



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

SAMUEL D. ROBERTS
Commissioner

SHARON DEVINE
Executive Deputy Commissioner

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	15-LCM-17
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Center for Employment and Economic Supports
Date:	October 5, 2015
Subject:	2015-16 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
Contact Person(s):	HEAP Bureau at (518) 473-0332
Attachments:	Attachment 1 – HEAP Desk Guide – LDSS 5005 Attachment 2 – Home Energy Assistance Program Administrative Forms Guide Attachment 3 – HEAP Regional Training
Attachment Available Online:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 2

I. Purpose

This is to provide local Social Services Districts (SSD) with information for the 2015-16 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 2015-16 HEAP State Plan has been approved 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 9, 2015. This component will run until funding is exhausted.

SSDs will be notified of the component's closing date via General Information System message (GIS).

Applications for Regular benefits must be accepted beginning November 16, 2015. No 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, may be issued before November 16, 2015. The anticipated closing date for the Regular component is March 15, 2016. The closing date may be earlier depending on the timing and amount of federal funding. SSDs will be notified of the component's closing date via GIS.

Applications for Emergency benefits must be accepted beginning January 4, 2016. Notices for Emergency benefits, payments or guarantees of benefits, including ten-day hold requests from utility companies based on an anticipated Emergency HEAP payment, must not be issued before January 4, 2016. Applications for Emergency benefits must be accepted through March 15, 2016. SSDs will be notified of the component's closing date via GIS.

The dates for these program components may be adjusted based on the amount and timing of receipt of federal funding. SSDs will be notified if program dates are changed.

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.

Payments for cases included as part of the HEAP Mass Authorization process (Autopay) must be authorized in myWorkspace no later than December 31, 2015.

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 1, 2015-16 HEAP Desk Guide (LDSS-5005) for income guideline amounts.

D. Application Process

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

Applicants requesting a HERR benefit or an Emergency benefit cannot apply for these benefits via myBenefits. Applicants for the HERR benefit component must apply in person (or via an authorized representative) at the SSD. Applicants for the Emergency benefit component may apply in person or via telephone. Applicants may also continue to submit paper applications by mail, fax or in person at a SSD or certifying agency. A printable HEAP Application (LDSS-3421) will be available on the OTDA website effective November 16, 2015.

If an applicant submits multiple applications for a Regular or Emergency benefit, the application submitted to the SSD first, regardless of method (electronic or paper), takes precedence.

E. Autopay Process for Temporary Assistance (TA)¹ and SNAP Recipients

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

TA and SNAP recipients who are in receipt of ongoing benefits are considered to be categorically income eligible for Regular HEAP benefits, but these recipients must also meet all other eligibility criteria in order to be eligible 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), or “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Application/Recertification” (LDSS-4826). 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 Autopay pull down 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 household. If required, HEAP eligibility factors beyond income eligibility cannot be retrieved from WMS, the case appears on an exception report for required SSD review and eligibility determination.

Individuals who become ongoing recipients of TA or SNAP after the Autopay pull-down will not be included in the Autopay process. These individuals must apply for HEAP by submitting a HEAP Application (LDSS-3421) on or after November 16, 2015.

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

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 has been provided to SSDs in the August 7, 2015 Dear WMS and BICS Coordinator Letter, “HEAP Systems Letter Outlining WMS Systems Implications for the 2015-16 HEAP Program Year.”

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 ¼ tank of oil, kerosene, or propane, less than a ten-day supply of other deliverable fuels, or utility service is scheduled for

¹ Whenever ‘Temporary Assistance’ or ‘TA’ is used in this document, it means ‘Family Assistance’ and ‘Safety Net Assistance.’ Statutorily, these programs are referred to as ‘Public Assistance.’

disconnection. Any HEAP eligible household's crisis emergency must be resolved within 48 hours from the time the household applies for an Emergency benefit.

For applicants eligible for income deeming, the application date is the date the Emergency Benefit Budget Worksheet (LDSS-3594B) was completed by the SSD 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 is submitted to the certifying agency. This must accompany a completed Emergency Benefit Budget Worksheet (LDSS-3594B).

G. Regular and Emergency Benefit Amounts

Regular direct heating, Regular heat-included and Emergency benefit levels all remain the same for the 2015-16 HEAP season. See Attachment 1, 2015-2016 HEAP Desk Guide, (LDSS-5005) for benefit amounts.

H. Forms

As a result of New York State's branding initiative, all forms used to administer HEAP have been revised for the 2015-16 program year. All forms with a revision date of 2014 or older are now obsolete and must be destroyed. New forms with updated branding and a revision date of 2015 may be ordered. Only these forms may be used for the 2015-16 program year. Attachment 2, Home Energy Assistance Program Administrative Forms Guide, is a table that identifies revised forms, and whether the form is mandatory or optional.

No forms will be drop shipped this year. All forms should be ordered by the SSDs as needed. All forms are available to order, and all electronic forms were made available on e-forms on September 8, 2015.

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. SSDs must also take into consideration the form supply needs of Alternate Certifiers when placing orders. Please check the current supply at the SSD prior to placing an order.
2. HEAP forms and notices are also available on Centraport under Forms, titled "OTDA Forms," or at https://otda.state.nyenet/ldss_eforms/. Orders for all forms are placed through the SSD's ordering procedures using OTDA Form 876, "Request for Documents and Publications," or using the Bureau of Management Services Electronic Forms and Publications Online System.
3. The Systems Desk Guide was provided in the HEAP Regional Training meeting 2015 Participant Training Manual.

How to request a Local Equivalent Form:

1. To make substantive changes to a mandated LDSS form, the HEAP Coordinator MUST submit to the OTDA HEAP Bureau 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 request must receive written approval from the OTDA Bureau of Management Service (BMS) prior to using the local equivalent form.

2. Local equivalent forms are forms developed by SSDs which are designed to be used in place of State-mandated forms. Local equivalent forms must contain all of the information required on the State-mandated forms, but may also contain additional information required for the SSD's own purposes. Local equivalents may differ in format as well as media from the mandated forms. SSDs 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 SSDs 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 that a SSD has an approved waiver or the SSD would like to make additional revisions to a form with an approved waiver.
4. SSDs interested in this procedure should consult 97-ADM-13 for guidance.

I. Case Supervisory Review Process

In accordance with 12-LCM-12, SSDs are required to complete a supervisory review and approval on 100% of the cases on which HEAP benefits are authorized unless the SSD has a Case Supervisory Review (CSR) plan approved by OTDA. The CSR process permits SSDs supervisors to review and approve a targeted or random sampling of HEAP cases.

Each SSD which 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. In order 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.

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

All applications from known relatives of any SSD employee require two levels of review. Written SSD 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 which cases will be subject to supervisory review approval. SSDs must identify areas or types for cases that should be targeted for 100% review. For example:
 - a. Error prone areas (i.e. earned income cases);
 - b. New applications, new workers' cases; or
 - c. Emergency applications 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:

Phyllis Morris
Deputy Commissioner
Center for Employment and Economic Supports
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
40 North Pearl Street, 11-C
Albany, NY 12243

Upon the submission of a CSR plan, OTDA will review each SSD's plan and approve the plan in whole or in part within 60 days of the date of submission by the SSD. 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 SSD must take to rectify the plan. Once a plan is approved by OTDA, a SSD does not need to submit another plan unless the SSD makes revisions to the originally approved plan. SSDs which 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 SSD designated HEAP Coordinator perform review and sign-off on all heating equipment repair and replacement 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

SSDs are required to provide 100% supervisory review and approval of the authorization document for HEAP. Generally, SSDs use the Non-Services Authorization Document (LDSS-3209) to authorize assistance; however, a SSD may request a waiver to use a different process to authorize assistance (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 SSDs operating under an approved waiver from OTDA Budget, Finance and Data Management.

K. Pending Report Information

SSDs are required to complete and submit HEAP Pending Reports for the 2015-16 program year to the HEAP Bureau via electronic reporting effective Friday, September 11, 2015 as outlined in GIS 15TA/DC022 "Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Pending Report Closing."

If a SSD 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 Maher Cmaylo at Emily.MaherCmaylo@otda.ny.gov or Emily Urban at Emily.Urban@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 SSD has a unique password for the participating list. These will remain unchanged, unless a SSD requests a new password. SSDs must contact their OTDA HEAP Bureau liaison if a new password is required.

SSDs must check the vendor list when processing applications to ensure that only participating vendors 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 Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) or when the SSD sets the HEAP BICS locks to “off” to produce EBT payments and locally issued two party checks.

SSDs may process denial transactions beginning November 16, 2015.

N. Subscription to Policy Directives

SSD staff, as appropriate, can 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.ny.net/dta/subscription.htm>. See the Dear CNS-WMS Coordinators letter dated April 13, 2015 for more information.

O. Systems

It is strongly suggested that SSDs 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 SSD employees, including granting entitlements to myWorkspace and the resetting of passwords, is performed at the local level by a SSD LAN Administrator. The LAN Administrator will be 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 15/TAmyB009 “Providing Remote Access to myWorkspace for Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Alternate Certifiers (AC).”

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 SSDs (including their Alternate Certifiers) 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.ny.net/dta/myWorkspace/myWS_switchboard.html.

The SSD identifies the Alternate Certifier role that works best for their operations and is responsible to communicate the roles and responsibilities to the Alternate Certifier.

SSDs 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 is found in the GIS 14 TA/myB013.

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

2. MyWorkspace Problem Solving

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

The SSD 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, SSD should include as much information as possible, including at a minimum the registry/case number, and any error number and message you receive.

SSD staff may access information regarding myWorkspace from the myWorkspace ‘Resources’ link on CentraPort:

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 SSD HEAP Coordinator.

P. OSC Vouchers

HEAP OSC Voucher Production

Initial production of the 2015-16 HEAP vouchers for vendor direct payments will remain in issued status until they are transferred to NYS Office of State Comptroller (OSC) for payment once federal funding is in place.

The initial 2015-16 vouchers for HEAP OSC vendor payments authorized outside of the Autopay will be available to SSDs on Monday, October 12, 2015 and continue each Monday thereafter.

The TA and SNAP Autopay vouchers will be available to SSDs on Monday, October 19, 2015.

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

Name: Phyllis Morris

Title: Deputy Commissioner

Division/Office: Center for Employment and Economic Supports