
**ENERGY PROGRAMS
CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

EP – 400 CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

**Change 1-2020
October 01, 2020**

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 in a crisis if it is currently experiencing or is in danger of experiencing a life-threatening or health-related emergency 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
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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.

Applications are taken beginning July 1st, 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 telephonic signature.**

NOTE: If an interview cannot be completed on the same day an application is signed,

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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 DMA-5001, Notice of the Use of Social Security Numbers, 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. In the event that 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 with a Native American adult age 18 and older residing in Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland counties, who wish to apply for CIP benefits, must do so through the Lumbee Tribe.

Households that include an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) 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 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.
2. Applications received in the agency by mail, email, fax or dropped 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, follow up 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 interview is conducted. A CIP application is not considered a complete application until the client is interviewed.

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

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date of application is the date the applicant was interviewed and consented to the telephonic signature.

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 client has the option to provide a telephonic signature over the phone.**
 - 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.
 - 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.

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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 listed as head of the household or case. Household benefits are subject to the maximum benefit amount per household as listed in 400.04. Benefit amounts are tied to the adult payee of the case at the time of application. If there are other adult family members in the household, create a "New" household.

EXAMPLE: A husband and wife are in the home and are applying for CIP for their daughter and son. The husband is the adult payee of the CIP case. The case is approved for this household in the amount of \$200. The wife moves out of the home to live with her mother. The wife goes in to apply for CIP. The wife can be the adult payee of the case and receive the full amount available under CIP.

If the original adult payee has already been approved for CIP applies again during the State fiscal year for CIP assistance, this household's benefit amount will be tracked using the previous approval amount already received.

EXAMPLE: A husband and wife are in the home and are applying for CIP for their daughter and son. The husband is the adult payee of the CIP case. The case is approved for this household in the amount of \$200. The maximum allowed benefit amount established by the state during the State fiscal year is \$600. The husband moves out of the home, establishes a new residence, and applies for CIP. The household is eligible for an additional \$400 during the State fiscal year.

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

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- 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 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.

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) can also be run in NC FAST and 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, The Work Number, 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. **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.

Refer to the Income Section of the Integrated Policy Manual at <https://economicbenefits.nc.gov> for types of income to count, how to verify income and which income deductions and base periods to apply.

No. Eligible In Household	Maximum Countable Income	No. Eligible In Household	Maximum Countable Income
1	\$1,595	14	\$ 8,875
2	2,155	15	9,435
3	2,715	16	9,995
4	3,275	17	10,555
5	3,835	18	11,115
6	4,395	19	11,675
7	4,955	20	12,235
8	5,515	21	12,795
9	6,075	22	13,355
10	6,635	23	13,915
11	7,195	24	14,475
12	7,755	25	15,035
13	8,315	26	15,595

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 for the maximum gross monthly income.

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3. Citizenship

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

4. 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.

G. Crisis Determination

A household is in a crisis if it 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, and non-life-threatening if there is a danger of losing the heating/cooling source, and
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 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 acknowledge that a life-threatening or health risk issue exists.

NOTE: Be aware of potential vulnerable populations of elderly persons age 60 and above, disabled, and children under age 5.

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.

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H. 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.

I. Time Frames for Authorizing Assistance to Eligible Households

1. Time Frame for Authorizing **Assistance** for Households with a Disconnect, ~~Notice-~~ **Final or Past Due Notice.**

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 manual DSS-8185 (Low Income Energy Assistance Program Crisis Intervention Program Information Needed) must be completed and tracked by the case worker. The applicant has two business days to return 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, and the household will need to reapply.

2. Time Frame for Authorizing Assistance for Households without A Heating or Cooling Source.

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 manual DSS-8185 (Low Income Energy Assistance Program Crisis Intervention Program Information

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Needed) must be completed and tracked by the case worker. The applicant has two business days to return requested information. Once 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, 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.

J. 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 per State fiscal year is \$600. The maximum benefit amount allowed can be up to \$600 per application per crisis.
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 per 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.

B. Method of Payment

Methods of payment include but are not limited to:

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1. Voucher payments
2. Direct energy provider payments

If a household is facing disconnection and a payment agreement is set up with their energy provider, the county will need to verify the terms of the agreement, and how much is needed to prevent disconnection. Regular agreement payments should not be made by the county.

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, not to exceed \$250.

C. 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.

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 persons 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:

- Past due bills with a disconnection notice, or
- Connection or reconnection fees.

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

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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 that would allow households the ability to heat or cool their homes.

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.