



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

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Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Information Memorandum

IM#: LIHEAP-IM-2022-06

DATE: July 19, 2022

TO: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Grant Recipients

SUBJECT: Heat Stress Flexibilities and Resources

ATTACHMENT(S): N/A

LIHEAP and Extreme Heat

This summer, [weather reports](#) and [media alerts](#) highlight record high heat waves across the Nation. Heat advisories and excessive heat warnings remain in effect across a large portion of the United States, where heat indices are expected to soar well above 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provides a [three-month outlook](#) on weather each month as well as [monthly and season outlook maps](#) for communities to better understand their potential risk and provides information on [heat and health information for the nation](#).

The climate crisis is making heat waves more intense and frequent, endangering communities and vulnerable households. The data suggest there will be additional, intense heat waves across the country throughout the summer months. We also know that extreme heat kills more Americans than any other weather-related event and the threat of extreme weather is disproportionately felt by [communities of color and lower-income households](#). Many of those households are unable to afford adequate cooling systems. Heat also poses higher risks in urban centers and to children, older adults, and those with underlying health conditions. For more information on how and why extreme weather disproportionately impacts these communities, please review the Office of Community Services' blog post on the systemic disadvantages in energy costs faced by low-income households and communities of color, titled [LIHEAP American Rescue Plan Funding: Racial and Economic Justice is Also Equity in Energy](#).

Examples of How You Can Adjust LIHEAP to Address Extreme Heat

Some examples of ways you can adjust your program this summer season include, but are not limited to:

- **Reopen your program now, add a cooling assistance component, and/or expand your crisis/summer crisis assistance component** if you still have unobligated American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding available.
- **Provide benefits to service, repair, or replace cooling equipment.** Remember that even households that have air conditioning may not have equipment that can handle such high, sustained temperatures. When cooling equipment needs to be replaced, we encourage grant recipients to replace equipment with more energy efficient and effective units, such as Energy Star compliant units.
- **Increase crisis and/or cooling benefit payments for electric bills** to help off-set the higher demand for air conditioning.
- **Prevention of electricity shut offs and reconnection assistance.** LIHEAP benefits, pledges, and other forms of crisis intervention can save lives. Consider maintaining shut-off prevention services during the summer months, especially during the time when voluntary or mandatory moratoria against utility shut-offs are not in place.
- Adjust the benefits allowed under your cooling assistance and crisis assistance components to **allow the purchase of efficient air conditioning units** and/or prioritize air conditioning equipment over fans alone.
- **Distribute or loan efficient air conditioning units**, especially targeting vulnerable households that will most likely be homebound and most impacted by extreme temperatures, such as older adults, young children, or individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, prioritize households with individuals who rely on medical devices or need to refrigerate certain medications, such as for diabetes, and need uninterrupted electricity supply.
- **Utilize high efficiency air source heat pumps** which enable cooling as well as heating. Heat pumps offer the most energy-efficient alternative to furnaces and air conditioners for all climate zones. Make sure cold climate heat pumps are specified for residences in northern states and high altitudes. Today's heat pumps can reduce your electricity use for heating by approximately 50% compared to electric resistance heating such as furnaces and baseboard heaters.
- **Provide evaporative (swamp) coolers** for households located in low humidity areas if appropriate and ensure that households know how to properly maintain them.
- **Establish cooling centers**, which may include partnering with other public facilities such as local libraries, community centers, and government buildings, to establish a waiting area where people can remain cool during the hottest periods of the day (usually 10 a.m.-4 p.m.). It might also include coordinating with emergency response teams in states, Tribes, territories, and localities to ensure that they are aware of cooling centers; how to refer people to LIHEAP for immediate needs; how to help move homebound individuals to cooling centers if needed; and other related issues.
- **Create a buddy check system** to have intake staff and/or volunteers check on homebound LIHEAP clients, such as older adults and individuals with disabilities, to

determine their home cooling situation and try to get them transported to a public cooling center right away.

- **Provide and coordinate targeted outreach to identify households at greatest risk**, such as those who are homebound, to ensure they are in a temperature safe environment. This may include telephone calls, home visits, public service announcements, etc. Interventions might include making sure they have working air conditioning units, ensuring they set the thermostat to a temperature that is safe for their medical needs (which might involve them consulting with their nurse or doctor), helping transport them to a cooling center, etc. You may also reach out to the medical community such as hospitals, community health centers, and doctors' offices to ensure that they are aware of cooling assistance and heat stress mitigation efforts in your jurisdiction.
- **Provide education to applicants and recipients** about how to keep their homes cool during this time, including safe use of their cooling equipment and setting indoor temperatures sufficient for the make-up of household members, especially those with older adults, young children, and individuals with disabilities. LIHEAP energy burden reduction set-aside funds (Assurance 16) can be used to support your home energy education activities.

The Obligation Period for ARP Funding is Expiring Soon

Remember that **September 30, 2022, is the last day you are permitted to obligate (legally commit) any LIHEAP ARP funding** that you may have carried forward into FY 2022. ACF awarded all of the LIHEAP ARP Act funding on May 4, 2021. There are many policy and program changes you can make on your own, at any time, in order to fully use those funds. For example, given the impact of heat stress, you can increase benefits to households; provide a supplemental benefit to households that received a benefit earlier in the year; pay the entire past due bill amounts; reopen your program now if it has already closed for the year; and/or add a cooling assistance component, if needed, if you still have ARP funding (you can also use your FY 2022 funding to meet these needs). You can contact your [LIHEAP liaison](#) if you have a question about whether or not an action is allowable. **Remember, you must obligate all funds by September 30, 2022.**

Climate Change and Environmental Justice

Due to the deadly combination of high heat and a lack of air conditioning, it is critically important that LIHEAP staff and partners get messages out to households and the community about how to keep themselves and their families safe and healthy. OCS is working to highlight the disproportionate impact climate change has on the communities we serve and how OCS programs can mitigate this harm and promote environmental justice and racial equity. For example, OCS developed a [one-pager](#) for Earth Day that highlights the role LIHEAP plays in addressing the impact of climate change, and advancing environmental justice including racial and energy equality.

Online Information Resources

OCS developed a [LIHEAP and Extreme Heat website](#) to provide additional online resources including the [Heat Stress Geographic Information \(GIS\) Dashboard](#) to help grant recipients and stakeholders track, visualize, and respond to heat stress trends and needs across the country. This dashboard is available in both English and Spanish and can be automatically translated into 108 other languages. The [website](#) also provides Heat Stress and Extreme Weather Guidance for LIHEAP Grant Recipients and a recorded [webinar](#) with experts from across the country discussing their research and work as it pertains to heat stress, climate change, and environmental justice. Additionally, there is a second [webinar](#) recording highlighting how LIHEAP grant recipients are using flexibilities to mitigate heat stress.

[Ready.gov/heat](#) also provides information about extreme heat and is available in Arabic, English, Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

Take Action

Please contact [your federal LIHEAP liaison](#) with any questions. We are counting on you to take additional steps to provide assistance to vulnerable communities during this extreme heat period and other similar heat waves that are likely to hit this summer.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. OCS looks forward to continuing to provide high-quality services to OCS partners.

/s/

Dr. Lanikque Howard

Director

Office of Community Services