

GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM
Center for Employment & Economic Supports

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TO: Commissioners, TA Directors, HEAP Coordinators, CAP/TOP Directors, Staff Development Coordinators

FROM: Phyllis Morris, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Center for Employment and Economic Supports

SUBJECT: National Grid program: "Advocates in Action"

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSON: Temporary Assistance Bureau at 1-800-343-8859; ext. 4-9344

The purpose of this GIS is to inform Social Service Districts (SSDs) of an opportunity to participate in National Grid's new program, "Advocates in Action." In 2011, the National Grid Consumer Advocacy and Low Income group launched "Advocates in Action" as a program to bring services directly to their customers at locations such as Community Action Program agencies, food pantries, healthcare facilities, local governmental offices and other locations where low income customers seek assistance. National Grid representatives are stationed at these locations during scheduled times each week to assist their customers with utility needs.

Equipped with a laptop, National Grid representatives are able to provide on-site National Grid billing system access, review specific customer accounts, provide individualized bill payment assistance, energy education, and information on low income programs and other services.

A few SSDs piloted this program and feedback from the piloted SSDs has been very positive, citing multiple benefits of having a National Grid representative on site, such as, the ability to negotiate deferred payment agreements (DPAs), access the case notes in the National Grid record system, guide customers in certifying medical emergencies and facilitate a quick restoration of service.

Pilot districts have cited a decrease in the number of households requiring an emergency Temporary Assistance grant to meet a utility emergency. Additionally, the immediate referral to the National Grid representative lessens the need for a TA applicant/recipient to revisit the SSD and encourages a working relationship between the utility company and their customer.

Pilot districts also utilized this program to facilitate applying Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) benefits to the utility customer's account.

Since the "Advocates in Action" program has been so well received, National Grid is offering to make the program available to all SSDs in their territory. We encourage SSDs to explore this opportunity to enhance efficiency, while achieving cost reductions by lessening the costs associated with TA emergency programs. To take advantage of this program or for additional information, please contact:

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