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

NOTICE: LHP-2020-02

ISSUED: October 28, 2020

This notice remains in effect until
December 31, 2020

SUBJECT: Temporary Expansion of the Louisiana LIHEAP Crisis Definition

The national emergency caused by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created unimagined home energy burdens statewide. Due to increased unemployment rates and reduced employment hours, many Louisiana citizens have been unable to meet the financial obligations associated with their home utility costs. This has led to a rise in unpaid client obligations to both heating and cooling vendors across Louisiana over the past 6 months.

The Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) moratorium on disconnections was lifted effective July 16, 2020. LPSC Special Order No. 43-2020 ordered all jurisdictional utilities to temporarily provide payment plans or levelized billing for recovery of past due balances for residential customers for a period up to 12 months. To date, many clients have qualified for a heating/cooling benefit and/or the 2020 CARES Act benefit, but due to the lack of disconnection, they have not qualified for a crisis benefit.

The current definition of a crisis under Louisiana's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is when a household's energy source for heating and/or cooling has been disconnected, scheduled for disconnection, or has been depleted, and there are insufficient resources to resolve the situation. The current definition does not allow Past Due amounts to be addressed or to be counted toward the maximum crisis benefit of \$475 for FY2020 or \$600 for FY2021.

Because the majority of the parishes in Louisiana have depleted the 2020 CARES Act funding, Louisiana is temporarily expanding its definition of a crisis to include Past Due financial obligations to utility vendors in addition to disconnects.

The temporary crisis definition will remain in effect from October 28, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Intake

When a client presents with a shut-off or disconnect notice, a Subgrantee must still provide assistance within 48 hours for non-life threatening crisis and within 18 hours for life-threatening crisis.

When a client presents with a Past Due amount only and no disconnect notice, Subgrantees must provide assistance on a first come, first serve basis in accordance with existing intake/scheduling policies for non-crisis appointments.

Benefit Determination and Eligibility

Crisis benefits must still be applied wherever the crisis exists, whether it is to either a heating or cooling vendor.

Clients are eligible for one benefit from each allocation. Clients are still only eligible for one crisis benefit in a 12-month period. Past Due amounts may only be considered for clients who are assisted between October 28, 2020 and December 31, 2020.

The temporary expanded definition of crisis allows the following items to be included in the calculation:

- Past Due amounts
- The amount of the disconnect notice
- All costs to connect or reconnect services, except non-energy related charges

The calculated benefit must not exceed \$475 for FY2020 or \$600 for FY2021. All previous LIHEAP income eligibility requirements still apply.

Documentation

All previous LIHEAP documentation requirements still apply. A utility statement showing a Past Due amount may substitute a Shut-Off/Disconnect Notice or Final Bill and proof of new account.

This Notice hereby supplements the LIHEAP Service Delivery Guide for the timeframe defined.

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