

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 6-2020
EFS_EA_AL-6-2020**

Low Income Energy Assistance Program

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Energy Program Administrators, Managers and Supervisors

DATE: September 15, 2020

SUBJECT: Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) Automatic Payment

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

North Carolina received an additional \$25 million Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding as a result of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was passed due to COVID-19. A portion of the CARES Act funds will be used for LIEAP to issue automatic payments to a target population that received a LIEAP payment in 2019-2020. This automatic payment will help continue social distancing efforts and eliminate face to face contact for the more at-risk population.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

The target population to be evaluated to receive the automatic LIEAP payment must meet the following criteria:

- Households with persons aged 60 or older or
- Households with disabled individuals receiving DAAS services and
- Currently receiving FNS and
- Received LIEAP during the 2019-2020 LIEAP season

NC FAST will generate a notice with 2019-2020 pre-populated application information. The notice will be sent to the target population on November 16, 2020 with instructions to the recipient on how to report changes to information. The recipient can contact or return the notice with changes to their local DSS office within 10 business days. If the recipient does not contact or return notice to the local DSS office, the information from the 2019-2020 LIEAP application will be used to approve the household for 2020-2021 benefits. The recipient will be informed that an automated LIEAP payment will be issued therefore they do not need to apply for LIEAP this year. Households not included in the target population will be able to apply following regular LIEAP application policy.

Automated LIEAP Payments for each household will be based on heating source type.

- \$300 for Coal or Wood
- \$400 for LP Gas, Natural Gas, Kerosene, Fuel Oil, Energy-other
- \$500 for Electric

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

To allow counties to be proactive in the automated payment process, a report will be posted to NC FAST Help on November 2, 2020. The report will display all case heads that will receive a notice on November 16, 2020. Counties may contact clients prior to the notice being issued to determine if there are any changes since their last LIEAP application. The clients will be informed in the notice to contact or return the notice to the local DSS with any updates if the county has not already reached out to them. If a change is reported, caseworkers must update the client's information in NC FAST such as a change to energy provider, account information or heating source, household size, income, etc. Once the caseworker edits and confirms the changes in NC FAST, the application will update. If there are no changes reported by the household, applications will be processed systematically using last year's information. The editing function of the application will be available after the NC FAST November release and first batch process is completed to produce the automated application.

NC FAST will authorize applications that meet eligibility requirements and deny applications that do not. Denial notices are a manual process for caseworkers and must be done before authorization batch runs December 9, 2020. Approval notices will be sent via central print, caseworkers will not have to mail approval notices to clients.

NC FAST will automatically create energy payment requests for provider payments and generate a report with payment request reference numbers. A report will be generated on December 9, 2020 and will be available to counties on December 11, 2020. Counties will have 30 days to submit payment request to their financial office.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

NC FAST will complete LIEAP automated payments via a batch process on December 9, 2020.

A webinar will be scheduled for October 7, 2020 to explain this process to county staff. A webinar invitation will be forthcoming.

If you have any questions, please contact the Operational Support Team (OST) at DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Locklear".

David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services

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