

An Overview of Arkansas' LIHEAP Program

Administration

The Arkansas Department of Human Services oversees the state's LIHEAP program. The state provides grants to the local Community Action Agencies (CAA) to handle the day-to-day administrative tasks required by the program. Funding is passed directly from the state to the CAAs. For more information about how to apply for assistance, contact the Department of Human Services at 501-682-8726.

How the program works

Arkansas's LIHEAP program is comprised of two parts:

- **Heating Assistance Program:** CAAs administer the heating assistance program from January 1 until March 31, at which point all funding for heating assistance is typically expended. However, many CAAs run out of heating assistance funding long before the end of March. This program primarily serves elderly households and households in which at least one member has a disability. The elderly and people with disabilities who access the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp Program) are automatically pre-qualified for LIHEAP heating assistance. The maximum annual heating assistance benefit for 2009 is \$359.00. The benefit amount a household may receive depends on household size and income level.
- **Crisis Assistance Program:** CAAs administer the crisis assistance program from March 1 until the end of the federal fiscal year (September 30), or whenever funds are depleted. The crisis assistance program is available to households that have received a shut-off notice from their utility provider. The maximum annual crisis assistance benefit for 2009 is \$700, though households receive only enough assistance to re-establish service.

When adequate funding is available, Arkansas provides a summer cooling program. In 2006, due to increased federal appropriations within the LIHEAP block grant, Arkansas was able to offer its first comprehensive cooling assistance program. Arkansas will begin a summer cooling period in July of 2009 with payments being made directly to households or their energy supplier. There is significant demand for cooling assistance; however, in most years, the state does not receive sufficient federal funds to support an annual cooling assistance program.

Eligibility

This year, Arkansas increased its eligibility to households with incomes up to 150 percent of the federal poverty level. Historically, approximately 18 percent of eligible households receive LIHEAP assistance each year.

Weatherization

Arkansas designates 15 percent of its annual LIHEAP funding to support weatherization.

Curtailed Service

Arkansas imposes a moratorium on utility shut-offs when the temperature goes below 32 degrees or above 98 degrees.

SGA and LIHEAP

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a block grant that provides resources to states to help low-income families meet their energy assistance needs. Most Southern states rely on LIHEAP to assist low-income households -- working families with young children and senior citizens -- pay for their cooling and heating bills throughout the year.

LIHEAP is largely viewed by some members of Congress as a regional program, primarily intended to benefit cold weather states in the Northeast and Midwest. Its funding formula relies on data that is more than a quarter century out of date, and is skewed to disproportionately benefit states in these cold weather regions of the country.

SGA believes that Congress must view LIHEAP as a national program that assists families throughout the country with their overall energy needs. As such, SGA is working to achieve equity in the formula so Southern states will begin to receive a fair share of LIHEAP funding to better meet the needs of their low-income residents.

SGA Point of Contact

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