHEAP Assurance requirements
- Your flexibility in interpreting LIHEAP Assurances
- How to incorporate the LIHEAP Assurances into program planning and evaluation
- Where to find additional resources

What are Assurances? Why are they Important?

Background

Every September, states/tribes/territories who wish to receive LIHEAP funding must submit a model plan. The model plan (LIHEAP application) lays out how each grantee will use LIHEAP funds in accordance with the law.

“Each State desiring to receive an allotment for any fiscal year under this title shall submit an application to the Secretary. Each such application shall contain assurances by the chief executive officer of the State that the State will meet the conditions enumerated in section (b).”

Section 2605(a)(1) of the LIHEAP Act, 42 U.S.C. § 8624(a)(1)

In other words, the LIHEAP law includes sixteen “assurances” that must be officially certified each September by a governor or tribal chairperson (or his or her designee) via the model plan process.

The Assurances and Program Flexibility

The Federal LIHEAP statute, including the sixteen assurances, provides grantees with “fenceposts” when designing their LIHEAP programs—**leaving a lot of room for flexibility.**

- Federal regulations at 45 CFR 96.50(e) indicate that **grantees have the "primary responsibility" for interpreting the federal law as it relates to their administration of LIHEAP** and that HHS will defer to their interpretations unless it is deemed "clearly erroneous."

STATE LAW/RULES

While the federal statute provides “outer bounds” for grantees, state/tribal law can also influence or restrict the design and delivery of LIHEAP programs.

- For example, although the federal statute allows income eligibility up to 60% of state median income, some states have enacted laws that make their LIHEAP income eligibility thresholds much lower.

Analyzing the Assurances

For the remainder of this training, we are going to walk through each of the sixteen LIHEAP Assurances. For each assurance, we'll focus on three things:

**Breaking It Down
(Key-Takeaways)**

- Identifying key takeaways

**Interpretation and
Implementation**

- Highlighting examples of grantee interpretations

**Bringing it
Back Home**

- Pinpointing questions grantees can use in program planning or evaluation

Notes

- **Feel free to type your questions in the Chat Box as we go.** We'll either address them as we move through the slides, or answer them at a stopping point.
- **You'll be asked to complete a poll question after we review each Assurance.** We'll also answer your questions at this time.
- **Don't be afraid to ask "what if" questions and/or share examples.** Telling us about your own concerns and triumphs helps everyone to learn.
- **This training is split into four parts.** However, we'll move ahead or slow down as needed. If for any reason your questions aren't answered, we can meet 1:1 after the training (or have an impromptu group Q/A session) as needed.

LIHEAP Assurances 1-3

Assurance 1—Uses of Funds

Breaking It Down (Key-Takeaways)

Assurance 1: USES OF FUNDS

[Section 2605\(b\)\(1\) of LIHEAP Act, 42 U.S.C. § 8624\(b\)\(1\)](#)

The funds grantees receive for LIHEAP must be used only for purposes explicitly authorized in the law. These include:

- heating and/or cooling assistance
- crisis assistance
- weatherization and energy-related home repair
- outreach to households with lowest income and highest home energy needs
- planning, development, and administration (including leveraging)

Assurance 1—Uses of Funds

Interpretation and Implementation

- Which program components will we administer?
- How will we allocate our funding?

	# of State/Territory Grantees	Lowest % of Funds Allocated	Highest % of Funds Allocated
Heating	51 of 54	5%	78%
Cooling	32 of 54	1%	84%
Crisis	54 of 54	.25%	42%
Weatherization	53 of 54	2%	25%



WHEN will we use our funds?

- *Example:* Winter versus year-round crisis

What will each program component include?

- *Example:* Equipment repair/replacement versus bill payment assistance only

Assurance 1—Uses of Funds

Bringing it
Back Home

How will we interpret and implement Assurance 1?

Example Focus Areas, Questions

Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are we turning away households from one component (e.g., heating) in order to keep another (e.g. cooling)?
Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are we seeing an increase in households with high energy usage or inoperable equipment that may warrant more crisis or weatherization services?
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are more households requesting LIHEAP during months when the program hasn't typically been offered (e.g., summer)?
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we have money left over at the end of each heating season that could fund cooling, summer crisis, or year-round crisis programs?

Assurance 1—Uses of Funds

POLL QUESTION #1 (Assurance 1)

Assurance 1 specifically names OUTREACH as an authorized use of LIHEAP. How does your state budget and allocate funding for outreach activities?

(Check all that apply)

- We set a statewide outreach budget each year
- We ask all of our subgrantees to submit an outreach budget each year
- Our state and/or subgrantees do not set specific budget for outreach each year
- Our state and/or subgrantees pay for outreach using admin funds
- I have no idea
- None of the above

Assurance 1—Uses of Funds

POLL QUESTION #2 (Assurance 1)

Assurance 1 specifically names ENERGY RELATED HOME REPAIR as an authorized use of LIHEAP. Does your state conduct LIHEAP energy equipment repair or replacement?

(Check all that apply)

- We only do LIHEAP equipment repair or replacement as part of our weatherization program
- We only do LIHEAP equipment repair or replacement as part of our crisis program
- We do equipment repair or replacement in both our crisis **and** weatherization programs
- We don't do any equipment repair or replacement with our LIHEAP funds
- I have no idea
- None of the above

Assurance 1—Uses of Funds

QUESTIONS?

Assurance 2—Eligibility

Breaking It Down (Key-Takeaways)

Assurance 2: ELIGIBILITY

[Section 2605\(b\)\(2\) of LIHEAP Act, 42 U.S.C. § 8624\(b\)\(2\)](#)

Grantees will only make LIHEAP payments to:

1. Households with a member receiving one or more of the following:
 - a. *assistance under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act*
 - b. *supplemental security income payments under title XVI of the Social Security Act*
 - c. *food stamps under the Food Stamp Act of 1977*
 - d. *payments under section 415, 521, 541, or 542 of title 38, United States Code, or under section 306 of the Veterans' and Survivors' Pension Improvement Act of 1978*
2. Households with an income at or below the greater of 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) or 60 percent of the state's median income (SMI).
 - *The eligibility limit cannot be set lower than 110% FPG.*
 - *Grantees can set additional eligibility criteria such as an assets test.*

Assurance 2—Eligibility

Interpretation and Implementation

Will we utilize Categorical Eligibility?

Some states use categorical eligibility, but add additional requirements. For example, some states require that all household members be categorically eligible for the household to be considered categorically eligible for LIHEAP.

Who will be eligible?

- Income eligibility guidelines vary across grantees.
 - Among states, the lowest income eligibility threshold is 125% FPG.
 - Among tribes, the lowest income eligibility threshold is 150% FPG.
- There are some grantees who set different income eligibility guidelines for different components of their program.
 - One common example is Weatherization. Some states administer LIHEAP Weatherization funds using federal “DOE rules.” This means they can set the income eligibility threshold for weatherization services as high as 200% FPG.

Assurance 2—Eligibility

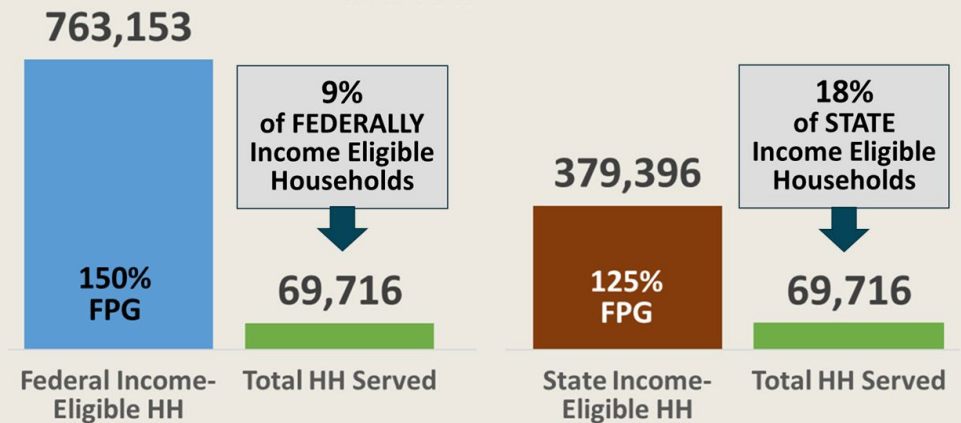
Bringing it Back Home

How will we interpret and implement Assurance 2? *Example Focus Areas, Questions*

Eligible v. Assisted Households

- What percentage of the currently income eligible population are we reaching?
- Are we satisfied with this percentage?

Federally Income Eligible Households, State Income Eligible Households, and Total Households Served



Fewer HH or Higher Benefits?

- Is it more important for our state, territory, or tribe to serve the highest number of households (even if the benefit amount is low?)
- Is it more important for our state, territory, or tribe to provide households with a larger benefit (even if we serve fewer households?)

Assurance 2—Eligibility

POLL QUESTION #3 (Assurance 2)

Does your state use different income eligibility guidelines/limits for different LIHEAP program components?

(Check all that apply)

- Our income guidelines are the same across all LIHEAP services
- Our income guidelines are the same across all LIHEAP services **except Weatherization**
- Our crisis program uses different income guidelines than our regular heating/cooling program
- Each component of our program has its own income guidelines
- I have no idea what income guidelines our state uses for LIHEAP
- None of the above

Assurance 2—Eligibility

QUESTIONS?

Assurance 3—Outreach

Breaking It Down (Key-Takeaways)

Assurance 3: **OUTREACH**

[Section 2605\(b\)\(3\) of LIHEAP Act, 42 U.S.C. § 8624\(b\)\(3\)](#)

Grantees must conduct outreach activities designed to assure that eligible households know about LIHEAP and other similar energy programs.

- Outreach should be especially targeted toward “vulnerable” households, e.g., elderly, young child and/or disabled individuals.
- Outreach should also be targeted to those households with high home energy burdens (the lowest income and highest energy costs).

Assurance 3—Outreach

Interpretation and Implementation

- How are we making sure that eligible households know about LIHEAP?
- How are we targeting our outreach to vulnerable households?

Examples of LIHEAP Outreach:

- Newspaper announcements
- Fliers in senior/aging centers
- Fliers in food boxes or with Meals-on-Wheels deliveries
- Speeches by LIHEAP personnel at tribal meetings, church meetings, cultural center meetings, or other community meetings
- Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)
- Fliers in social service offices
- Utility company bill inserts
- Mailings by the LIHEAP office, or as part of other social service program mailings
- LIHEAP “press kits” for community advocates who visit disabled or senior households who may be homebound.
- Fliers home with Head Start families

Assurance 3—Outreach

Bringing it
Back Home

How will we interpret and implement Assurance 3?

Example Focus Areas, Questions

Targeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we know who is eligible for LIHEAP (<i>e.g. demographics</i>)?• Do we know where these eligible households are (<i>e.g., geographically</i>)?
Gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who is applying for LIHEAP services?• How does this line up with who is eligible?
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are we using the right tools to reach who we need to?• Are we actively conducting outreach throughout the year, or just at the beginning of the heating or cooling season?
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do we have clear outreach goals in our state, tribe, or territory?• If subgrantees deliver outreach, are they aware of these goals?

Assurance 3—Outreach

POLL QUESTION #4 (Assurance 3)

Grantees are required to conduct outreach activities to assure that eligible households know about LIHEAP. How does your state determine whether or not LIHEAP outreach has been successful?

(Check all that apply)

- We compare spending year over year (if we run out of money, we must be doing something right)
- We look at the number/percentage of new households applying for LIHEAP each year
- We compare the characteristics of LIHEAP applicants to eligible population characteristics (e.g., census)
- We use GIS (mapping) to compare where eligible households live vs. where households are applying
- We set application targets for specific populations each year then measure whether or not we met these target(s)
- We compare spending year over year (if we run out of money, we must be doing something right)
- At this time, we aren't intentionally setting outreach goals or measuring outreach success
- Other
- I'm not really sure

Assurance 3—Outreach

QUESTIONS?