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Local Commissioners Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	08-LCM-04
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Center For Employment and Economic Supports
Date:	July 3, 2008
Subject:	2008-09 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Targeted Mail Out
Contact Person(s):	HEAP Bureau Liaison at 1-800-343-8859, extension 3-0332
Attachments:	Attachment I – FFY 2007-08 HEAP Administrative Allocations, Additional Amounts Available for Early Mail Out Attachment II - Early Mail Out Processing Plan Attachment III - Mail out Schedule
Attachment Available On – Line:	Yes

Section 2

I. Purpose

This Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM) provides information on the targeted early mail out process that will be conducted for the upcoming 2008-09 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP).

The LCM also advises local districts that processing cases during the early mail out period will be mandatory for the 2008-09 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) year for all districts. The early mail out targets those households that have received a HEAP benefit in the preceding year and whose household contains a vulnerable individual (under age 6, age 60 or older, or disabled). Instructions for the mail out process and allocations for administrative funds for this purpose are also provided.

II. Background

Each program year, a HEAP application is mailed out to those households that received a HEAP benefit in the preceding year and whose household contains a vulnerable individual (under age 6, age 60 or older, or disabled).

During the past several years, this mail out has been conducted prior to program opening in November in an effort to streamline the workflow and to assist districts in managing the large volume of case processing that occurs in the HEAP program. The current mail out process for districts outside of New York City (NYC) is conducted centrally by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), using the Client Notices System (CNS) system to mail applications to targeted households. Mail out to targeted households in NYC is conducted by the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA).

Processing cases during the early mail out period has previously been on a voluntary basis, with additional administrative funds provided to districts that have agreed to participate.

Reviews of case processing timeliness have proven the effectiveness of participation in case processing during the early mail out period. Many districts have been able to fully process and authorize payments for these cases prior to the program opening in November. This has resulted in significantly reduced backlogs and timelier issuance of benefits in the participating districts. As a result, OTDA is mandating that all districts process cases during the early mail out period, starting with the 2008-09 HEAP season.

III. Program Implications

Districts must structure local programs to begin case processing no later than September 8, 2008 for applications received during the early mail out period. If alternate certifiers participate in case processing for applications sent out in the early mail out period, contracts with these certifiers must be in place prior to September 8th and certifiers must agree to begin case processing by September 8th.

Processing is defined as eligibility determination and authorization of benefits through the Welfare Management System (WMS).

HEAP benefits may not be used to resolve emergency situations until on or after November 3, 2008.

Allocation of Additional Administrative Funds

All districts will receive additional HEAP administrative funds for the purpose of processing cases during the early mail out period. The allocation schedule is attached (see Attachment I).

In order to access these additional funds, districts must submit a plan (see Attachment II) to the OTDA HEAP Bureau outlining the activities that will be conducted during the early mail out period. If an alternate certifier will participate in processing cases during the early mail out period, a copy of the contract must also be submitted.

Once the district plan has been accepted by OTDA, the district will be notified, the administrative funds will be released to the local district, and the 2007-08 administrative allocation for your district increased. In order to receive these additional funds, each district's plan must be submitted by **no later than July 15, 2008**. These funds must be obligated by no later than September 30, 2008 and claimed by December 31, 2008. Unclaimed funds cannot be rolled into the 2008-09 administrative allocation.

Failure to submit a plan and/or to receive these funds does not release the district from the obligation to process cases during the early mail out period.

Mail out Schedule

OTDA will begin the mail out, utilizing the Client Notices System (CNS) process, on August 25, 2008.

A schedule of the mail out is attached (see Attachment III). Applications for the "over age 60/disabled" group are mailed first in all districts. Once this has been completed, applications for targeted households containing children under 6 are then mailed. The mail out is expected to be completed no later than three (3) weeks from the start date.

Control lists for the rest of state (ROS) counties will be provided at the start of the mail out and will be transmitted through your Benefit Issuance and Control System (BICS) queue.

NYC must begin the mail out of applications no later than August 25, 2008.

Application and Cover Letter

Applicants will be provided with a cover letter that provides instructions for completion of the application and contains the return address. The application will be pre-filled with the applicant's name, address, date of birth, last four (4) digits of the social security number, and sex. Districts will be provided with a sample cover letter shortly.

Systems Information

All support systems, such as WMS (Welfare Management System), ABEL (Automated Budget and Eligibility Logic), the HEAP Benefit Calculator (HBC) and the HEAP electronic workbook, will be available to districts during the early mail out period. Districts may calculate and store ABEL budgets and authorize payments through WMS during this period.

Payments and notices will be held until after program opening. Due to a change in the way that CNS notices are processed for HEAP, batching is no longer necessary. Notices will not be issued until payments are sent to the NYS Office of the State Comptroller

(OSC) or until BICS locks are released to allow issuance of direct client payments and two-party checks.

Additional Information

Plans should be submitted no later than July 15, 2008 to:

NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
HEAP Bureau 11D
40 North Pearl St.
Albany, NY 12243

Plans may also be faxed to the attention of the HEAP Bureau at 518-474-9347 or sent via e-mail to Esther.Matos@OTDA.state.ny.us.

Issued By

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