

**West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR)
Bureau for Children and Families (BCF)**
2018 Block Grant Public Hearing
Energy Block Grant

Presented by Jessica Dale, BCF

Purpose and Scope

West Virginia's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is funded through a block grant originally authorized by the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981, Public Law 97-35, and most recently reauthorized by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. LIHEAP block grant dollars flow to West Virginia through the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for the purpose of assisting eligible households in meeting the cost of home heating.

Health and Human Services (HHS) ongoing Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides for heating, cooling, energy crisis, and low-cost weatherization and other energy-related home repair assistance.

Funding

West Virginia's allocation for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017 was \$25,927,056 under the basic LIHEAP grant.

Distribution of Funds

West Virginia proposes continued funding for the two current components of the program, defined as "Regular" and "Emergency" LIHEAP. Approximately 10% of the allotment is available for administrative costs. An additional 15% is transferred to support the Weatherization Program administered by the West Virginia Development Office as authorized by Public Law 97-35. This law also allows a 10% carryover of funds to the next fiscal year, although it is possible that funds this winter will be totally expended for heating assistance.

Eligibility

Income eligibility is based on 150% of the federal poverty guideline. The amount of the LIHEAP payment is based on the number of individuals in the assistance group, the gross monthly income of the group, and the type of home heating used. The average benefit in FFY 2017 was approximately \$233.00 per family for Regular LIHEAP and \$264.00 for Emergency LIHEAP.

Eligibility for Emergency LIHEAP is based on the same benefit group income limits, but the payment amount is determined by the amount required to eliminate the emergency and the amount of Regular LIHEAP that may have been received. In addition, the benefit group must be facing a home heating emergency, such as receiving a termination notice or being nearly out of bulk heating fuel. The maximum amount that any benefit group can receive in a combination of Regular and Emergency LIHEAP payments is contingent upon the amount of the allotment received in any given fiscal year. For FFY 2017, the maximum is \$700.

Public Involvement

In FFY 2016, West Virginia provided 59,241 Regular LIHEAP payments for a total of \$13,865,389.00 and Emergency LIHEAP payment of \$4,512 for the total of \$2,051,118.00. The Weatherization Assistance Program provided needed help to 628 households.

In addition to providing short-term assistance to households in crisis, DHHR is also providing emergency repair and replacement of heating and cooling units for eligible clients through the LIHEAP Program. DHHR continues to explore methods of reducing the need for this assistance both through education in energy conservation and budgeting and through flexibility in the use of the LIHEAP payment. The Department is working with various groups throughout the state and with its federal counterparts to provide assistance to West Virginia's low income residents in the most effective and efficient method possible. The need for home heating assistance continues. Current economic conditions will cause more West Virginia families whose income may be limited to seek this program's assistance.