NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
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Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	11-LCM-14
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Center for Employment and Economic Supports
Date:	November 21, 2011
Subject:	2011-12 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
Contact Person(s):	HEAP Bureau at 518-473-0332
Attachments:	2011-12 HEAP Program Highlights
Attachment Available On – Line:	Yes

Section 2

I. Purpose

This is to provide local districts with information about the 2011-12 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 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 districts must implement program changes as outlined in the State Plan and as directed in the 2011-12 HEAP training conducted in August 2011 and in subsequently released policy instructions. Copies of the training materials can be found at http://www.trainingspace.org/ . Policy instruction letters can be found at: http://otda.state.nyenet/dta/ in the Information section. Local district staff, as appropriate, should subscribe to both HEAP policy and HEAP funding distributions to ensure receipt of information.

A copy of the 2011-12 Program Highlights, which provides greater detail on program changes, is attached.

Program Dates

- Regular HEAP opened November 16, 2011. Applications for households not included in the early outreach process and appointments for interviews may be accepted beginning on this date. A printable HEAP application will be posted on the OTDA website effective November 16, 2011. No notices, payments, or guarantee of payments, including ten day hold requests from utility companies based on an anticipated HEAP payment, may be issued before this date.

- Applications for the regular benefit component must be accepted through March 16, 2012. If there is insufficient funding to provide regular benefits to all applicants, OTDA will notify 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.

- Emergency HEAP opens January 3, 2012. Request for emergency benefits, either through phone requests or the application process may be accepted beginning on this date. 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.

- Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement opened on October 3, 2011.

- Applications for emergency benefits, including heating equipment repair and replacement, will be accepted through March 16 unless funding is exhausted prior to March 16, 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. 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 certification 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 16 begins on November 16.

In addition, the emergency situation of an eligible household must be resolved 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.

Payments for cases included as part of the HEAP automatic payment process must be authorized no later than December 30, 2011.

Program Highlights

Revised income guidelines

- 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 2011-12 HEAP Program Highlights for income guideline amounts.

Revised regular and emergency benefit amounts.

- Regular and emergency benefits have been reduced as a result of the projected federal funding decrease. See the attached 2011-12 HEAP Program Highlights for benefit amounts. New York's HEAP State Plan does allow for increasing benefits if there is sufficient federal funding.

Application Process

- 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 2010-11 or who has moved to a different county since the last 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.

- Applicants for emergency benefits may request benefits via the phone if the applicant is approved for a 2011-12 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, Temporary Assistance (TA) and Food Stamp(FS) 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.

- All applications for heating equipment repair or replacement must be in person.

Emergency Benefit Component

- Changes to resource exemptions

There have been some minor changes in resource exemptions. Please see the attached 2011-12 Program Highlights for specific information.

The $3000 standard exemption that has been allowed for heating equipment replacements is now applicable to repairs. Households applying for repair or replacement cannot have liquid resources exceeding the cost of the repair or replacement.

- Income deeming rules have changed. Households will not be eligible for deeming if household income has changed more than $200, this is a reduction from the $500 threshold previously allowed.

Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement

- Detailed information on this component was provided in a September 27, 2011 "Dear HEAP Coordinator," letter.

- Applicants are now required to have owned and resided in the dwelling for the twelve (12) months prior to the month of application; and the heating system must have been operable within that twelve (12) month period.

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 a "Dear Commissioner" letter on October 24, 2011.

- WRAP funding for local districts has been eliminated for the 2011-12 program year.

- Local districts may set BICS locks to "off" to generate two party checks and issue direct client payment checks or EBT payments on or after November 16, 2011 or when funding allocations have been received, whichever is later.

Vendor Payments

- Production of OSC payment vouchers for vendor payments has begun. Payments to vendors are scheduled to begin November 21 for TA and FS autopay cases and on November 28 for all other cases. Payments will then be issued on a weekly basis.

- 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 local district vouchers/checks are produced.

- 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 districts may process denial transactions via WMS beginning November 16, 2011. Denial notices are produced by CNS.

Issued By
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