
ATTENTION OF:
All Louisiana Low Income Home Energy
Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Providers

NOTICE: LHP-2020-01

ISSUED: May 29, 2020

This notice remains in effect until amended,
superseded, or rescinded

SUBJECT: Louisiana LIHEAP CARES Act Supplemental Funding for COVID-19

On May 8, 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Community Services (OCS), Division of Energy Assistance (DEA) released \$13,946,959 in supplemental funding for the State of Louisiana's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for federal Fiscal Year (FY) 2020.

Congress appropriated these funds under the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Public Law 116-136)*, signed into law on March 27, 2020. This act provided supplemental LIHEAP funding to help “prevent, prepare for, or respond to” home energy needs surrounding the national emergency created by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Effective May 26, 2020, the federal FY 2020 Louisiana LIHEAP Agreement is being amended to add these additional funds to the local Subgrantee Agreements. This Notice hereby supplements the LIHEAP Service Delivery Guide in regards to how to qualify applicants and disburse the CARES Act Supplemental Funds.

Subgrantees must expend CARES Act Supplemental Funds by June 30, 2021 to avoid any risk of loss of funds.

Intake and Prevention Measures

All intake and eligibility services must be conducted in accordance with local, state, and federal guidelines related to the mitigation of risk related to the spread of COVID-19.

Subgrantees are highly encouraged to develop intake procedures that minimize face-to-face contact with clients and allow clients to apply in more than one form, which may include drop off, mail in, or online means.

Benefit Determination

Effective May 15, 2020, all LIHEAP Cooling and Crisis allocations with remaining funds were re-opened to assist clients that were not previously assisted by one of the individual allocations.

Clients are eligible for one benefit from each allocation; however, Subgrantees must expend any remaining 2019 Crisis funds before utilizing 2020 Crisis funds.

A household will be eligible for a **\$600 supplemental benefit** in addition to any other LIHEAP funds for which the household may qualify.

Clients who previously received LIHEAP assistance for the period beginning April 15, 2020 and who were assisted with 2020 Cooling funds prior to the release of the CARES Act Supplemental Funds will be eligible for the \$600 supplemental benefit without having to reapply. No additional appointment or application will be necessary.

While the regular LIHEAP allocations have a prescribed utility vendor that must be paid, for the purpose of the CARES Act Supplemental funds, Clients must be given the opportunity to determine which utility vendor to apply the supplemental benefit. Clients may choose their heating vendor or cooling vendor or both. Subgrantees should strongly encourage clients to apply the supplemental benefit to any utility in arrearages due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Income Eligibility

All previous LIHEAP income eligibility requirements still apply. This includes the LIHEAP Income Eligibility Limits for FFY2020 – Louisiana released on October 21, 2019 in Notice LHP-2019-02.

Per LIHEAP DCL 2020-10, LIHEAP Grantees and Subgrantees should **not** consider the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) economic impact payments (up to \$1,200 for qualified individuals or \$2,400 for

couples filing jointly and an additional \$500 per child) as income for eligibility. These payments count as a rebates or advance payments of a credit that are **exempt** from consideration as income.

Per LIHEAP DCL 2020-10, State Grantees may determine whether to include or exclude CARES Act funded supplemental unemployment compensation payments from the LIHEAP income eligibility calculation. If a Grantee rule allows it, a Grantee may treat these supplemental payments differently than the regular Unemployment Insurance Benefits. Louisiana has chosen to **exclude** these payments. The regular State Unemployment Insurance Benefits must still be counted as income.

Utility Allowances

Per the LIHEAP Service Delivery Guide, clients who receive a utility allowance as a form of additional utility assistance for being on a rental assistance program, such as Section 8, must have the utility allowance deducted before receiving a regular LIHEAP benefit. This remains in effect for the regular LIHEAP allocations.

This utility allowance will **not** apply to the CARES Act Supplemental benefit. If the client is a renter who receives a utility allowance, the Hancock Software utility allowance field should be left blank for the 2020 CARES Act in order for the client to receive the full flat \$600 supplemental benefit.

Documentation

All previous LIHEAP documentation requirements still apply.

Subgrantees may make copies of a client application for as many LIHEAP allocations as the client may qualify for to expedite processing. The copied application must notate where the original can be located.

Memorandum: LA LIHEAP 04 allowed Social Security Card flexibility, which included suspending requirements related to copies of Social Security cards for all applicants, for the LIHEAP 2020 Cooling Season only during the COVID-19 Stay At Home period. This flexibility is being extended for as long as a Subgrantee has CARES Act Supplemental Funds available and is also applicable to the regular LIHEAP 2020 allocations that have remaining funds. All Social Security numbers must still be reported on the application. Subgrantees have the option to pull the card from previous applications to verify, if necessary.

Subgrantees must enter the household's application into a separate 2020 CARES Act allocation located within the Louisiana Housing Corporation's Hancock Software. Both the heating vendor and cooling vendor must be entered, along with the designated benefit for each, totaling the flat \$600 supplemental benefit.

If you have any questions regarding this notice, please contact the LHC Energy Assistance Department at E4@lhc.la.gov or Lauren Holmes at lhartley@lhc.la.gov.

Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC)
Energy Assistance