



**Stay
Connected**

National Consumer
Law Center

HEATING
ASSISTANCE
and ENERGY
EFFICIENCY
SERVICES
for Income-Eligible
Households in MA

Thank you for participating in this training—and assisting your clients to complete their LIHEAP applications.

The federally-funded LIHEAP is overseen in the Commonwealth by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and is administered by local providers, primarily Community Action Agencies.

These slides are meant to be a training tool used alongside a trainer's explanation.

They do not represent a complete list of eligibility requirements.

October 23, 2023

Home Energy Assistance Program

LIHEAP (FUEL ASSISTANCE)

GOAL: To reduce the energy burden of income eligible households.

Eligibility is based on the number of individuals, adults and children, who live in a household, and their combined income.



FY 24 LIHEAP Income Eligibility		
Number in Household	Annual Income	Income Past 4 Weeks
1	\$ 45,392	\$ 3,491
2	\$ 59,359	\$ 4,566
3	\$ 73,326	\$ 5,640
4	\$ 87,294	\$ 6,714
5	\$ 101,261	\$ 7,789

Full benefit chart available here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/learn-about-home-energy-assistance-liheap>

Home Energy Assistance Program

LIHEAP (FUEL ASSISTANCE)



Benefit is paid to vendor for primary heat



Gas, oil, electricity, propane, wood and heat included in unsubsidized rent



Can be owner or renter



Single family home, apartment or condo



Usage between Nov 1 and April 30th



Discount Rate on utilities all year



Energy Efficiency Benefits



Protection from Service Termination



Payment and Forgiveness Plans



Applications Accepted until April 30th



Emergency Assistance Funds

Home Energy Assistance Program

LIHEAP (FUEL ASSISTANCE)



Dates and other payment information:

- **LIHEAP Benefits are paid for deliveries and usage between November 1st and April 30th**
- **Applications are taken through April 30th and benefits are effective on or retroactive to November 1**
- **Payments are made directly to the primary heating vendor and can be retroactive**
- **If heating cost is included in (unsubsidized*) rent, the client is directly reimbursed.**

***subsidy must be <30% of household income**

How to apply for the Home Energy Assistance Program

Examples of what we mean by “Income”

Income for the last 4 weeks for all household members 18 and over.

Wages

Social security

Regular Unemployment

Disability Income

Rental income or Self Employment

Child Support, Alimony, regular Financial Assistance

Odd jobs

Interest

Pension

Other types of income may also apply.



Other necessary documents include ID
Citizenship information
Housing expense
Heating bills

There is no “Asset Test”

SNAP Participants and LIHEAP



COMING SOON!



- Individuals who participate in SNAP will not have to provide income or citizenship information in order to qualify for LIHEAP.
- LIHEAP has a different definition of “Household” than SNAP does and individuals who live with SNAP recipients and do not receive SNAP themselves will still provide eligibility documents.
- Heating, housing information etc. will still be required as will a signed application—in paper or digital form



Stay
Tuned!

How to apply for the Home Energy Assistance Program: Citizenship

- Federal LIHEAP benefits are available to:
 - Documented Citizens
 - Qualified Aliens
- Mixed Status Households (documented/undocumented) may receive a pro-rated benefit.



Households where no members qualify *may* receive assistance from other funds within the agency.

UTILITY DISCOUNTS AND PROTECTIONS

Qualifying customers will be enrolled on the discount rate.

Automatic Enrollment

- The Dept. of Transitional Assistance (“DTA”) will share with the utilities a list of qualifying customers on a monthly/quarterly basis.
- LIHEAP Agencies share eligibility files with utilities throughout the heating season***
- The Discount Rate is not Fuel Assistance. You can have both.

*****Important to know*****

The Discount Rate can be obtained in several ways and some clients you speak with may not know if they have it or not.

Some discount rate assignments can be complicated based on the name on the account.

Discount rates vary by utility and location. The current range is 25% (for many gas companies) to 42%.

www.Eversource.com/BillHelp
www.ngrid.com/madiscount

UTILITY DISCOUNTS AND PROTECTIONS

Protections from Disconnect

Protection from disconnection of service for non-payment **may be** available for customers with financial hardship and specific household circumstances.

Protected customers are still responsible for their usage and utility bill.

We encourage these customers to make a payment, enroll in a payment plan, or apply for the Forgiveness Program.

Financial Hardship Protection

Medical Protection

Infant Protection

Elderly Protection (65)



Convenient LIHEAP Application Options

It is more convenient than ever to apply for the first time or to re-certify a LIHEAP application.

- **MAIL:** Everyone who applied last year will receive an application in the mail with instructions on how to re-apply.
- **ONLINE Portal:** People can apply for the first time or re-apply through the online portal. Recertifications require a PIN which is included with the paper application or from a rep at the agency. The PIN changes each year.
- Many agencies partner with councils on aging and other community-based groups to help them take applications both walk-in and by appointment. Work with your local agency to find what works for them.
- All first-time applications require an interview, either in person or by phone before the application can be certified.
- Agency Look Up tool: <https://hedfuel.azurewebsites.net/>
- Direct link to online portal: <https://www.toapply.org/MassLIHEAP>
- You are encouraged to visit the agency websites directly for more localized info, including application times etc.
- Most agencies have an IVR which will provide up to date application status information.
- The portal will have this capacity in coming months as well.



Additional Resources and Benefits

Additional Resources

Clients who participate in LIHEAP often are facing other challenging circumstances that compromise their ability to move forward with other opportunities.
Agencies are expert at assisting clients in these situations.

Old Bills

Terminations

Repayment
Agreements

Forgiveness
Plans

Bills in
someone
else's name

ENERGY Efficiency Services, ranging from Heating system repair/replacement, to full scale Weatherization and Instant Savings Measures such as LED light bulbs and upgraded appliances, are available to tenants and homeowners in most communities at no cost.

These programs work hand in hand with LIHEAP to ensure energy savings for our clients and create a cleaner, greener world.

Myths and Pro-Tips

- I own my home so I can't participate: MYTH! No Asset test
 - I have savings so I won't be eligible: MYTH! We will only count your interest or required distributions.
 - I am self-employed so I can't participate: MYTH! Any kind of income
 - I don't need to report veteran's income: MYTH! Most kinds of Veteran's income are counted. (Income eligibility is high.)
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- ❖ Do I have to count my children or others who do not have income or do not contribute to the household? Yes—we count everyone.
 - ❖ Are portal (on-line) applications are processed faster?—all applications are carefully reviewed by LIHEAP staff.
 - ❖ Should I say I have an emergency so my application will be processed faster? Please don't.
 - ❖ Should I leave it for someone who needs it more than I do? The benefit levels are tiered so that those with the deepest need receive a higher benefit. This program is here for YOU!

Thank you!



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