



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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General Information System (GIS) Message

Section 1

Transmittal:	21 TA/DC065 Upstate and New York City
Date:	September 23, 2021
To:	Subscribers
Suggested Distribution:	Commissioners, HEAP Coordinators, TA Directors, SNAP Directors, Staff Development Coordinators
From:	Alison Maura, Director of Temporary Assistance and HEAP, Employment and Income Support Programs
Subject:	UPDATED 2020-2021/2021-2022 Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Regular Arrears Supplement (RAS)
Effective Date:	September 22, 2021
Contact Information:	HEAP Bureau (518) 473-0332 or NYSHEAP@otda.ny.gov
Attachments:	Attachment 1 – Regular Arrears Supplement (RAS) Worksheet Attachment 2 – RAS Outreach Letter Template Attachment 3 – Revised 2020-2021 HEAP Manually Denied Applicant Report Attachment 4 – Revised 2021-2022 HEAP Manually Denied Applicant Report Tracking Tool

Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to provide social services districts (districts) with updated information about the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Regular Arrears Supplement (RAS) benefit.

This directive eliminates the requirement that domestic electricity accounts be heat-related as previous stated in 21TA/DC065, released September 22, 2021.

RAS is a onetime benefit funded with the HEAP appropriation received under the *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* (Public Law 117-2). This benefit will be available from September 22, 2021 through September 30, 2022 or until funding is exhausted, whichever occurs first.

RAS benefits are a Regular HEAP supplement available to assist HEAP eligible households who have electricity and/or gas account arrears as documented by their utility vendor. Only one RAS benefit per current electricity and/or gas account is permitted, and total RAS benefits must not exceed \$10,000 per applicant household.

Application and Eligibility Criteria:

All applicants must meet the requirements to receive a Regular HEAP benefit as outlined in [20-LCM-11](#), the [HEAP Manual](#) and the forthcoming 2021-2022 Local Commissioner Memorandum (LCM), and must

have past-due utility arrears and be in active collections, or otherwise facing disconnection or termination of service on their current gas and/or electricity utility account(s) at the time of application for RAS.

The application for RAS is the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)), which is to be used in conjunction with the RAS Worksheet (Attachment 1). The RAS Worksheet is for district use only and must be completed by the certifier. The RAS Worksheet is not available for ordering and must be reproduced locally. A completed copy must be retained in the case file.

Households who received a Regular benefit in any amount through the application or Autopay processes, currently have an open HEAP, TA or SNAP case, and have not moved since receiving their Regular benefit do not need to complete a new HEAP Application and may apply using only the RAS Worksheet. These applicants may apply by phone or in person.

Applicants who did not receive a Regular benefit, have moved since receiving their benefit, or whose TA or SNAP case has closed since receiving their Regular benefit must apply using both the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) and RAS Worksheet. Districts must write "RAS" on page one of the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) upon receipt. An interview for these applicants is required. The requirement for in-person interviews is currently waived due to COVID-19. Applicants who apply using both forms may complete the RAS Worksheet by phone or in person, and the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) may be submitted by mail or in person. Applications for RAS benefits may not be submitted online via myBenefits.

The applicant must be the customer of record for the electricity and/or gas account(s), or must document that they pay the utility vendor(s) directly for the bill(s). This must be verified and documented on the RAS Worksheet. Domestic electricity utility accounts may qualify for a RAS benefit .

There is no resource test for the RAS benefit.

District Initiated Benefits:

A district specific spreadsheet will be sent to HEAP Coordinators under a separate cover indicating recipients of HEAP Regular benefits during the 2020-2021 program year who have been identified by their utility company as having electricity and/or gas arrears. Districts are instructed to assess these recipient households for RAS benefits by verifying the household's current electricity and/or gas account status.

Districts must complete the RAS Worksheet on behalf of the recipient household for which a RAS benefit is issued. Client interviews are not required for recipient households on this list whose eligibility for RAS can be determined using the utility web tool or collateral contact with the electricity and/or gas utility vendor.

If the district is unable to certify the eligibility for RAS for any households on this list (i.e. the electricity and/or gas account is not active, the address has changed since receipt of their most recent HEAP benefit) districts must mail the household a letter to contact the district. A RAS outreach letter template for district use can be found in Attachment 2. This template may be edited as necessary and placed on district letterhead for local reproduction. No district action is required for recipient households on this list whose current arrears are \$0.

Benefits authorized to recipient households contained on the district specific spreadsheet must be authorized as 2020-2021 payment in accordance with [WMS-CNS Coordinator Guidance WMS Implications for the 2021-2022 HEAP Program Year](#), dated August 3, 2021.

RAS Benefit Amount:

The amount of the RAS benefit must equal the current electricity and/or gas amount owed by the household, but must not exceed \$10,000 per household.

All electric and/or gas arrears must be verified on the date of application processing using a utility webtool and/or collateral contact with the vendor and must be documented on the RAS Worksheet.

Only one RAS benefit per current electricity and/or gas account is permitted. This benefit may not be accessed more than once for each current electric and/or gas account. Arrears that have already been paid by the applicant or any other party do not qualify for payment under RAS.

RAS payments must be guaranteed as Regular benefits to the electricity and/or gas utility company using the vendor's utility website or by sending the HEAP Guarantee of Payment Letter ([LDSS-5000](#)).

Systems Implications:

HEAP RAS payments are authorized by districts through the Welfare Management System (WMS) or myWorkspace using payment type J9 "HEAP Additional Benefit". These payments must be issued on a Case Type 60 (HEAP only) or an appropriate TA or SNAP case type. Payments on closed cases are not permitted. Benefits greater than \$9999 must be split into two separate payments to accommodate the length of the payment amount field.

An ABEL budget must be stored. Special Claiming Code H – "HEAP Prevention" is required for all RAS payments. This payment type does not require the payment amount to match the benefit amount on the stored ABEL budget. The first and second occurrences may be used on screen 6 in WMS, or in the Vendor Information section under the Payment/Budget Tab of myWorkspace, when issuing benefits to more than one utility vendor. The first occurrence must be used for all primary heat account payments, and the second occurrence must be used for all domestic electric utility payments.

Processing Timeframes and Client Notification:

The application date is the date that the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) is received by the district or the date that the RAS Worksheet is completed by the district, if a HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) is not required.

The district must determine an applicant's eligibility for RAS benefits within 30 business days from the date of application. Applications for RAS benefits may be pended for missing or additional documentation for up to 10 business days if necessary. If the applicant fails to provide the requested documentation by the due date, the application must be denied, and the applicant must be provided with a timely notice of eligibility decision.

A supervisory review must be completed for all approved and denied applications for RAS benefits. Districts with an approved HEAP specific Case Supervisory Review (CSR) plan on file with OTDA may review a targeted sample of applications.

Applicants must be provided an appropriate notice of the eligibility decision no later than 30 business days from the RAS application date. A copy of all notices must be retained in the case record.

Manual notices must be used for the approval and denial of RAS when CNS is not available. All manual RAS denials that are denied using WMS denial code Y99 must be reported on the HEAP Denied Applicant Report under RAS. A revised 2020-2021 HEAP Manually Denied Applicant Report may be found in Attachment 3, and a revised 2021-2022 HEAP Manually Denied Applicant Report Tracking Tool may be found in Attachment 4.

Additional Guidance to Districts and Vendors:

Districts must continue to submit their HEAP Pending Case Report in eReports on a weekly basis, as outlined in [20-LCM-11](#). Applications for RAS benefits must be reported under Regular HEAP, item 2 "Number of regular supplemental benefit applications received but not yet processed on WMS."

The HEAP Bureau has scheduled two Webex meetings to provide technical assistance to districts with the implementation of RAS. Representatives from OTDA's HEAP Bureau will be available for questions

related to the program administration. Information regarding the Webex meetings will be forthcoming under separate cover.

Additional guidance will also be provided to participating electric and gas utility vendors. Districts will be invited under separate cover to attend these meetings.