

## NYS Home Energy Assistance Program Cooling Assistance Component

### A. Benefit Component

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Cooling Assistance Component (CAC) provides for the purchase and installation of an air conditioner or fan. CAC benefits are available to HEAP eligible households containing at least one individual with a documented medical condition that is exacerbated by extreme heat and verified in writing by a physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner.

Households that are unable to obtain the required documentation within the requested timeframe may attest that their household contains a member with a medical condition that is exacerbated by extreme heat, and that they are experiencing a hardship in obtaining medical documentation. Households containing a vulnerable member based on their age (age 60 years of age or older, or children under age 6) that meet all other component eligibility criteria may receive a CAC benefit without a corresponding medical need. No additional cash benefits are available for CAC.

### B. Application Requirements

Applicant households that received a Regular HEAP benefit greater than \$21 during the current program year, received a benefit equal to \$21 during the current program year and reside in government subsidized housing with heat included in their shelter costs, or are currently in receipt of ongoing Temporary Assistance (TA) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, **AND** who have not moved since receiving a current program year Regular HEAP benefit, may apply by completing, dating and submitting to the local social services district (district) the HEAP Cooling Assistance Request for Benefit ([LDSS-4992](#)).

Government subsidized housing includes upstate Welfare Management System (WMS) and NYC equivalent shelter codes 02 (Rent Public), 38 (Subsidized Housing Non-Certificate), 40 (Section 8 Voucher 30% Limit), 96 (SSI High Shelter), and 97 (SSI Low Shelter). Applicants who reside in group homes or congregate care shelter types, which qualifies them for a \$21 Regular benefit, are not eligible for CAC.

If only the [LDSS-4992](#) needs to be completed, this can be completed with the applicant over the telephone or in person at the certifying agency.

Applicant households for which the preceding does not apply must complete both the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) **and** the Cooling Assistance Request for Benefit ([LDSS-4992](#)). Districts must check the box "Cooling" in the agency use section on page one of the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) upon receipt.

- An authorized representative or an individual with power of attorney may apply on behalf of the applicant. The applicant must designate an Authorized Representative using page 4 of the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)), or with a dated and signed statement from the applicant authorizing the individual to request a Cooling Assistance benefit on their behalf.
- Applicants for the HEAP CAC who received a Regular HEAP benefit equal to \$21 and reside in government subsidized housing with heat included in their shelter costs or

received a Regular benefit greater than \$21 during the current program year are not required to have an interview.

- Applicants for the HEAP CAC who did not receive a current program year Regular HEAP benefit must have an eligibility interview conducted either in person or by telephone.
- Applicants for the HEAP CAC cannot apply online through [myBenefits](#).
- Any applicant who is denied a HEAP CAC benefit may reapply for the HEAP CAC benefit.
- Each application must be date-stamped upon receipt and acted on.

### C. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must meet all HEAP eligibility criteria to be eligible for the HEAP CAC. See the [HEAP Manual](#), Chapter 8 – Basic Eligibility for specific eligibility criteria.

In addition to basic eligibility, all applicants for the CAC must meet the following criteria:

- The applicant must currently reside in an eligible living situation which would qualify them to receive a Regular HEAP benefit equal to \$21 and reside in government subsidized housing with heat included in their shelter costs or greater than \$21.
- The applicant or a household member must have a documented medical condition that is exacerbated by extreme heat.
  - The medical documentation must be issued in writing and be signed by a physician, physician's assistant, or a nurse practitioner and clearly state the medical condition.
  - The document must be dated within the previous 12 months from the month of application.
  - Documentation older than 12 months may be used if it provides sufficient information to indicate that the medical condition is considered chronic; e.g., Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).
  - If the applicant cannot obtain medical documentation within the requested timeframe, the district may allow the applicant to attest that their household contains a member with a medical condition exacerbated by extreme heat, and that they are experiencing a hardship in obtaining medical documentation. The attestation may be verbal and must be recorded in case notes. The applicant must contact the district within the 10-day pending period as specified on the Documentation Requirements ([LDSS-2642](#)) form.
  - Households containing a vulnerable member based on their age (age 60 years of age or older, or children under age 6) which meet all other component eligibility criteria may receive cooling assistance benefits without a corresponding medical need.
- The applicant household must not have a working air conditioner newer than five years old or

an operational central air system, as reported by the applicant and verified by the vendor. Households whose central air system is inoperable may be eligible for CAC if all other eligibility criteria are met.

- The applicant household must not have received a HEAP funded air conditioner within the past five years.

Applicant households that received a current program year Regular HEAP benefit in an amount less than or equal to \$21 and do not reside in government subsidized housing with heat included in their shelter costs are not eligible for the HEAP CAC. However, such applicants who move into an eligible living situation may apply for this component using both the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) and the HEAP Cooling Assistance Request for Benefit ([LDSS-4992](#)).

#### **D. Documentation**

Applicants must meet all HEAP documentation requirements to be eligible for the CAC.

- Applicants who apply using only the HEAP Cooling Assistance Request for Benefit ([LDSS-4992](#)) do not need to provide additional income documentation.
- Applicants who request a benefit using both the HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) and the HEAP Cooling Assistance Request for Benefit ([LDSS-4992](#)) must provide documentation of residence, identity for each household member, documentation of household income and a valid Social Security Number for each household member that has one.
- Districts must use any permanent and/or medical documentation available in the applicant's case record or within the agency.
- Applicants whose request for benefit is pended must be provided the Documentation Requirements ([LDSS-2642](#)) form. A copy must be retained in the case record.
- Applicants pended for medical documentation may contact the district within the 10-day timeframe if they are experiencing a hardship in obtaining medical documentation. The district may allow the applicant to attest that their household contains a member with a medical condition that is exacerbated by extreme heat, and that they are experiencing a hardship in obtaining medical documentation. This attestation may be accepted verbally and must be recorded in case notes.
- Households containing an individual age 60 or older or under age 6 do not need to be pended for medical documentation. These households may be pended for proof of age, if missing from the case record.
- Districts may pend a benefit request for a maximum of ten business days for documentation. If the applicant fails to provide the requested documentation by the due date, the benefit request must be denied using the HEAP Denial Code HEAP Cooling Assistance Component (CAC) Denial (M09).

#### **E. Scope of Benefits and Specifications**

CAC benefits are provided on a first come, first served basis to eligible applicants. The following is a listing of benefit limits, equipment and services that are provided through the HEAP CAC.

- Benefits are not to exceed \$800 for a window, portable air conditioner, or fan and not to exceed \$1,000 for an existing wall sleeve unit, once in a 5-year period. This must include the cost of the air conditioner or fan, administrative costs, labor, program support, materials, removal of the old unit and minor repairs essential for proper and safe installation. Funds may not be used for any other purpose.
- Vendors are required to charge the same rate for services performed for households not in receipt of HEAP.
- Only one HEAP funded air conditioner or fan may be provided per eligible dwelling.
- Vendors are required to determine the most appropriate living space for the creation of a cooling room.
- Vendors are required to calculate the British Thermal Units (BTUs) of the cooling room to ensure the purchase of an appropriately sized air conditioner.
- In circumstances where an air conditioner cannot be safely installed, the vendor must provide a fan, at a reasonable cost, for the established cooling room.
- It is the responsibility of the client or dwelling owner to maintain the air conditioner. This includes removing, covering, storing, and reinstalling the unit.
- Vendors are required to register all warranties with the manufacturer and provide a copy of the completed warranty and the manufacturer's owner's manual to clients.
- With client consent, vendors are required to remove and properly dispose of old air conditioning units.
- Recipients of the HEAP CAC should be directed to contact the vendor directly for any issues that arise with the unit after installation.

If an eligible applicant received a HEAP funded fan when an air conditioner could not be safely installed, and subsequently moves into a dwelling that will support an air conditioner, one may be provided using HEAP funds. A new application is required.

#### **F. Processing Timeframes and Client Notification**

Districts must determine an applicant's eligibility for the HEAP CAC within 30 business days of receipt of the completed HEAP Application ([LDSS-3421](#)) and/or the HEAP Cooling Assistance Request for Benefit ([LDSS-4992](#)). Requests for HEAP CAC 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 benefit request must be denied using M09.

Applicants must be provided with written notice of the eligibility decision made on the application for HEAP CAC benefits no later than 30 business days from the date of receipt of the final

vendor invoice for payment.

Manual notices must be used for the approval or denial of the CAC benefit when CNS is not available. Districts must provide recipients with a completed Home Energy Assistance Program Notice of Eligibility Decision – Approval ([LDSS-3494A](#)) or completed Home Energy Assistance Program Notice of Eligibility Decision – Denial ([LDSS-3494B](#)) when using a manual notice for the CAC benefit.

All manual Cooling denials that are denied using WMS denial code Y99 – Manual Denial must be reported on the HEAP Denied Applicant Report under Cooling.

## **G. Vendor Participation**

All vendors providing CAC services must have a signed HEAP Cooling Assistance Services Vendor Agreement on file with the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) HEAP Bureau. This legally binding document provides both OTDA and participating vendors with assurances that vendors understand the scope of the work to be performed. In addition, it requires participating vendors to abide by the provisions set forth in the document. Vendors must be directed to contact the OTDA HEAP Bureau at: (518) 473-0332 or 1-866-270-HEAP (4327) to become a provider of CAC services.

Each district can find a list of all its HEAP CAC participating vendors in the HEAP Participating Vendor list found in Centraport. This list is updated daily, and districts must confirm vendor participation using this list prior to authorizing a benefit.

## **H. Cooling Assistance Installation Scheduling**

Once notified by the district of an approved applicant, HEAP CAC vendors are responsible for contacting eligible households to schedule installation. If a vendor cannot schedule an installation with the household within ten business days of the referral, the vendor must notify the district. The district must then send the household a Documentation Requirements form ([LDSS-2642](#)) with the “Other” box checked and the following language, “(Vendor name) tried to contact you to schedule installation of cooling equipment, but was unsuccessful. Please contact us by (date) to resolve this.”

If the client does not contact the district within the ten-business day pending period to arrange installation, the case must be denied using denial reason code M09 – HEAP Cooling Assistance Component (CAC) Denial. Workers should utilize the “other” selection and cite “you failed to make arrangements for installation of your cooling equipment by the due date of (date)”.

## **I. HEAP Cooling Assistance Services Invoice**

The HEAP Cooling Assistance Services Invoice form, ([LDSS-5044](#)) is used by both the district and the vendor.

Districts use this form to notify a vendor that an applicant is approved for services. Districts must complete the following sections:

- Customer contact section, which is used to communicate approved applicant information to the vendor; and,

- Agency Use Section, which is used to record the Application Date, Date Approved, Invoice Date Received and date of Collateral Contact with Client to confirm the satisfactory installation and operation of the cooling equipment upon job completion.

To receive payment, vendors must return the completed form to the districts, with the client's signature. The sections to be completed by the vendor are:

- Services Provided checklist, used to identify services performed by the vendor;
- Invoice section, used to itemize the cost of the job including equipment, work completion date and technician signature; and,
- The Customer Section with client signature to attest that services have been satisfactorily completed.

## **J. Payment and Authorizations**

Vendors must submit a completed HEAP Cooling Assistance Services Invoice ([LDSS-5044](#)) to the district for a payment to be authorized. Payments to vendors must not exceed \$800 per benefit for a window, portable air conditioner, or fan and not to exceed \$1,000 for an existing wall sleeve unit, once in a 5-year period.

All HEAP CAC payments are authorized by the districts through WMS or myWorkspace using payment type code H2 – HEAP Cooling Benefit. These payments must be issued on a Case Type 60 (HEAP only) or an appropriate (open and active) TA or SNAP Case Type.

Special Claiming Code H – HEAP Prevention Payment is required onscreen 6 of WMS or on the payments/budget tab in myWorkspace for all CAC payments.