



# Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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## Local Commissioners Memorandum

### Section 1

<b>Transmittal:</b>	17-LCM-14
<b>To:</b>	Social Services District Commissioners
<b>Issuing Division/Office:</b>	Integrated Family Assistance Programs / Employment and Income Support Programs
<b>Date:</b>	November 14, 2017
<b>Subject:</b>	2017-18 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
<b>Contact Person(s):</b>	HEAP Bureau at: (518) 473-0332
<b>Attachments:</b>	<a href="#">Attachment 1 - Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement Reference Tool</a> <a href="#">Attachment 2 - 2017-18 HEAP Desk Guide- LDSS-5005</a> <a href="#">Attachment 3 - 2017-18 HEAP Administrative Forms Guide</a> <a href="#">Attachment 4 - 2017-18 HEAP Systems Quick Reference Tool- LDSS-5099</a>
<b>Attachment Available Online:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Section 2

#### I. Purpose

This is to provide social services districts (districts) with information for the 2017-18 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

#### II. Background

HEAP is a federally funded energy program intended to provide assistance to low income households in meeting their immediate home energy needs. To receive federal funding, states must submit a State Plan to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) each year. New York State's 2017-18 HEAP State Plan has been accepted by HHS and may be found on the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's (OTDA) website at: <http://otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/stateplan.asp>.

#### III. Program Implications

##### A. Program Components – Opening Dates

Applications for the Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement (HERR) component must be accepted beginning November 6, 2017. This component will operate until funding allocated to this component is exhausted. Districts will be notified of the component's closing date via General Information System (GIS) message. A detailed component summary may be found in Attachment 1.

Applications for Regular benefits must be accepted beginning November 13, 2017. Client notices for Regular benefits, payments or guarantees of benefits to vendors, including ten-day account hold requests to utility companies based on an anticipated receipt of a HEAP benefit, must not be issued before November 13, 2017. The anticipated closing date for the Regular component is March 15, 2018. Districts will be notified of the component's actual closing date via GIS.

Applications for Emergency benefits must be accepted beginning January 2, 2018. Client notices for Emergency benefits, payments or guarantees of benefits, including ten-day hold requests to utility companies based on an anticipated Emergency HEAP payment, must not be issued before January 2, 2018. The anticipated closing date for the Emergency component is March 15, 2018. Districts will be notified of the component's actual closing date via GIS.

Applications for Cooling Assistance must be accepted beginning May 1, 2018. Client notices for Cooling Assistance benefits, payments or guarantees of benefits must not be issued before May 1, 2018. Districts will be provided detailed program information under a separate LCM. The Cooling Assistance component will operate until August 31, 2018 or until funding allocated to this component is exhausted; whichever comes first. Districts will be notified of the component's actual closing date via GIS.

Applications for the 2018 Heating Equipment Clean and Tune component must be accepted beginning July 2, 2018. Districts will be provided detailed program information under a separate LCM. Client notices for Clean and Tune Assistance benefits, payments or guarantees of benefits, must not be issued before July 2, 2018. The Clean and Tune Assistance component will operate until November 2, 2018 or until funding allocated to this component is exhausted; whichever comes first. Districts will be notified of the component's actual closing date via GIS.

Beginning April 1, 2018, a \$21 nominal benefit will be available to specific households once the regular HEAP season ends. This nominal benefit will be provided to households in receipt of ongoing SNAP, in a HEAP eligible living arrangement and that incur a shelter expense with heat included and would not otherwise be eligible for the Heating and Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (HCSUA). The nominal benefit will be provided to households that meet the qualifying living situation in order to help pay for home energy costs and enable these households to receive the HCSUA to maximize their SNAP benefits. This nominal benefit is an advance of the 2018-19 HEAP benefit. Households eligible for a HEAP benefit larger than \$21 will receive the balance through the 2018-19 autopay process. Districts will be provided detailed information regarding this benefit in a separate policy issuance.

The dates for all program components with the exception of the Emergency Component may be adjusted based on the amount and timing of receipt of federal funding. Districts will be notified if program dates are changed. Applications for all components must be accepted through the specified closing date for each component.

## **B. Processing Time Frames**

There are no changes to the HEAP application processing timeframes. Applicants must be notified in writing of the eligibility decision, either an approval or denial, within 30 business days from the application date. Any pending timeframes, up to ten business days, will not be counted towards the 30-business day requirement.

Cases that appear on the exception list during the 2017-18 HEAP Mass Authorization process must be reviewed and authorized no later than December 31, 2017.

### **C. Income Guidelines**

Maximum income guidelines have been set at 60% of State Median Income (SMI) for household sizes 1-10 and at 150% of the federal poverty guidelines for household sizes 11 and above. See Attachment 2, 2017-2018 Home Energy Assistance Program Desk Guide ([LDSS-5005](#) [rev. 7/17]) for income guideline amounts.

### **D. Application Process**

Applicants may submit paper applications by mail, fax or in person at a district or certifying agency. A printable HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) will be available on the OTDA website effective November 13, 2017.

All applicants outside of New York City have the option of submitting an application for Regular benefits online via myBenefits. In New York City, a HEAP application may be downloaded through Access NYC. All new, returning or Early Outreach HEAP applicants should be encouraged to apply for regular HEAP via myBenefits. After creating a secure account, applicants may complete, submit, and track the status of their HEAP application online. Applicants may also use myBenefits to submit required documentation to districts who use OTDA's Imaging Enterprise Documentation Repository (I/EDR). When HEAP is open, households may apply via myBenefits for both HEAP and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) using a single application.

Applicants requesting a HERR benefit, an Emergency benefit, a Cooling benefit or a Clean and Tune benefit cannot apply online via myBenefits. Applicants for the HERR benefit component must apply in person (or via an authorized representative) at the district or certifying agency. Applicants for the Emergency benefit component may apply in person or via telephone. Applicants for the Cooling and Clean and Tune benefits should call their districts for information and applications.

If an applicant submits multiple applications for a Regular or Emergency benefit, the application(s) submitted to the district first, regardless of method (electronic or paper), takes precedence. Subsequent applications must be acted on and appropriate notice(s) must be issued timely. Applications for HEAP regardless of method (electronic or paper), cannot be withdrawn without the client's consent.

### **E. Autopay Process for Temporary Assistance (TA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recipients**

The Autopay process is utilized as a tool to maximize outreach and limit administrative costs while maximizing HEAP accessibility and targeting the highest benefits to the lowest income households.

TA and SNAP recipients who are in receipt of ongoing benefits are categorically income eligible for Regular HEAP benefits, but these recipients must also meet all other eligibility criteria for a Regular benefit. These recipients consent to have their eligibility determined for HEAP through the Autopay process when they complete and submit the Statewide Common Application ([LDSS-2921](#)), Recertification Application for TA or SNAP ([LDSS-3174](#)), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Application/Recertification ([LDSS-4826](#)), or who apply for SNAP or who recertify for SNAP or TA using myBenefits. The consent language is found in the Consent Section of each application.

TA and SNAP recipients who are categorically income eligible, meet all other eligibility criteria, and are in receipt of ongoing benefits at the time of the Autopay pull down are not required to complete a separate HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)).

OTDA uses the TA and SNAP eligibility information found in the Welfare Management System (WMS) at the time of the September and March Autopay pull-downs to determine the household's income eligibility for HEAP, as well as other eligibility criteria, including living arrangement and vendor relationship. If all HEAP eligibility factors can be collected from WMS, a Regular benefit eligibility determination is made and a payment amount is electronically issued, as appropriate, to either the vendor or the household. If required HEAP eligibility factors beyond income eligibility cannot be retrieved from WMS, the case appears on an exception report for required District review and eligibility determination.

Individuals who become ongoing recipients of TA or SNAP after the initial Autopay pull-down will not be included in the initial Autopay process. These individuals may apply for HEAP by submitting a HEAP Application (LDSS-3421) on or after November 13, 2017. Only those individuals who wish to receive a HEAP benefit prior to second Autopay must apply using the HEAP Application (LDSS-3421).

Households may receive a HEAP supplemental Regular benefit if they received a heat-included benefit, but subsequently move within the program year and are then responsible for the heating bill. Additional information on this process was provided to districts in the August 8, 2017 Dear WMS and BICS Coordinator Letter, "HEAP Systems Letter Outlining WMS Systems Implications for the 2017-18 HEAP Program Year."

Any individual who receives a Regular benefit via the Autopay must not be issued a duplicate Regular benefit. Districts must complete WMS inquiry on all applications, for every component, to ensure a duplicate benefit is not issued.

## **F. Definition of Emergency Types**

A HEAP eligible household is considered to be in a life-threatening emergency when the household is without heat. A household without heat has no heating fuel or utility service has been disconnected. Any HEAP eligible household's life threatening emergency must be resolved within 18 hours from the time the household applies for an Emergency benefit.

A HEAP eligible household is considered to be in a crisis emergency when the loss of heat is imminent. A household with imminent loss of heat has less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  tank of oil, kerosene, or propane, less than a ten-day supply of other deliverable fuels, or utility service is scheduled for disconnection. Any HEAP eligible household's crisis emergency must be resolved within 48 hours from the time the household applies for an Emergency benefit.

Emergency resolution may include an action other than the issuance of a benefit, such as temporary relocation, safe supplemental heat, or referral to Temporary Assistance or other community resource if HEAP eligibility has not been determined.

For applicants, eligible for income deeming, the application date is the date the Emergency Benefit Budget Worksheet (LDSS-3594B) was completed by the district eligibility examiner with assistance from the applicant, either over the telephone or in person. For applicants, ineligible for income deeming, or who have not received a Regular benefit in the current HEAP season, the application date is the date the signed and dated HEAP Application (LDSS-3421) is submitted to the district. This must accompany a completed Emergency Benefit Budget Worksheet ([LDSS-3594B](#)).

## G. Regular and Emergency Benefit Amounts

For the 2017-18 season, the benefit amounts for households who heat with wood, pellets, coal or corn or a utility will remain the same. The benefit amount for households who heat with oil, kerosene or propane has increased from \$575 to \$675. See Attachment 2, 2017-2018 HEAP Desk Guide, ([LDSS-5005](#) [rev. 7/17]) for benefit amounts.

## H. Forms

Seventeen forms used to administer HEAP have been revised. New forms with a revision date of 2017 were made available to order on September 7, 2017. These forms, along with any forms that were not revised, may be used for the 2017-18 program year. Attachment 3, Home Energy Assistance Program Administrative Forms Guide, is a table that identifies revised forms, and whether the form is mandatory or optional.

The HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) is available in alternative formats. Alternative format applications in audio format, data format, and large print will be available for download on the OTDA website. Audio CDs, Data CDs and Braille applications may be ordered through BMS Document Services. Please refer to [16-ADM-08](#) "Alternative Format and Disability Accommodation Indicator Use" for further information.

The updated 2017-2018 HEAP Systems Quick Reference Tool ([LDSS-5099](#)), Attachment 4, is included in this LCM. This guide is also available for download on LDSS E-Forms and printed copies may be ordered on card stock through the OTDA warehouse.

No forms will be drop shipped. All forms should be ordered by the districts as needed. All forms were made available on September 7, 2017 to order and for electronic downloading from LDSS E-forms, through CentraPort or OTDA warehouse order.

How to order forms:

1. All forms with LDSS or PUB numbers are produced by OTDA and can be ordered. When ordering or reordering any HEAP form, be sure to order sufficient quantities for the entire HEAP season. Districts must also take into consideration the form supply needs of Alternate Certifiers when placing orders. Please check the current supply of forms at the district prior to placing an order.
2. HEAP forms are available on the OTDA Intranet website at: [http://otda.state.nyenet/ldss\\_eforms/default.htm](http://otda.state.nyenet/ldss_eforms/default.htm) and may be available for downloading by districts for reproduction locally, depending on print specifications.

Requests for printed copies of HEAP forms should be submitted to OTDA using either the OTDA 876EL (DOC) or OTDA 876 EL (PDF) available at the link above and either mail, fax or e-mail it to:

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
BMS Document Services and Operational Support  
PO Box 1990  
Albany, NY 12201

E-mail: [forms.orders@otda.ny.gov](mailto:forms.orders@otda.ny.gov)  
District online forms ordering system: <http://formorders/>  
Fax: (518) 402-0084



Questions concerning ordering forms should be directed to BMS Document Services at: (518) 474-9522.

How to request a Local Equivalent Form:

1. To make changes to a mandated LDSS form, the HEAP Coordinator **MUST** submit to the Bureau of Management Services (BMS) a written request on county letterhead with a modified version of the form attached, prior to program opening. The request must include the reason for the change and a contact person. The district must receive written approval from the OTDA BMS prior to using the local equivalent form.
2. Local equivalents are forms developed by districts which are designed to be used in place of State-mandated forms. Local equivalent forms must contain all the information required on the State-mandated forms, but may also contain additional information required for the district's own purposes. Local equivalents may differ in format as well as media from the mandated forms. Districts develop local equivalent forms for many reasons. These include producing forms to accommodate sight-impaired workers; producing different sized forms which better fit in local case folders; producing forms which have the agency address preprinted; and producing electronic forms to be used in place of hard copy forms. The goal of the local equivalent form approval process is to guarantee that districts are using forms which are legally, programmatically and systemically accurate and up-to-date.
3. All prior year approved waiver requests remain valid unless OTDA revises a form for which a district has an approved waiver or the district would like to make additional revisions to a form with an approved waiver.
4. Districts interested in this procedure should consult [16-ADM-03](#) for guidance.

## **I. Case Supervisory Review Process**

In accordance with [12-LCM-12](#), districts are required to complete a supervisory review and approval on 100% of all HEAP applications, unless the district has a Case Supervisory Review (CSR) plan approved by OTDA. The CSR process permits district supervisors to review and approve a targeted or random sampling of HEAP cases.

Each district that chooses to review their cases with an approved CSR plan may implement a plan specific to their district to ensure that cases are processed properly and that corrective action measures are instituted. To maintain accuracy standards, HEAP cases chosen for review must receive a thorough case review by a supervisor. The case review must be based upon all current information pertaining to eligibility and benefit levels, and the supervisor's approval must be indicated by including the supervisor's dated signature in the case record.

Districts that elect to perform a targeted or random sample review should provide increased staff training, when appropriate, to address those areas that are identified through the supervisory review approval process as needing worker improvement.

All applications from known relatives of any district employee require two levels of review. Written district guidelines that provide for stricter protocol take precedence.

CSR plans must be submitted to and approved by OTDA. The plan must include the following:

1. A description of cases that will be subject to supervisory review approval. Districts must identify areas or types of cases that should be targeted for 100% review. For example:
  - a. Error prone areas (e.g. earned income cases);
  - b. New applications, new workers' cases; or
  - c. Emergency application cases from an alternate certifier.
2. The minimum number of HEAP cases each supervisor will be required to review per worker, per week/month;
3. A description of how case processing errors will be addressed to assure accuracy; and,
4. A description of how the plan will address alternate certifiers. Alternate certifiers must not review or approve HEAP cases.

### Plan Submission

Plans must be submitted to:

HEAP Bureau  
Employment and Income Support Programs  
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
40 North Pearl Street, 11-B  
Albany, NY 12243

Upon the submission of a CSR plan, OTDA will review each district's plan and approve the plan in whole or in part within 60 days of the date of submission by the district. The time frame may be extended with the agreement of both parties. If any or all components of the plan are not approved, OTDA will specify the reason(s) for the disapproval and will specify the steps, if any; the district must take to rectify the plan. Once a plan is approved by OTDA, a district does not need to submit another plan unless the district revises the originally approved plan. Districts that currently have a CSR plan approved by OTDA for HEAP do not need to re-submit a plan unless revisions are made to the originally approved plan.

### CSR and HERR Benefits

All applications for HERR benefits require two levels of review and a CSR process cannot be used for this component.

It is recommended that the district designated HEAP Coordinator perform the review and sign-off on all HERR benefit applications, unless the HEAP Coordinator has determined eligibility. In that case, a supervisor one level up must sign-off.

## **J. Required Signatures on Authorization**

Districts are required to provide 100% supervisory review and approval of the authorization document for HEAP unless the district has a CSR plan approved by OTDA. Generally, districts use the Non-Services Authorization Document (LDSS-3209) to authorize assistance; however, a district may request a waiver to use a different process to authorize assistance (for further information see 05-LCM-09). An alternative method of authorization must be approved by OTDA. The LDSS-3209 is signed by the worker who prepared the authorization and the supervisor who approved it. Once both signatures are obtained, the LDSS-3209 becomes the official authorization. The exception for this procedure would be

for districts operating under an approved waiver from OTDA Budget, Finance and Data Management.

#### **K. Pending Report Information**

Districts are required to complete and submit HEAP Pending Reports for all applications (Regular, Emergency, Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement, Cooling, and Clean and Tune) that have been received but do not have an approval or denial transaction through WMS or myWorkspace. Beginning Friday, September 8, 2017, districts must begin reporting any pending applications for the 2017-18 program year to the HEAP Bureau via eReports. Districts must continue to report the number of pending cases for each program component year-round, on a weekly basis. If you have no pending cases for a specific component, you must enter 0 in that field.

If a district has any changes in their pending report designee, please provide the HEAP Bureau with the following information for the person or persons that you would like to have access to eReports: (a) name; (b) user ID; (c) email address; (d) phone number; and, (e) fax number. This information can be e-mailed to Emily Urban at: [Emily.Urban@otda.ny.gov](mailto:Emily.Urban@otda.ny.gov) and Anna Vitolins at: [Anna.Vitolins@otda.ny.gov](mailto:Anna.Vitolins@otda.ny.gov). If you have questions, please call your HEAP Bureau liaison at: (518) 473-0332.

#### **L. HEAP Participating Vendor List**

The HEAP database for commodity vendors is available through Centraport. Each district has a unique password for the participating list. These will remain unchanged, unless a district requests a new password. Districts must contact their OTDA HEAP Bureau liaison if you do not know your current password or if a new password is required.

Districts must check the current OTDA online vendor list when processing applications to ensure that only participating vendors in their county are issued benefits.

#### **M. Notice Production**

Use of the Client Notice System (CNS) is required. Manual notices must only be used when the CNS does not support the action taken. Proper use of CNS ensures accuracy and further supports consistency of program rules and policy across the state.

Approval notices will be produced via CNS when the payment file is sent to the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) or when the district sets the HEAP BICS locks to “off” to produce EBT payments and locally issued two party checks.

Districts may process denial transactions beginning November 13, 2017.

#### **N. Subscription to Policy Directives**

District staff, as appropriate, should subscribe to receive Administrative Directives (ADM), Information letters (INF), Local Commissioner Letters (LCM), and General Information Systems (GIS) messages via email by going to: <http://otda.state.nyenet/dta/resources/subscribe.asp>. See the Dear WMS-CNS Coordinators letter dated September 26, 2017 for more information.



## O. Systems

It is strongly suggested that districts outside of New York City use myWorkspace as the primary computer application to complete eligibility processing for Regular applications submitted via myBenefits.

System access for district employees, including granting entitlements to myWorkspace and the resetting of passwords, is performed at the local level by a district LAN Administrator. The LAN Administrator is responsible for granting entitlements and setting up Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) accounts to all users including alternate certifiers. Instructions for LAN Administrators can be found in [GIS 17TA/myB006](#) "Providing Remote Access to myWorkspace for Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Alternate Certifiers (AC)." For assistance with problems establishing remote connections through a Secure Sockets Layer Virtual Private Network (SSLVPN), district staff must contact the ITS Service Desk at: 1-800-697-1323, and open an ITSM ticket specifically for "SSLVPN Support". Please discuss any problems with your local LAN or Systems Administrator in accordance with local procedures before contacting the ITS Service Desk.

### 1. Alternate Certifiers' Access to myWorkspace

The Alternate Certifiers' role and responsibilities have not changed from previous years. **Alternate Certifiers cannot determine final HEAP eligibility, complete final HEAP authorizations in myWorkspace or resolve energy emergencies by guaranteeing payment to energy vendors.** Applicants may apply for a Regular benefit using myBenefits and districts may use myWorkspace to process Regular applications. The current and future 'Remote Access End User Guide' can be accessed from the myWorkspace 'Resources' link on CentraPort (HEAP Information): [https://otda.state.nyenet/dta/myWorkspace/myWS\\_switchboard.html](https://otda.state.nyenet/dta/myWorkspace/myWS_switchboard.html).

The district identifies the Alternate Certifier role that works best for their operations and is responsible to communicate the roles and responsibilities to the Alternate Certifier. Districts can grant one of two levels of entitlements in myWorkspace; either an Alternate Certifier worker or an Alternate Certifier supervisor. A listing of the Alternate Certifier worker and supervisor functionality in myWorkspace can be accessed from the myWorkspace "Resources" link on CentraPort (HEAP information) at: <https://otda.state.nyenet/dta/resources/myWorkspace/myW-HEAPUserRoles.pdf>

Alternate Certifier staff experiencing problems accessing myWorkspace and/or having HEAP policy questions must contact the district HEAP Coordinator.

### 2. MyWorkspace Problem Solving

District HEAP Coordinators experiencing problems accessing myWorkspace must contact their Systems Administrator.

The district staff must use the "**Contact Us**" button in myWorkspace (located on the myWorkspace Homepage – External links) to report problems with myWorkspace. When reporting problems using the "**Contact Us**" functionality, districts should include as much information as possible, including at a minimum the registry/case number, and any error number and message you receive.

District staff may access information regarding myWorkspace from the myWorkspace "Resources" link on CentraPort: [https://otda.state.nyenet/dta/myWorkspace/myWS\\_switchboard.html](https://otda.state.nyenet/dta/myWorkspace/myWS_switchboard.html)

Alternate Certifier staff experiencing problems accessing myWorkspace and/or having HEAP policy questions must contact the district HEAP Coordinator.

3. CNS code modification

CNS case reason code modifications have been implemented on the HERR Denial Code- M08. There have been four additional denial reasons added to the screen (WCN042) selections, two of the new screen selections will allow for worker fill explanations for the HERR application denial.

4. HEAP Mass Closing

The HEAP Mass Closing (“HEAP Auto Close”) of 2015–2016 upstate HEAP cases (Case Type 60) which have had no activity since 09/30/16 is scheduled to begin Thursday, **October 12, 2017**, with completion scheduled for Monday, **October 16, 2017**. After the auto close report is completed, a report of successfully closed cases will be generated and available for viewing in the Cognos HEAP Reports folder. The reports can be viewed by selecting the following folder sequence in Cognos: [Public Folders](#) > [Global Reports](#) > [OTDA](#) > [HEAP Reports](#) > [Annual Reports](#) > [HEAP Auto Close Reports](#) > **2017**.

**P. OSC Vouchers**

**HEAP OSC Voucher Production**

Initial production of the 2017-18 HEAP vouchers for vendor direct payments will remain in issued status until they are transferred to the NYS Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) for payment once federal funding is in place.

The initial 2017-18 vouchers for HEAP OSC vendor payments authorized outside of the Autopay will be available to districts on Monday, October 16, 2017 and continue each Monday thereafter.

The TA and SNAP Autopay vouchers will be available to districts on Monday, October 23, 2017.

**Voucher Review Period**

During the review period, there are only two actions that districts may perform on a HEAP OSC voucher that is in OSC-Issued status: correction of the customer account number and voiding the voucher.

Please note that each payment line has a unique voucher number and districts are able to void HEAP OSC vouchers using Accounts Menu, Selection 4 – Void a Voucher.

Districts must not adjust payment lines to zero on OSC vouchers.

**Issued By**

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**Title:** Deputy Commissioner  
**Division/Office:** Integrated Family Assistance Programs