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TO: Persons Interested in Energy Assistance  
FROM: Shirley Bergert  
DATE: September 16, 2010  
RE: Energy Assistance for winter 2009-10

**Energy assistance applications are currently being accepted**, although benefits will not be available until November 1<sup>st</sup> (*i.e.*, no oil or other deliverable fuel deliveries will be covered before this date) and fuel deliveries will not be authorized until November 2<sup>nd</sup>. To identify an application site, contact 211 or DSS' energy hotline: 1-800-842-1132.

### Some highlights:

- **Benefits are substantially reduced**, particularly for utility heated households. All basic benefit categories are reduced by \$45 from last year's plan, but utility heated households have been reduced by \$287 when compared to actual benefits provided last winter.
- **Crisis and Safety-Net benefits have been reduced.** The crisis benefit for deliverable fuel customers is a single grant of up to \$400. The safety-net benefit includes two potential payments of up to \$400 for "vulnerable" households (member who is disabled or under 6 or 60+ years, or one payment of up to \$400 for non-vulnerable households (see benefit chart).
- DSS will provide a nominal energy assistance **benefit to low income households whose heat is included in their rent and rent is less than 30% of household income.** This nominal benefit, automatically provided to SNAP (food stamp) recipients in this category by DSS, will result in increased SNAP benefits in most cases because DSS will utilize the "standard utility allowance" (SUA) when calculating SNAP benefits. DSS included this in the energy assistance plan for last winter, but didn't implement it until this past summer. It is important to encourage all low income households to apply for SNAP -- the income guidelines have been raised and benefits have been increased. The energy assistance benefit is only available to households already receiving SNAP.
- The plan again provides for an **expanded application period for utility heated households with a shut-off notice.** The Community Action Agencies will take applications until May 3, 2010. Additionally, utility heated households with a shut-off notice for their heating utility will be able to apply for benefits until May 17, 2010. This is beneficial to households new to the energy assistance program or headed by a person with a disability or competency issue that impedes his/her ability to timely apply for assistance; the threat of a utility shut-off is what often triggers a request for assistance. *As always, there is a risk the program will run out of funds, so we don't want anyone to wait until the last minute to apply.*



- **CL&P, UI, SCG, CNG and Yankee Gas will continue the affordability improvements their arrearage forgiveness programs.** Because utility heating costs have increased to unaffordable levels for many low income households, the arrearage forgiveness program has increased in importance. Anyone who receives energy assistance for heat services provided by one of these utilities can participate in that utility's arrearage forgiveness program.
  - Customers who cannot afford the amount of the monthly payments requested by the utility should be referred to a social service agency to complete a budget form that calculates what the household can afford to pay – these payments can be as low as \$50/month if that is all the household can afford.
  - The household will complete applications for “hardship status” (for protection from a winter utility shut-off) and for conservation assistance provided through the utility, at the same time the budget form is completed. In most cases, this should occur at the same time the household applies for energy assistance, avoiding confusion and ensuring full protection to vulnerable households.
  - Arrearage forgiveness budgets are being set now. If the customer begins making the required payments, this will resolve a current threatened or actual shut-off, although the utility match will not apply to customer and energy assistance payments until after November 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Community Action Agencies and other social service agencies are participating – ask the utility if you do not know where to refer someone as they have the list of trained social service agencies.

The **bad news is that DSS is persisting in requiring Social Security numbers** (SSNs) from every member of an applicant household, or at least proof that an SSN has been requested, with limited exceptions. There are many immigrants who qualify for energy assistance, but do not have an SSN, typically because they do not have authority to work in the US. A household may qualify for energy assistance even if a member is an ineligible immigrant -- the immigrant's income and assets will count against the household, but the immigrant is not counted as a household member. Households denied energy assistance or provided reduced benefits, can be referred to Statewide Legal Services: 1-800-453-3320.

**Attached please find the following for your use in assisting clients:**

- **Summary chart and notes regarding available energy assistance and related benefits, including weatherization programs** – includes more information than prior summaries, more phone numbers and websites, and appeal information
- **Outreach flyer** – can be provided directly to clients or blown up and posted

## ENERGY RELATED ASSISTANCE FOR WINTER 2009 - 10 (9/09)

### CEAP (CT Energy Assistance Program); Operation Fuel; CHAP (Contingency Heating Assistance Program)

#### Income Limits for Each Energy Assistance Program:

Family Size	∴= CEAP <sup>1</sup> : 0-150% FPL (Federal Poverty Level - FPL) < ∴									
						∴= CEAP Elderly (60+ years) & Disabled: < ∴ ∴ 150% - 200 % FPL				
	∴= Operation Fuel: 0% -- 200% FPL < ∴									
						∴= CHAP <sup>2</sup> : 150% FPL - 60% SMI (State Median Income – SMI) < ∴				
	100% FPL monthly income	100% FPL annual income	125% FPL monthly income	125% FPL annual income	150% FPL monthly income	150% FPL annual income	200% FPL monthly income	200% FPL annual income	60% SMI monthly income	60% SMI annual income
1	\$902	\$10,830	\$1,128	\$13,537	\$1,354	\$16,245	\$1,805	\$21,660	\$2,540	\$30,485
2	1,214	14,470	1,507	18,087	1,821	21,855	2,428	29,140	3,322	39,865
3	1,526	18,310	1,907	22,887	2,289	27,465	3,052	36,620	4,104	49,245
4	1,837	22,050	2,297	27,562	2,756	33,075	3,675	44,100	4,885	58,625
5	2,149	25,790	2,686	32,237	3,224	38,685	4,298	51,580	5,667	68,005
6	2,461	29,530	3,076	36,912	3,691	44,295	4,922	59,060	6,449	77,385

<sup>1</sup>Households where all members receive one of following DSS programs are income eligible for CEAP: Temporary Family Assistance, State Supplement (AABD), Refugee Cash Assistance, Food Stamps. Benefit level is determined by total household income; if income exceeds 150% of poverty, household is eligible for CEAP benefit at 150% of poverty.

<sup>2</sup>CHAP covers households ineligible for CEAP, up to 60% of state median income.

**Households with ineligible immigrants** – income and assets of immigrant count, but household number reduced by number of ineligible immigrants in household. *Many non-citizens are eligible for energy assistance*, including those without Social Security numbers. Refer those denied assistance or provided reduced benefits to Statewide Legal Services: 1-800-453-3320.

**Assets Test:** Homeowners with liquid assets over \$10,000 and all others with liquid assets over \$7,000 are ineligible for energy assistance, unless assets over these amounts plus income are less than income limit for assistance. Asset verification is required.

#### Benefits<sup>1</sup> Based on Household Income and Source of Heat:

Income (as % of FPL or SMI)	Basic Heat Benefit (primary heat only; benefit paid to vendor)		"Renter" Benefits (heat included in rent)	
	Vulnerable (household includes member who is disabled, 60+ or under 6 years)	Non-vulnerable	rent exceeds 30% of gross income; benefit paid to household	rent less than 30% of gross income; DSS automatically provides benefit without application
0%-100% FPL (CEAP)	\$ 880	\$ 840	\$ 410	\$1
101%-125% FPL (CEAP)	\$ 785	\$ 740	\$ 395	
126%-150% FPL (CEAP)	\$ 690	\$ 640	\$ 380	
150%-200% FPL (CEAP Elderly & Disabled)	\$ 605		(No "renter" benefit)	
150% FPL - 60% SMI (CHAP)	\$ 580			

<sup>1</sup>Households that receive CEAP, even nominal benefit, will have their food stamp benefits calculated by DSS using the "standard utility allowance" (SUA). This typically results in higher food stamp benefits.

**CEAP Crisis:** (limited to deliverable fuels, e.g., oil, propane, wood, coal, kerosene)

- Crisis Assistance: Basic heat benefits exhausted and help requested by 3/15/10. One time payment of up to \$400 for CEAP and CHAP households.
- "Safety-Net": Crisis benefits exhausted and help requested by 3/15/10. CAA staff interview household; if it cannot pay for fuel delivery and no other heated shelter option is available, payment of up to \$400 for fuel delivery is authorized. Two safety-net payments available for vulnerable households and one payment for non-vulnerable. No safety-net benefit available for CHAP.

**Furnace Clean, Tune and Test:** Available where heat source is a deliverable fuel; the cost is not be deducted from benefits.

**Gas and Deliverable Fuel heating system start-ups:** The cost is covered through benefits.

**Emergency Heating System Repair/Replacement:** Where heating system is unsafe or inoperable, repair or replacement is available to CEAP eligible homeowners in single family homes (income up to 150% FPL, or up to 200% FPL if household member is disabled or 60+ years); contact CAA (Community Action Agency) handling energy assistance application. Note such repairs are also available to DSS cash assistance recipients (TFA, AABD or State Supplement, and SAGA) who own their homes, when necessary to allow the individual to remain in the home; contact DSS case worker to apply.

**Applications:** DSS website provides program and application information: [www.ct.gov/staywarm](http://www.ct.gov/staywarm). Applications taken at local CAAs (Community Action Agencies). To find local application sites, call 211, 1-800-842-1132, or CAA (see list below). Heating bills must be in the name of an adult household member or emancipated minor; copy of a bill should be provided with application. Those who cannot go to the CAA because they are disabled or ill should ask the CAA for the assistance needed to allow them to apply; if assistance is not provided, contact DSS' Civil Rights Officer at 860-424-4050.

**CAAs:** Bridgeport – 203-384-6904; Bristol – 806-582-7490; Danbury – 203-748-5422; Derby-Ansonia-Shelton – 203-736-5420; Hartford – 860-560-5800 or 1-800-798-3805; Meriden – 203-235-0278; Middletown – 860-347-4465 x.223 or 224; New Britain – 860-223-2288; New Haven – 203-387-7700; Norwalk – 203-899-2484; Norwich-New London - 860-425-6681; Stamford – 203-352-4846; Waterbury – 203-756-8151; Willimantic – 860-450-7423.

**Deadlines:** **Application deadline:** 5/3/10; deadline extended to 5/17/10 for utility heated households with a shut-off notice. **Fuel delivery period:** 11/1/09 to 3/15/10. **Fuel bill submission deadline** (fuel from participating dealers): 5/31/10. **Notice of benefits** granted must be provided by CAA within 45 days of application, excluding state holidays; notice contains appeal information. **Appeals:** Initial appeal must be a written request for review to the executive director of the CAA responsible for the application, made within 60 days of problem (but no later than 9/30/10); the CAA review decision may be appealed in writing to DSS, 25 Sigourney St., Hartford, CT 06106, made within 60 days of the CAA decision.

**Fuel Banks:** **Operation Fuel** fuel banks and others provide assistance with energy and utility bills. Contact INFOLINE at 211 for local sites or go to [http://www.operationfuel.org/getting\\_help.html](http://www.operationfuel.org/getting_help.html) for Operation Fuel sites.

**Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund:** Provides emergency assistance, including help with utility and energy bills, for honorably discharged veterans who served during specific time periods. Spouses and dependent children can also get assistance. Application sites are located in nearly every town. Contact INFOLINE at 211.

#### **Weatherization:**

- **CAA program** for households with income less than 60% SMI ([www.ct.gov/staywarm](http://www.ct.gov/staywarm) - click on link to weatherization program). Energy assistance application is also application for weatherization, although household may need to complete a follow-up request sent by the CAA to the applicant.
- **CL&P** customers contact CL&P's WRAP program at 1-800-388-9727; **UI** customers contact UI HELPS at 1-877-947-3873. **Gas company** programs are coordinated through WRAP and UI HELPS.
- **Municipal utilities have programs:** Bozrah - 860-889-7388; Groton - 860-446-4000; Jewett City - 860-376-2955; Norwich - 860-887-2555; S. Norwalk - 203-866-3366; Norwalk Third Taxing District - 203-866-9271; Wallingford - 203-294-2263.
- **TFA, State Supplement (AABD) and SAGA recipient homeowners:** DSS funding available for repairs needed to allow them to remain in their homes. Apply with DSS worker.
- **Interest subsidized loans** available through CHIF for homeowners; call 860-233-5165.
- **Furnace replacement rebate** program through OPM: 1-866-940-4676.  
[http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2994&q=420476&opmNav\\_GID=1808](http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2994&q=420476&opmNav_GID=1808).
- The SmartLiving Center (297 Boston Post Road (Rt. 1), Orange, CT; 1-866-762-7899), starting Nov. 2 will provide **free weatherization kits** to customers who take a tour.

**Arrearage Forgiveness Programs:** CL&P, UI, CNG, SCG and Yankee Gas have programs beginning each November where energy assistance eligible households (and recipients of other charitable utility payments such as fuel banks) are put on budget plans. Substantially reduced payment plans ("below budget") are available through participating social service providers; if a customer cannot afford the payment requested, then a referral to a participating agency should be requested from the utility. If all payments are made by the household, the utility forgives back bills on a semi-annual basis and household is protected from shut-offs year round. CL&P and UI have alternate arrearage forgiveness programs for customers ineligible for energy assistance with separate eligibility criteria and forgiveness schedules. Some municipal utilities have programs. Apply with utility.

**Hardship:** Low-income "hardship" customers are entitled to have gas heat and electric service turned on between 11/1 and 5/1, even if they owe money to the utility, *except* if gas heat service was provided during prior winter based on "hardship" and service was turned off between 5/1 and 10/31, then, to get service turned on, customer must pay the lesser of \$100, minimum payments due under payment agreement, or 20% of debt to gas company when gas was shut off. Customers must apply for "hardship" protection at utility every fall. Gas and electric utility service must be provided year-round if a lack of service is life-threatening, regardless of debt to utility.

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## ENERGY ASSISTANCE BENEFITS -- APPLY NOW!

### Application deadlines:

- May 3, 2010 for most households
- May 17, 2010 for utility heated households with a shut-off notice



1. Energy assistance will help pay your heating bills. You may be eligible for benefits even if heat is included in your rent payment (*depending on your income and rent amount*).

2. Apply if your income is less than the amounts listed below:

number of people in household	1	2	3	4	5	6
Monthly income	\$2,540	\$3,322	\$4,104	\$4,885	\$5,667	\$6,449

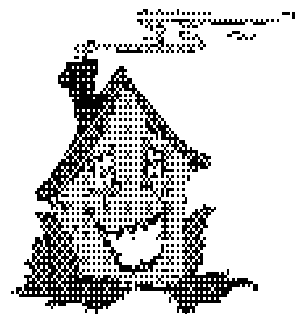
3. Apply at the local Community Action Agency, or call INFOLINE (211) for information on the closest application site. *Bring proof of income for everyone in the household and a copy of your fuel or utility heating bill.*

4. If you heat with electricity from CL&P or UI, or gas from Yankee Gas, SCG or CNG, ask the Community Action Agency to calculate a budget payment for the arrearage forgiveness program. If they cannot help you, contact the utility company and apply for the arrearage forgiveness program. *If you can't afford the payment amount offered by the utility company, ask for referral to a social service agency for calculation of a reduced payment.*

5. Assistance is available for heating equipment start-ups and tune-ups. *Ask when you apply for energy assistance.*

6. Ask for weatherization assistance – it is available to renters and homeowners.

7. Repairs or replacements of unsafe furnaces or furnaces that are not working are available to homeowners. *Ask when you apply for energy assistance; if you receive cash assistance from the Department of Social Services, ask your DSS worker.*



8. Protect yourself from a winter shut-off by applying for "hardship status" at your electric and gas companies.