



NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
40 NORTH PEARL STREET
ALBANY, NY 12243-0001
Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	12-LCM-12
To:	Local Social Services District Commissioners, TA and SNAP Directors, HEAP Coordinators
Issuing Division/Office:	Center for Employment and Economic Supports
Date:	December 6, 2012
Subject:	2012-13 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
Contact Person(s):	HEAP Bureau at (518) 473-0332
Attachments:	Attachment 1 - 2012-13 HEAP Program Summary Attachment 2 - 2012-13 HEAP Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement
Attachment Available On – Line:	Yes

Section 2

I. Purpose

This is to provide local social services districts (SSD) with information about the 2012-13 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), including information on funding and highlights of program changes and enhancements.

II. Background

HEAP is a federally funded energy program intended to provide assistance to low income households in meeting their immediate home energy needs. In addition, funding is provided to NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) to provide weatherization assistance to low income households.

In order to receive federal LIHEAP funding, states must submit a plan to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) each year. Funding is appropriated each year and the program operates on the federal fiscal cycle, from October 1st to September 30th. New York's HEAP State Plan has been submitted to HHS and the final plan can be found at: <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/> in the State Plans and Reports section.

III. Program Implications

Local social services districts must implement program changes as outlined in the State Plan and as directed in the 2012-13 HEAP trainings conducted in August 2012 and in subsequently released policy instructions. Policy instruction letters can be found at: <http://otda.state.nyenet/dta/> in the Information section. Local social services district staff, as appropriate, should subscribe to both HEAP policy and HEAP funding distributions to ensure receipt of information.

Program Dates

- Applications for Regular HEAP benefits must be accepted beginning November 19, 2012. A printable HEAP application was posted on the OTDA website effective November 19, 2012.
- Applications for the regular benefit component must be accepted through March 15, 2013. If there is insufficient funding to provide regular benefits to all applicants, OTDA will notify social services districts that funding has been exhausted and will provide further instructions. Districts are responsible to date stamp each application upon receipt and to provide accurate pending reports each week to OTDA. Regular benefit applications are processed on a first come, first served basis with exceptions for expedited processing for households in a heating crisis.
- Applications for emergency HEAP benefits will be accepted beginning January 2, 2013. No notices, emergency benefit payments or guarantee of emergency HEAP benefits, including ten day hold requests from utility companies based on an anticipated emergency HEAP payment, may be issued before this date.
- Applications for heating equipment repair and replacement were accepted beginning October 1, 2012.
- Applications for emergency benefits, including heating equipment repair and replacement, will be accepted through March 15, 2013, unless funding is exhausted prior to that date; in which case, the program component will close and applications will not be accepted beyond the new date established by OTDA.
- All program components may be extended if there is sufficient federal funding. Social services districts will be notified of any extension and will be provided with separate administrative funds for operation during the extension period.

Processing Time Frames

Applicants must be provided with a written notice of eligibility determination no later than thirty (30) business days after receipt of the application by the certifying agency. Additional processing time of no more than ten (10) business days is allowed for applications which are pended for incomplete information. The processing time frame

for early outreach applications received prior to November 19, 2012, begins on November 19th.

In addition, some action to resolve a household's emergency situation must be taken within 18 hours if the household is without heat or within 48 hours if loss of heat is imminent. Resolution may include: delivery of fuel or restoration or continuation of gas or electric service; repair or replacement of the heating system; use of safe, supplemental heating source; temporary relocation or other appropriate measures. HEAP funded assistance may only be provided to eligible households and only when the program component for the specific type of assistance is open.

Payments for cases included as part of the HEAP automatic payment process must be authorized on WMS no later than December 30, 2012.

Program Summary

Revised Income Guidelines

- Maximum income guidelines have been set at 60% of state median income for household sizes 1-10 and at 150% of the federal poverty level for household sizes 11 and above. See the attached 2012-13 HEAP Program Summary for income guideline amounts.

Regular and Emergency Benefit Amounts

- See the attached 2012-13 HEAP Program Summary for benefit amounts.

Application Process for HEAP Only Households

- Applicants for regular benefits may submit applications by mail or fax. The application must be signed by either the customer of record or the household member with primary responsibility for the heating bill, or the primary tenant if heat is included in the rent. New applicants must submit documentation of identity, residence, income, and vendor relationship and must be interviewed, either in person or by phone. A new applicant is defined as an applicant who did not receive HEAP through the application process in 2011-12 or who has moved to a different county since the previous HEAP program.
- All applicants, new and returning, must provide valid social security numbers for all household members. Returning applicants must provide documentation of earned income. Benefits are only provided to citizens, qualified aliens or non-citizen nationals.
- All applications for Heating Equipment Repair or Replacement must be in person.

Application Process for Temporary Assistance (TA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recipients

- In September, NYS OTDA utilized information available on WMS to identify HEAP eligible TA and SNAP recipients and to system generate a benefit.

- Beginning in December, NYS OTDA intends to conduct a daily autopay process that will identify HEAP eligible TA and SNAP recipients whose case opened after the initial autopay.
- Additional information on this process will be provided under separate cover.
- Additional information on the application process is contained in the attached 2012-13 HEAP Program Summary.

Emergency Benefit Component

- Applicants for emergency benefits may request benefits via the phone if the applicant is approved for a 2012-13 regular HEAP benefit, has not moved or had a change in household composition or an increase of more than \$200 in household income since the regular benefit application. In addition, TA and SNAP recipients may also apply by phone. The applicant must be the customer of record. Applicants not eligible for the phone process must apply in person.

Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement

Applications for this component were accepted beginning October 1, 2012.

- Detailed information on this component is contained in the 2012-13 HEAP Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement Component attachment.

Supervisory Review Process

In order to have a more consistent process throughout the state, the following supervisory review guidelines have been set:

- All applications must be reviewed and signed off by a staff member at least one level above that of the staff member determining eligibility. Social services districts may opt to use an approved Case Supervisory Review (CSR) process for regular and emergency benefit cases in lieu of a full review of all cases.
- ALL applications for heating equipment repair and replacement benefits require two levels of review and a CSR process cannot be used for this component.
- It is recommended that the SSD designated HEAP Coordinator perform review and sign off on all heating equipment repair and replacement benefit applications, unless the HEAP Coordinator determined eligibility. In that case a supervisor one level up must sign off.
- All applications from known relatives of any SSD employee require two levels of review. Written SSD guidelines that provide for stricter protocol take precedence.

Funding and Payments

Local District Allocations

- Allocations for both administrative purposes for all social services districts and for locally issued payments outside of NYC were issued in Local Commissioners Memorandum 12-LCM-10.
- In a Dear HEAP Coordinator letter dated November 16, 2012, local social services districts were told they could set BICS HEAP locks to “off” to generate two party checks and issue direct client payment checks or EBT payments effective November 19, 2012.

Vendor Payments

- The initial production of the NYS Office of State Comptroller (OSC) voucher files for those vendor payments authorized outside of the autopay occurred on the weekend of October 6, 2012. OTDA sent the first 2012-13 HEAP payment file for vendor payments authorized outside of the autopay to OSC the weekend of November 16, 2012. After the initial payment file transfer, payment files will be sent to OSC on a weekly basis with the exception of the weekend of December 2, 2012.
- The TA and SNAP autopay voucher production occurred on the weekend of November 3, 2012. These vouchers were available in districts on Monday, November 5, 2012, and the SSD will have until close of business, Friday, November 30, 2012, to review these cases. These voucher files will be sent to OSC beginning on December 3, 2012.
- Due to the large size of the initial files, it is expected to take several days to issue all payments.

Notice Production

- Approval notices will be produced via CNS when the payment file is sent to OSC or when the SSD sets the HEAP BICS locks to “off” to produce EBT payments and two party checks.
- Again, due to the large volume of the initial vendor payment file, it is expected to take several days to produce and mail all notices associated with payment files.
- Local social services districts may process denial transactions via WMS beginning November 19, 2012. Denial notices are produced by CNS.

Issued By

Name: Phyllis Morris

Title: Acting Deputy Commissioner

Division/Office: Center for Employment and Economic Supports