

An Overview of Florida's LIHEAP Program

Administration

The Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA) oversees the state's LIHEAP program. 32 local entities, both public and non-profit, handle the day-to-day administrative tasks required by the program. Administrative and benefit funding is passed directly from the state to these entities, which in turn distribute funding to eligible households. To contact the Department of Community Affairs, Division of Housing and Community Development at (850) 488-7541

How the program works

Florida's LIHEAP program runs year round and is comprised of two parts:

- **Home Energy Assistance Program:** Local LIHEAP agencies accept applications for energy assistance throughout the year and eligible households may apply for a benefit once each year at any time. In the 2008-2009 program year, the benefit ranged from \$150 to \$300 per household, depending on family size and income.
- **Crisis Assistance Program:** Households can apply for crisis assistance up to two times per year—once between October 1 and March 31 for winter crisis assistance, and once between April 1 and September 31 for summer crisis assistance. Households can receive up to \$600 for each crisis assistance period, a maximum of \$1200 per year. In 2008, the average crisis payment was approximately \$320. Households must be delinquent in paying their utility bills, received a shut-off notice, or be without power in order to qualify. In providing crisis assistance, local entities place a priority on serving households containing elderly or disabled persons under five years old. Florida also transfers 6% of LIHEAP funds to the Department of Elder Affairs for the Emergency Home Energy Assistance for the Elderly Program (EHEAP), a special outreach program to assist low-income households having at least one person age 60 or older that are experiencing a home energy emergency. The benefits provided by EHEAP are the same as those provided by the regular crisis assistance program.

Eligibility

Florida restricts program eligibility to households with incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. With recent increased funding, Florida anticipates serving 226,000 households this year or about 16% of the eligible households.

Weatherization

Florida designates 15 percent of its annual LIHEAP funding to help low-income households make energy saving improvements to their homes. Due to a significant increase in weatherization assistance under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Florida will not transfer funds to fiscal year 2010.

Curtailement of Service

Florida does not impose a moratorium on utility shut-offs.

Southern Governors' Association

444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 200

Washington, DC 20001

Alabama Arkansas Florida Georgia Kentucky Louisiana Maryland Mississippi Missouri North Carolina Oklahoma
 Puerto Rico South Carolina Tennessee Texas U. S. Virgin Islands Virginia West Virginia

Revised: July 13, 2009

SGA and LIHEAP

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a block grant that provides resources to states and territories 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

Jennifer Schwartz
Director of Federal Policy
Southern Governors' Association
Phone: 202-624-5897
Email: jenniferschwartz@sso.org