



WomanView

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Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Funds Available to Help Pay Winter Heating Bills

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released, on September 18, \$121 million to help eligible low-income households meet home energy costs. The amount released to Illinois is \$5,550,061.

The purpose of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is to assist low-income households in meeting their immediate home energy needs. The LIHEAP program in your area may offer one or more of the following:

- Bill payment assistance
- Energy crisis assistance
- Weatherization and energy-related home repairs

Eligibility and assistance levels depend on

- the household's income and number of members;
- the household pays for its home energy costs directly or the home energy costs are included in the rent and if rent exceeds 30 percent of income;
- the type of home energy fuel if the household pays directly; and
- the region in which the household is located.

The federal government does not send or take applications for LIHEAP assistance. The federal government sends the money to the states. In Illinois, local community organizations and state agencies take LIHEAP applications. To find out where to apply for LIHEAP in Illinois, visit the State of Illinois's LIHEAP web site at <http://www.liheapillinois.com>. The site has a list of community and government agencies that are taking applications in each county. Households with a combined income of 150 percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines (i.e., \$2,650 per month or \$31,800 per year for a family of four) are eligible. An overdue bill or cutoff notice is not required. Applicants do not have to own their home or pay energy bills directly to be eligible. And the applicant's source of fuel does not have to be natural gas or electricity for the applicant to receive assistance.

Emergency assistance is also available if your household is disconnected from an energy source needed for heating or if a delivered-fuel supplier refuses to deliver and the tank contains 10 percent or less, or if both situations are true. Reconnection assistance can be provided if households have made a good-faith effort to maintain their energy services or can pay a portion of the amount owed for reconnection.

The following are the documents that may be required to establish eligibility and assistance levels:

- Recent copies of your utility bills
- A recent payroll stub or other proof that shows your current gross income
- Documentation showing income from Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Pension Funds, disability, etc.
- Proof of present address (e.g., rent receipt, lease or deed, property tax bill)
- Proof of total members living in your household (e.g., birth certificates, school records, etc.)
- Social Security cards (or numbers) for all persons living in your household
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or permanent residence

Note that availability of LIHEAP is not guaranteed, and often funds are spent early during the winter. Apply early while funds are still available.

Illinois also offers the Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP), which helps low-income residents save fuel and money. Eligibility for IHWAP is the same as for LIHEAP. The weatherization services are provided by nonprofit agencies throughout the state.

Weatherization services can include an assessment of your home to determine what work can be done to save the most energy. Once the assessment is done, experienced workers are scheduled to do the job. For example, a heating contractor may examine a home's heating system and furnace to make sure both are safe and in working order. Sealing cracks, replacing windows, replacing doors, and insulating attics are other services that may be done. Once the work is completed, the work is inspected to make sure it is complete and correct. To find out where to apply for weatherization services in each county, visit

<http://www.illinoisweatherization.com/community.html>.

For more information about LIHEAP in Illinois, you may visit www.liheapillinois.com; for more information about IHWAP, visit www.illinoisweatherization.com/; or call 877.411.9276. The Illinois LIHEAP manager is

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For a complete list of state allocations of the funds released on September 18, go to:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2008/liheap_contingency_fund_release.html#primary. For

more information about LIHEAP from the federal government, visit

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap> or

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap/brochure.html>.

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