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**ENERGY PROGRAMS**  
**EP-400 CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

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**FEP-400 CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

**Change 01-2026**  
**January 1, 2026**

**400.01 GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) assists individuals and families who are experiencing a heating or cooling related crisis. A household is considered to be in a life threatening or health related crisis if the heating or cooling source is disconnected, or the household is currently experiencing or is in danger of experiencing a life-threatening or health-related emergency due to lack of heating/cooling, and sufficient, timely, and appropriate assistance is not available from any other source. Life-threatening is defined as a household which has no heating or cooling source or has a disconnect, final or past due notice for their primary heating or cooling service and the health or well-being of a household member would be in danger if the heating or cooling crisis was not alleviated. Each household should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a heating or cooling crisis.

The following sections of the Energy Programs manual also apply to CIP:

	Section	Section Number
1	Contracting and Vendor Agreement	120
2	Retention	125
3	Appeals and Hearing Process	135
4	Overpayments and Fraud	140
5	Household Composition	150
6	U. S. Citizenship and Non-Citizens	175
7	Energy Programs Outreach Plan	200

**400.02 FUNDING**

At the beginning of each State fiscal year (July 1 through June 30), each county receives an allocation to fund CIP. As this is a block grant program, funding is limited. NC FAST tracks funding to ensure that funds are not overspent.

**400.03 APPLICATION REQUIREMENT**

Everyone who wishes to apply must be given the opportunity to do so on the same day they visit or contact the agency. Each applicant must be screened promptly to determine if the household has an energy-related crisis. Only households identified as having an energy-related crisis are potentially eligible for CIP.

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Applications are taken beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, when new funding is allocated and continues until the CIP allocation is exhausted or until the end of the state fiscal year, whichever comes first. The applicant must be allowed to sign an application on the day they appear at the local county agency or other agency responsible for taking applications. Scheduling appointments for CIP applications is not required due to the federal requirement to alleviate a crisis within 18 to 48 hours of completing the application. Applicants have the option to do a telephone interview with a telephonic signature.

**NOTE:** If an interview cannot be completed on the same day an application is signed, an interview appointment may be scheduled if the crisis is screened as non-life threatening and the 48-hour processing time will be met.

A valid social security number is required, when available, for each household member. Applicants not currently active in Food and Nutrition Services, WFFA, or Medicaid must sign the NC FAST-20009, North Carolina Rights and Responsibilities for Public Assistance, when Income and Eligibility Verifications System (IEVS) matches are performed prior to the applicant signing the DSS-8178, Energy Programs Application or the signature page from the application in NC FAST.

If the utility bill provided is not in the applicant's name, or another adult household member's name, the applicant needs to provide a written statement from the person whose name the bill is in verifying the applicant is responsible for paying the cooling or heating expense. If a person is unreachable, accept the applicant's statement.

**NOTE:** CIP funds cannot pay bills in a deceased person's name or in the name of a minor child. In such cases, the applicant should be encouraged to transfer the utility bill in their name as soon as possible.

Households that include a Native American individual that is eighteen or older, living in Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland counties, who wish to apply for CIP benefits, must do so through the Lumbee Tribe.

Households that include a Native American individual that is eighteen or older, living in the five-county service area of Cherokee, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, and Swain counties, who wish to apply for CIP benefits, must do so through the EBCI. This includes enrolled EBCI members on and off the Qualla Boundary in the five counties.

**NOTE:** CIP applicants must be provided with the opportunity to register to vote.

**A. Acceptance of Application**

1. The applicant or the authorized representative must apply for CIP in the county in which the household resides, and the applicant must be a resident of North Carolina. If an applicant comes in to apply and states, they are moving to another county but is required to have the utilities connected before they are able to physically move and have the new lease agreement, they must apply in the county in which they will now reside. The county should verify the new address via a lease or statement from the landlord and take and process the application. **Applications**

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received by mail, email, fax, dropped off, in person, or ePASS in the incorrect county of residence must be transferred by the receiving county to the correct county of residence within one business day to meet federal policy requirements.

2. Applications received in the agency by mail, email, fax or drop-off will require an interview, however, this interview can be conducted by telephone. Applicants are not required to complete applications in the office nor have face-to-face interviews. When these applications are received and a crisis is indicated, it must be keyed into NC FAST for tracking purposes and followed up on within one workday to schedule an interview. If the applicant cannot be reached by phone, send a DSS-8185 including a date and time for an interview. For CIP applications, the date of the application is the date the signed application is received in the agency.

Applicants who contact the agency by phone wanting to apply for CIP should be interviewed at that time and complete the application with a telephonic signature. If verification is needed send a DSS-8185 requesting necessary verifications. The date of application is the date the applicant was interviewed and consented to the telephonic signature for telephone applications only.

If a life-threatening situation exists, a home visit to obtain the required information may be necessary if the information cannot be obtained by some other means.

#### Application Procedure for Telephone Interviews

- a. Complete the application interview over the telephone.
- b. Telephonic Signature Option. For any application the client has the option to provide a telephonic signature over the phone.
  - The worker will summarize the information to which the household assents and allows a verbal signature from the applicant that is documented by the worker. The documentation will be included in a case note in NC FAST to demonstrate that the client has signed the application. Document "Telephone Signature" in the Income Support Application → Case Details → Notes.

The documentation in NC FAST should include the client's name, date, time telephone interview and the client's response to indicating agreement to this verbal attestation of signature over the phone.

- c. For any client that declines the option of telephonic signature, mail the DSS-8178, Energy Programs Application to the applicant. Do not key an application in NC FAST until the signed DSS-8178 is returned. The county is responsible for keeping a record of applications being mailed.

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- Applications mailed after the conclusion of a telephone interview must be returned and signed by the applicant or authorized representative.
  - Applications not returned or returned not signed are incomplete.
  - If an incomplete application is received, notify the applicant, verbally or in writing, that the application is incomplete and will not be processed.
  - Document all verbal contact or file a copy of the letter in the case record.
  - Do not key an unsigned application in NC FAST.
- d. The date of application is the date the signed application is received in the agency.
- e. Authorize benefits within 18 to 48 hours of receiving a signed application.
3. If the applicant or the authorized representative decides not to apply, complete the inquiry. Include as much information about the situation as possible.
4. To determine if anyone in the household has received CIP before, perform an Energy Benefits Search in NC FAST. See Job Aid, Energy – Initial/ New CIP Application to Case Job Aid.
5. Applications must include the applicant’s signature and date. The worker’s signature is not required. NC FAST provides a transaction history of the case actions based on the North Carolina Identity Management (NC ID) of the user for all applications. This is considered the worker’s electronic signature.

**B. Who must be included in the application**

Everyone who lives at the same residence must be included in the CIP household unless the residence is known to be a boarding house or has a separate apartment. If the residence is a known boarding house or separate apartment with a heating source, there must be a written agreement or lease.

Households have the option to include or exclude foster children in the household. If the child is included, count income of the child and foster care payment. If the child is not included, exclude all income of the child including the foster care payment.

At least one responsible adult payee must be in the household. An adult payee is defined as the person responsible for the household and must be

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listed as head of the household or case. Benefits are subject to the maximum benefit amount listed in policy section 400.04.

CIP benefit amounts are tied to the Head of Household (HOH) of the case at the time of application. The HOH can only receive the maximum benefit amount one time per Energy fiscal year as the HOH. In addition to the HOH rule, any other adult member on an application at the same physical address where the HOH has received the maximum benefit amount for that FY, cannot receive on an application that includes the same HOH. If an adult applies on a new application where the head of household from the previous application is not included in the new application and is no longer living in the household, the adult member can receive CIP funds as a new HOH.

**EXAMPLE:** John Doe and Jane Doe live at 123 Main Street. John applies as the head of household and receives the \$600 maximum Energy FY benefit. John moves out and lives alone and applies on an application by himself. John is not eligible because he has already received the \$600 max Energy FY benefit as a head of household.

**EXAMPLE:** Jane Doe and John Doe live together at 123 Main Street. The electricity has been disconnected for nonpayment. Jane comes in to apply for assistance as the head of household and lists John as a household member. Jane is not eligible because she received the maximum Energy FY benefit when John was the head of household on a previous application in the same FY and they both still reside together in the same household.

**EXAMPLE:** John Doe and Jane Doe have separated, and John moves out of their shared home at 123 Main St. Jane remains at the address and lives alone. She applies as the head of household and is the only member in her household. Jane is eligible for the maximum Energy FY benefit.

**EXAMPLE:** John Doe moves in with his girlfriend, Mary. Mary applies for CIP as the head of household with John as a household member. Mary is eligible for the maximum Energy FY benefit, because John is not HOH and this is a new household dynamic.

**EXAMPLE:** John Doe moves in with his girlfriend, Mary. John applies for CIP as the head of household at Mary's address. John is ineligible to receive because he has already received the max Energy FY benefit as the head of household on a previous application in the same FY.

### **Changes during the Application Process**

1. If the adult payee of the case changes (moves, dies, etc.) before the application is processed, evaluate the current crisis and household situation. Determine whether there is an adult member in the household

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included in the original application who can serve as payee. If so, follow these steps:

- a. Close the original application and key a revised CIP Application reflecting the new payee's name.
  - b. Update all information for the adult payee.
  - c. Process the "new" CIP Application.
2. If the adult payee of the case changes (moves, dies, etc.) before the application is processed and there is no adult member in the household who can serve as payee for the case, follow these steps:
- a. Deny the CIP application due to no eligible adult payee in household.
  - b. Inform the household members by printing a denial notice from NC FAST.
  - c. Document the application information in NC FAST in the notes folder of the Energy Income Support case.

**D. Explanation of Rights and Responsibilities**

1. Explain that the applicant has the right to:
  - a. Apply at any time they come into the agency.
  - b. Have any person participate in the interview for determination of eligibility.
  - c. Receive assistance if found eligible.
  - d. No person shall on the ground of race, color, national origin, or sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity funded in whole or in part with funds made available under this title. Any prohibition against discrimination on the basis of age under the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 or with respect to an otherwise qualified handicapped individual as provided in section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 also shall apply to any such program or activity.
  - e. Have any information given to the agency kept in confidence.
  - f. Appeal if:
    - (1) Denied the right to apply for assistance.
    - (2) The application was denied.
    - (3) The assistance received was incorrect based on the county's interpretation of State regulations.
    - (4) A decision is not made on the application within 48 hours.

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- g. Withdraw from the assistance program at any time.
  2. Explain that the applicant's responsibilities are to:
    - a. Provide the local county agency with the necessary information which can be used to locate and obtain information to determine eligibility.
    - b. Report immediately to the local county agency the receipt of benefits which are known to be erroneous. If the incorrect payment is not reported, the applicant may be required to repay any overpayment.
    - c. Provide verification of each household member's social security number. If the applicant cannot provide this information, accept the applicant's statement through documentation or verbal statement. Do not delay processing the application.
    - d. Give authorization to their utility company to release information regarding energy usage and bill payment for the last 12 months to agencies.
  3. Explain the meaning of fraud to the applicant. (For County Responsible Overpayments, see DSS-8201).

**E. Completion of the Online Application During the Interview**

1. Document the applicant's response to the questions NC FAST. See Job Aid,-Energy – Initial/New CIP Application to Case Job Aid
2. As part of the interview process, determine what other services may be available to alleviate the crisis. Document in NC FAST which services were provided.
3. The applicant must sign the application Signature Page generated by NC FAST if the application is completed in person. A telephonic signature can be accepted for all other applications. Document the telephonic signature in NC FAST.

**F. Eligibility Determination**

When you complete the interview, verify all necessary factors of eligibility to determine if the household is eligible.

The household must meet the following eligibility criteria to be eligible for CIP:

1. Income

Income verification obtained from other sources such as Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), Medicaid (MA) or Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) can be used to verify income if it is current, representative and from the applicant's current employer. If the income is not current and representative, the income becomes questionable, and verification is required.

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Online Verification System (OVS) must be run in NC FAST and can be used if income is current and representative. Representative means taking the OVS income and calculating the monthly amount. If this amount is comparable to the amount the client states, they received in the last 30 days then consider it representative and use this income as verification. If OVS does not return expected data, then the use of Online Verification (OLV) is allowed.

Other acceptable forms of verification such as but not limited to check stubs, a wage verification form completed by the employer, or statements from employer. Client statement can be used as a last resort. An example of use of client's statement would be if the applicant's employer went out of business or moved out of town and the applicant is not able to provide wage verification. Documentation of efforts should be included to support accepting client's statement as the last resort.

Document the income verification used in NC FAST. This information should be uploaded in NC FAST.

## 2. Income & Deductions

If income is not available from sources listed in 1 above refer to the following Food and Nutrition Services Manual sections for types of income to count, how to verify income and budgeting guidance to apply:

- FNS 300 Sources of Income
- FNS 305 Rules for Budgeting Income
- FNS 315 Special Budgeting Income
- FNS 350 Whose Income is Counted
- FNS 310 Budgeting New, Changed, and Terminated Income

**NOTE:** FNS base periods do not apply to CIP. CIP has no base period; income should be calculated using actual/anticipated income in the month of application.

Example of anticipated income: Applicant applies for CIP on February 1 and has not received a pay stub yet in the month of application. She has a check stub for \$124.00 gross income from January 18, that she reports is representative of ongoing pay. She reports that she is paid weekly. She would receive 5 pay checks in the month of February. Anticipated income for February would be  $124 \times 5 = \$620$ .

### A. Deductions

#### 1. Child & Adult Care Expenses.

- a) Determine whether a household member has out of the pocket childcare expenses in the base period. If so, allow the full

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amount of out-of-pocket expenses paid to the day care provider. Do not allow any amount paid by or reimbursed by other parties.

- b) Verify actual childcare costs paid in the base period for each household member with earned income. This includes additional transportation expenses incurred as a result of transporting Energy members to and from the dependent care provider. When determining the mileage incurred to provide dependent care transportation, do not include the normal mileage incurred by the Energy unit to go to and from work. Only allow the dependent care transportation expense for the additional mileage incurred by the Energy unit. Allowable mileage is the current business IRS mileage rate. Verify childcare by seeing a receipt or canceled check or by contacting the childcare provider.

2. Child Support Deductions.

- a) Determine whether a household member is required to pay legally obligated child support to a non-household member. Legally obligated child support is:
  - i. Court ordered; or
  - ii. Ordered through an administrative process (such as IV-D); or
  - iii. Ordered through a legally enforceable separation agreement.
- b) Take the following steps when a household member reports paying legally obligated child support to a non-household member.
- c) Verify the child support amount actually paid (including arrearages) in the base period by the household member. Verify by ACTS inquiry, statement from receiving parent, canceled checks, and money orders. Document all verifications on the application in the Energy System.
- d) Allow as a deduction the child support actually paid (including arrearages) by the household member. This includes court ordered payments or rent, mortgage, or other shelter expenses to the custodial parent and child in lieu of child support and court ordered payments for health insurance coverage for the child.
- e) Do not allow a child support deduction for alimony payments, spousal support payments, or property settlement payments paid by a household member.

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- f) Enter the allowable amount of the legally obligated child support deduction into the Data Entry System. The system will automatically deduct the amount from the household's income when determining eligibility.
3. Earned Income Deductions.
- a) The Energy System allows automatically for each household member with earned income the standard deduction from the table below for all types of earned income including farm, self-employment, and rental income. (The table includes an allowance for hospital insurance premiums, FICA, State retirement, etc.)

<b>Gross Income Level</b>	<b>Standard Deduction</b>
\$1 - \$50	\$10
\$51 - \$100	\$20
\$101 - \$150	\$30
\$151 - \$200	\$40
\$201 - \$300	\$60
\$301 - \$400	\$80
\$401 +	20%

4. Standard Medical Deduction for Specified Persons.
- a) Each specified person will receive a standard medical deduction of \$85, regardless of whether they have an expense. A specified person is an individual 60 years of age or older, or one of the following:
- i. Who receives SSI or disability or blindness payments under Title one, two, fourteen or sixteen of the Social Security Act. These individuals may have been approved but have not received their initial payment.
  - ii. Who receives VA disability for a 100% service or non - service connected disability.
  - iii. Is a disabled surviving spouse or disabled surviving child of a Veteran.
  - iv. Receives disability retirement benefits from a State, county, or local government agency due to a disability considered permanent under Section 221 of the Social Security Act.

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- v. Is receiving a pension from Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 and determined to be eligible to receive Medicare.
  - vi. Who receives Federal Employees Compensation Act payments due to a disability considered permanent under the Social Security Act.
  - vii. Receives Medicaid based on disability.
  - viii. Receives SSI based on presumptive eligibility.
5. Self-Employment Expenses.

Include but are not limited to:

- Taxes required to operate the business.
- License and permit fees.
- Interest on business debts, including mortgages and loans necessary for producing income.
- Principal on loans used to purchase income producing equipment and property. (FNS & Energy Programs only)
- Rent payments (not for home-based businesses, except that part allowed as a deduction by the IRS)
- Insurance associated with operating the business.
- Labor costs related to the business.
- Utilities costs to the business.
- Repairs and maintenance related to the business.
- Cost of products, materials and supplies required to operate the business.
- Business-related transportation costs as allowed by the IRS.
- Actual costs of providing meals as part of the business, such as child or elder care.
- Accounting, advertising, and legal costs.

3. Federal Poverty Level

The household meets income eligibility if the total household members' countable income is equal to or less than 150% of the current poverty level. See the chart below.

<b>No. Eligible In Household</b>	<b>Maximum Countable Income</b>	<b>No. Eligible In Household</b>	<b>Maximum Countable Income</b>
1	\$1,956	14	\$10,894
2	\$2,644	15	\$11,581
3	\$3,331	16	\$12,269

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4	\$4,019	17	\$12,956
5	\$4,706	18	\$13,644
6	\$5,394	19	\$14,331
7	\$6,081	20	\$15,019
8	\$6,769	21	\$15,706
9	\$7,456	22	\$16,394
10	\$8,144	23	\$17,081
11	\$8,831	24	\$17,769
12	\$9,519	25	\$18,456
13	\$10,206	26	\$19,144

If there are more than 26 in a household, contact the Economic and Family Services Section at 919-527-6300 or [dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov) for the maximum gross monthly income.

4. Citizenship

A household must contain a U.S. citizen or an eligible alien. See Section 175 for more details.

5. An energy-related crisis must exist.

See G. below.

Document eligibility verifications in NC FAST. Receipt of CIP benefits does not affect a household's eligibility for LIEAP, Energy Neighbor, Emergency Assistance, etc.

6. Resource Limit

- Counted Resources include:
  - Cash on Hand
  - Countable Portion of Savings Account
  - Countable Portion of Checking Account
  - Lump Sum Payments
- Resource Limit for Households:

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- Households with member aged 60 or older or disabled= \$4,500
- All other households= \$3,000

If a household is over these resource limits, they are ineligible for the energy programs. They can reduce resources and reapply at any time.

Accept the household's statement unless questionable. A resource is considered questionable when there is reason to believe that the reported value is incorrect. When determining the value of a checking or savings account, subtract any outstanding withdrawals and any funds remaining that were counted as income in the CIP application. When verifying assets, document in NC FAST. Allow the client two (2) business days to provide verification of stated resources. Verification of resources should be requested using the form DSS-8185.

**G. HOUSEHOLDS WITH AN INELIGIBLE ALIEN**

**A. Computation of Gross Countable Income**

1. Follow instructions in the appropriate section to determine the gross countable income household members. To determine who is a qualified or non-qualified alien, please refer to Section 225 of the Food and Nutrition Services Certification Manual.
2. To compute countable income of an ineligible alien (if it is determined not to be terminated income) you must:
  - a. Qualified Ineligible Aliens  
Include this member's prorated countable gross income. For instructions on proration, refer to section d below.
  - b. Treatment of Income of Non-Qualified Ineligible Aliens  
  
Count all the non-qualified ineligible alien's income when applying the manual gross income test for eligibility purposes; do not include the nonqualified ineligible alien in the household size. If the household's income exceeds the gross income test, deny the application.  
  
EXAMPLE: A CIP Unit consists of four persons. The head of household, who is an undocumented alien, is employed and has earnings that exceed the maximum income level for a household of three. Deny the application.  
  
If the household's income does not exceed the gross income level, include this member's prorated countable gross income. For instructions for proration, refer to section d below.
  - c. Determine if the ineligible alien paid room/board in the base period to the CIP household. Exclude the room/board payment from the

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ineligible alien's gross income since the room/board payment is counted as income for another CIP household member. The exclusion cannot exceed the amount of the room/board income.

- d. Divide the gross countable income of each ineligible alien by the total number in the household [including the ineligible alien(s)]. This is each person's pro rata share.
- e. Multiply the pro rata share amount by the number of eligible household members in the CIP budget. This figure is the prorated amount to count in the budget for the ineligible alien(s).

EXAMPLE: A household consists of seven people. The household contains two ineligible aliens. One is employed and earns \$700 per month. The other has \$70 unearned income per month.

**Ineligible Alien 1:**

\$700 divided by 7 = \$100 (pro rata share)

\$100 x 5 (eligible household members) = \$500

\$500 = Income of this ineligible alien to be counted for remaining eligible household members in the CIP budget. This is the prorated amount.

**Ineligible Alien 2:**

\$70 divided by 7 = \$10 (pro rata share)

\$10 x 5 (eligible household members) = \$50

\$50 = Income of this ineligible alien to be counted for remaining eligible household members in the LIEAP budget. This is the prorated amount.

If an ineligible alien's income has terminated, see FNS policy referenced above in 400.03F2 to determine the amount of gross income. Prorate this amount. (See FNS policy section 350.01B4 for instructions on how to prorate.)

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3. Terminated Income

If an ineligible alien's income has terminated, see FNS policy referenced above in 400.03F2 to determine the amount of gross income. Prorate this amount. (See FNS policy section 350.01B4 for instructions on how to prorate.)

B. Deductions

- i. Do not allow a medical deduction for an ineligible alien, even if he is a specified person.
- ii. NC FAST **automatically** deducts the standard work-related expenses. The standard work-related deduction is based on the prorated income counted in the CIP budget.

EXAMPLE: A household consists of three people (one of which is an ineligible alien). The ineligible alien has \$300 gross wages. Count \$200 of his gross wages in the CIP budget. The standard deduction would be \$40. (This is based on the \$200 that is counted in the CIP budget.)

- iii. If paid by an ineligible alien.

Prorate the monthly childcare costs used to determine the current benefit or payment. See the example below for instructions on how to prorate.

EXAMPLE: To prorate, you must:

Divide the amount (childcare, etc.) by the total number in the household [including the ineligible alien(s)]

Multiply this amount by the number of eligible household members. This is the prorated amount (childcare deduction, etc.)

A household consists of three people (one of which is an ineligible alien). The ineligible alien has paid \$60 in childcare costs.

$\$60 \text{ divided by } 3 = \$20 \text{ (pro rata share)}$

$\$20 \times 2 \text{ (eligible household members)} = \$40$

$\$40 = \text{allowable childcare cost}$

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**H. Heating/Cooling Crisis Determination**

A household is in a crisis if it is in danger of having their heating/cooling source disconnected, and sufficient, timely, and appropriate assistance is not available from any other source. Each household should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a heating or cooling crisis.

Once a crisis is determined, check to see if funds are available through another energy assistance resource such as Energy Neighbor, Helping Each Member Cope, Wake Electric Round-Up or Share the Warmth to alleviate the crisis prior to using CIP.

If the applicant has a history of being in energy-related crisis situations, explore all other resources to assist in alleviating the current crisis. Counsel with the applicant and consider developing a plan with the household to ensure that it takes necessary steps to avoid future crisis situations. This may include working with the energy provider to pay a level amount year-round (equal payment plan), establishing a payment plan for outstanding balances at the end of the heating season to avoid disconnection, or planning ahead by budgeting for expenses that occur periodically, such as the purchase of school clothes and anticipated breaks in seasonal employment that result in reduced income.

**Note:** Applicant with a history of being in energy-related crisis situations has no bearing on eligibility.

**I. Life Threatening or Health Related Crisis**

A household is considered to be in a life threatening or health related crisis if the heating or cooling source is disconnected, or the household is currently experiencing or is in danger of experiencing a life-threatening or health-related emergency due to lack of heating/cooling, and sufficient, timely, and appropriate assistance is not available from any other source. Each household should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a heating or cooling crisis and whether it is life threatening or non-life threatening.

1. A crisis is considered life-threatening if there is no heating/cooling source, or
2. The health or well-being of a household member would be in danger if the heating or cooling crisis was not alleviated, or
3. An illness or medical condition that poses an immediate risk to the health or life of any household member due to a life-threatening medical condition.

A medical statement is not required but can be requested if questionable. The statement does not have to identify the medical condition but must

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acknowledge that a life-threatening or health risk issue exists. Document what makes the statement of crisis questionable.

**J. Verification and Documentation**

Verify eligibility for assistance and that a crisis exists.

1. Viewing the energy bill or contacting the energy provider.
2. Validating to the extent possible, the household's statement through NC FAST if current.
3. Confirming, to the extent possible, the presence of a disabled member using verification from sources such as BENDEX, SDX, or VA documentation, or by a doctor's note.
4. Contacting collaterals, such as neighbors, vendors, landlords, etc.
5. Viewing the cut-off notice.

Document the applicant's statements and verification sources used to complete the application in NC FAST. When you use other evidence, document the type used and the date. If a collateral is contacted, document the collateral's name, date, and statement.

**K. Time Frames for Authorizing Assistance to Eligible Households**

1. Time Frame for Authorizing Assistance for Households with a heating or cooling crisis.

Authorize benefits to avoid disconnection, however, all applications must be processed within 48 hours (2 business days) of the application date if no verification is needed. This includes households with a future disconnection date. This does not mean issuance of benefits, but you must authorize eligibility to alleviate the crisis. These deadlines apply even if another agency is taking the application.

If verification is needed to process the application, a DSS-8185 (Low Income Energy Assistance Program Crisis Intervention Program Information Needed) must be completed. The applicant has two business days to return the requested information. Once information is received, the two-business day processing time begins or process the case prior to the disconnect, whichever is sooner. If the verification is not provided within two business days, the application must be denied by 5 pm on the second business day, and the household will need to reapply.

2. Time Frame for Authorizing Assistance for Households with a life threatening or health related crisis.

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Authorize benefits within 18 hours of the application date if no verification is needed. This does not mean issuance of benefits, but you must authorize eligibility to alleviate the crisis.

These deadlines apply even if another agency is taking the application.

If verification is needed to process the application, a DSS-8185 (Low Income Energy Assistance Program Crisis Intervention Program Information Needed) must be completed. The applicant has two business days to return the requested information. Once the requested information is received, the 18-hour processing time begins. If the verification is not provided within two business days, the application must be denied by 5 pm on the second business day, and the household will need to reapply.

**NOTE:** When a Crisis application is taken and the time frame for authorization falls on a weekend or holiday, extend the time frame for authorization to the close of business the next workday.

Document in NC FAST the date the verification is received.

**L. Notification of Eligibility**

NC FAST will generate the DSS-8107 Approval/Denial Notice once the CIP application is authorized. See Job Aid, Energy – Initial/New CIP Application to Case Job Aid

**400.04 BENEFIT LEVELS AND METHODS OF PAYMENTS**

**A. Benefit Levels**

1. If eligible and funds are available, a household may receive benefits more than one time during a State fiscal year, which is defined as July 1 through June 30.
2. The maximum benefit amount allowed for a Federal fiscal year is \$600.
3. Benefits may vary based upon the amount needed to alleviate the crisis, however, benefits cannot exceed \$600 and/or the maximum allowed benefit amount in the Federal fiscal year.
4. If more than the maximum allowed benefit amount is needed to alleviate the crisis, you must:
  - Determine if the household has funds available and/or there are other community resources that can be used in conjunction with CIP **or**
  - Negotiate with the vendor to alleviate the crisis for the maximum CIP payment allowed **or**
  - Counsel the applicant on any available options which can be used. Use this option only if you are unable to alleviate the crisis using 1. or 2. above.

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- If you are unable to alleviate the crisis by one of the means listed above, deny the application.
5. If less than the maximum allowed benefit amount is needed to alleviate the crisis, authorize the lesser amount. Authorize only the amount needed to alleviate the crisis up to the maximum benefit amount allowed.
- I. Benefit Levels may increase up to \$1000 only when funds are available. If additional funds are available, the Division will issue a communication to counties to notify them of the change for the population mentioned above.**
1. If eligible and funds are available, a household may receive benefits more than one time during a State fiscal year, which is defined as July 1 through June 30.
  2. The maximum benefit amount allowed during the State fiscal year is up to \$1,000 **if additional funds are available**. The maximum benefit amount allowed can be up to \$1,000 per application per crisis.
  3. Benefits may vary based upon the amount needed to alleviate the crisis, however, benefits cannot exceed \$1,000 **when funds are available** and/or the maximum allowed benefit amount for the State fiscal year.
  4. If more than the maximum allowed benefit amount is needed to alleviate the crisis, you must:
    - Determine if the household has funds available and/or there are other community resources that can be used in conjunction with CIP **or**
    - Negotiate with the vendor to alleviate the crisis for the maximum CIP payment allowed **or**
    - Counsel the applicant on any available options which can be used. Use this option only if you are unable to alleviate the crisis using 1. or 2. above.
    - If you are unable to alleviate the crisis by one of the means listed above, deny the application.
  5. If less than the maximum allowed benefit amount is needed to alleviate the crisis, authorize the lesser amount. Authorize only the amount needed to alleviate the crisis up to the maximum benefit amount allowed.

**C. Method of Payment**

Methods of payment include but are not limited to:

1. Voucher payments
2. Direct energy provider payments

If a household has a late, past due, or disconnection notice and a payment agreement is set up with their energy provider, the county will need to verify

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the terms of the agreement, and how much is needed to prevent defaulting on the agreement or to prevent disconnection. A regular equal payment plan payments should not be made by the county unless the payment is past due.

A payment agreement is different from a regular equal payment plan.

An equal payment plan allows customers to pay a set amount each month based on their average energy usage. This helps the household manage fluctuations in their energy bill.

A payment arrangement is established to help customers pay down a past due balance over time. This type of agreement can be paid with CIP funds, since it is connected to a past due balance and missing a payment under this arrangement would place a customer at risk of defaulting on the agreement or face possible disconnection of services.

For electricity providers who use prepaid metering, the county will need to contact the energy provider and verify how much electricity the household has before their balance reaches zero (electricity will automatically shut off when the balance reaches zero). **If the household has less than four days of electricity, the county can authorize a CIP payment for thirty days of electricity.**

#### **D. Use of Funds**

Each county must use CIP funds to alleviate a heating and cooling crisis based on the client's need for the following:

1. Utility deposits to a heating or cooling provider.

**NOTE:** Deposits have to be tied to a crisis and the utility service has to be in the name of an adult household member.

2. Heating (including gas, fuel, oil, kerosene, wood, coal, etc.) and cooling bills.

**NOTE:** Heating and cooling bills that include other utilities such as: water, sewage, and trash cannot be paid with CIP funds. An itemized bill will need to be obtained. The household is responsible for paying the portion of the bill other than the heating and cooling such as water, sewage, and trash prior to CIP funds being approved.

**NOTE:** Heating and cooling source can be changed at client's request if the source meets all other eligibility criteria for assistance.

Example 1- Client comes in to apply for assistance and reports they need assistance with their electric bill because it is scheduled to be disconnected next week. They report that they

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heat with gas but need their electricity to operate the gas heater. If the electricity is disconnected it will eliminate the heating source. The electric bill qualifies for assistance to maintain heating source.

Example 2- Client comes in to apply for assistance and reports they normally heat with kerosene, but the kerosene heater is broken so they are currently heating with electricity using space heaters. The heating source can be changed, and the electric bill would qualify for assistance.

3. Bulk or single purchases of air conditioners, heating units, and the like.

**NOTE:** Items purchased in bulk cannot be accounted for in NC FAST until linked with an actual client. Air conditioners should only be purchased if the household does not have a cooling source, or the source is broken. Special attention should be given to households containing people over age 60 and children 5 and under.

4. Temporary shelter which includes, but is not limited to, temporary short-term relocation rent payments or hotel/motel expenses that serve to alleviate a heating or cooling crisis.
5. Utility Payments (for all heating or cooling sources) expenses, which include, but are not limited to:
  - Late or Past due bills
  - Disconnection notice
  - Connection or reconnection fees.
  - Taxes

**NOTE:** No charges that result from illegal activities, such as bad checks or meter tampering will be paid with CIP funds.

6. Home Repairs which include, but are not limited to:
  - Heating or cooling appliance replacement or repair.
  - Insulation replacement.
  - Necessary wiring/circuit board replacements to be able to heat or cool home.
  - Replacement/repair of windows, roofs, walls **or**
  - Any repair/replacement completed would allow households the ability to heat or cool their homes.

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7. In-kind services such as blankets, space heaters, and warm clothing. Space heaters should only be purchased if the household does not have a heating source, or the source is broken.

**400.05 RECORDS AND REPORTS**

**A. Case Records**

In addition to the CIP application in NC FAST, a case record must be set up on each household that applies. The record must contain the Signature Page, documentation of telephonic signature, a copy of the DSS-8107 Approval/Denial Notice, income verification, and any other documents used to determine eligibility. This information may be filed in the Energy case record and/or uploaded into NC FAST. Assign all other cases a unique county case number.

See the Records Retention Schedule for requirements on retention of the case file. See EP-125.

**400.06 VULNERABILITY**

To be eligible, a household must be vulnerable at the time of application. A household is vulnerable if it has a heating source billed separately and it is subject to the rising cost of heating for the heat expense. Accept the applicant's statement about the vulnerability status for the household.

1. If a household lives in a private living arrangement with a heating source and heat costs are billed separately, it is fully vulnerable.
2. If a household lives in public housing where heat costs are billed separately from the rent, it is fully vulnerable.
3. An applicant who lives in a private living arrangement who does not receive a separate bill from the energy provider, they are not vulnerable.
4. A household living in public housing where utilities for heat are billed separately from the rent or where utilities for heat are included in the rent, and the household has paid an excess in utilities for heat in the last 12 months at the current address, is fully vulnerable. County needs to have the public housing/housing authority sign a vendor contract for the payment check to be written to them directly or the public housing/housing authority needs to provide the account number for the household applying for benefits. For additional verification of a heating arrangement in public housing, contact the local public housing authority.
5. A person living in an institution is not vulnerable.

**NOTE:** Receipt of a utility allowance does not affect vulnerability status. Section 8 households are considered in a private living arrangement.

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CIP Supplement payments can be applied to old or new accounts that are active or closed if the client has a balance on the account. CIP application payments can be applied to a closed account if the payment is needed to reestablish the service.

Example: Applicant comes in the apply for CIP benefits to reestablish service with Duke Energy. The client moved to another county in 2020 and established service with another energy vendor and left a remaining balance with Duke of \$113.83. In order for Duke Energy to turn electric service on at current address the client must pay the previous balance of \$113.83 plus a deposit of \$200.00. The applicant has not applied for CIP for this fiscal year and is eligible to have the total balance of  $\$113.83 + 200.00 = 313.83$  to establish service at the current address.

If an applicant is living in another arrangement which is not listed above, contact the Economic and Family Services Section for assistance at 919-527-6300 or [dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov)

#### **400.07 RETURN PAYMENTS**

The only time a CIP supplemental payment is subject to return is at the discretion of the provider, once the balance is paid and a credit is remaining, if the provider does not allow credits that credit amount will be issued back to the County DSS office.

If the payment is returned in the current fiscal year or the previous fiscal year from when it was issued, counties will complete the return/overpayment process in NC FAST. If this is a return payment from a fiscal year outside of that allowable time frame, the county will complete this outside of NC FAST on a 1571 with a negative entry and a note on the case in NC FAST referencing the fiscal year of the returned payment for monitoring purposes.

Regular return partial payments can be entered in NC FAST. Return partial payments for supplemental payments cannot be entered in NC FAST but must be completed on a 1571.

#### **400.08 Vendor Responsibility**

The vendor delivering the fuel source for the customer is responsible for ensuring the heating source in the home meets all state and federal codes. If the vendor feels like the heating sources do not meet these requirements, they have the right to refuse to provide fuel to the home. The county can inquire if the home has another heating source to apply the benefit amount to.

#### **400.09 Weather-Related Event Caused by a Natural Disaster**

If the local DSS agency is closed due to a weather-related event caused by a natural disaster such as hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, tornadoes, ice storm, or earthquake with no access to applicant provided verifications for application processing purposes, the agency may process the application using client's statement to ensure timely assistance is provided to the applicant household. The agency is required to document the reason for the agency closure and why client's statement was necessary to process the application to ensure timeliness requirements were met.

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NOTE: This does not apply to voluntary closures for other purposes.