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**ENERGY PROGRAMS**  
**EP-200 ENERGY PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN**

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**EP-200 ENERGY PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN**

**CHANGE #1-2023**

**June 2 ,2023**

**200.01        REQUIREMENTS**

- A. Outreach must be provided to ensure that eligible households are made aware of the available assistance.
- B. In addition to social services, other state and local governmental entities or **community-based** organizations must be contacted and offered the opportunity to provide outreach and take applications.

**200.02        OUTREACH GUIDELINES**

The following are guidelines and suggestions as to how outreach requirements may be fulfilled.

A. Purpose and Priority Groups

The purpose of outreach is to reach and serve those eligible for and in need of assistance. Give priority to the following groups.

- 1. Those most vulnerable to the effects of the cold, especially individuals who are elderly, ill, bedridden, disabled, and young children.
- 2. Those for whom access is difficult because they live in isolated or rural areas, move frequently (such as migrants), or have limited proficiency in speaking English.
- 3. Those individuals and families with the lowest income and highest relative energy cost and needs.

B. Establishment of an Interagency Committee

One of the major factors in creating an effective outreach program is the identification of and coordination with other agencies, organizations, and groups that can assist in outreach activities. The county director or designee may establish a committee and encourage participation of local agencies and community-based organizations.

The county director or his designee may also want to investigate the possibility of utilizing existing energy advisory groups as part of the interagency committee. Contact may be made with agencies and groups such as the following:

- 1. Community service agencies such as community action agencies and public and private non-profit agencies serving families and children, especially households with the lowest income and highest relative energy costs and needs.
- 2. Volunteer programs.

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3. Regional area agencies on aging and senior citizens' organizations such as Councils on Aging and Focal Points on Aging.
4. Local health departments.
5. Community-based Indian organizations.
6. Home energy suppliers.
7. Federal government agencies such as Social Security district offices, Veteran's Administration offices, and post offices.
8. The public education and public library systems.
9. Vocational Rehabilitation offices.
10. Churches and religious organizations.
11. Legal services organizations.
12. Migrant service organizations.
13. Public media facilities.
14. Home health agencies.
15. Local colleges and universities with organizations that may be looking for community projects.
16. Other agencies and organizations in your area that may be willing to assist in outreach efforts.

**C. Providing Information to the Interagency Committee**

1. When agencies are first contacted, explain the purpose of the energy program, solicit their participation on the committee, and their assistance in outreach efforts.
2. At the first committee meeting, the county director or designee should:
  - a. Explain the **Low-Income** Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and the Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) and coordinate this effort.
  - b. Provide any informational materials on LIEAP and CIP [e.g., DSS-8117, flyers, manual material]; and
  - c. Poll the various agencies on the types of assistance they might provide in the outreach effort.

While communication with agencies would be necessary during the implementation of the program, a committee approach would help to ensure coordination and prevent duplication of effort.

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The interagency committee could be utilized, not just in relation to LIEAP and CIP, but as a group concerned with the broader problem of energy needs of the poor, elderly, and disabled. It could also become concerned with attempting to mobilize various resources in addition to benefits provided through LIEAP and CIP.

**D. Providing Ease of Access to the Program**

The county director or designee should consider the following methods to ensure program access to priority groups:

1. Utilize media contacts to publicize the program's eligibility requirements and methods of applying.
2. Publicize, in advance, extended hours and application-taking in outpost offices. Encourage participation of media representatives on the interagency committee to facilitate this process.
3. Take applications after regular office hours and on weekends to ease access.
4. Take applications at outpost offices, congregate meal sites for the elderly, churches, community centers, senior citizens centers, and community-based Indian organizations to encourage participation of those without access or transportation to county departments. Full county coverage can be assured by establishing locations for application-taking throughout the county. Make particular efforts to ensure rural coverage.
5. The interagency committee could be utilized to coordinate transportation. Pursue the use of volunteers for transportation services. See 200.07 "Use of Volunteers."

**E. Identifying and Informing Potentially Eligible Households**

The following are some possible methods to identify and inform potentially eligible households:

1. Utilize vendors to disseminate information about the program. Vendors have much to be gained by the energy program and could be a valuable source of assistance in informing potentially eligible households, specifically those with the lowest income and highest relative energy costs and needs. Some may be willing to distribute fliers with fuel bills or when making fuel deliveries. Again, encouraging participation of vendors on the interagency committee can facilitate this effort.

**200.03 APPLICATION PLAN GUIDELINES**

In addition to social services, other state and local governmental entities or community-based organizations must be contacted and offered the opportunity to provide outreach and take applications. Examples of community-based organizations are not-for-profit neighborhood-based organizations, area agencies on aging, and community action agencies.

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A. This requirement may be met in one of three ways. You may:

1. Set up outpost locations at one or more of these agencies and have a county caseworker take applications; or
2. Contract application-taking to one of these agencies for details of this process; or
3. Have these agencies take applications in addition to the county department of social services.

If you select option 2 or 3. above, the county director or designee must contact the agencies to determine whether they are interested in taking applications. This may be done as part of the first interagency committee meeting. (See 200.02C. above.)

All individuals requesting to apply for LIEAP must be logged using the DMA 5093, Daily Reception Log, for Medical and Financial Assistance, or another logging method may be used, as long, as a record is kept and maintained on site. When you offer outside agencies the opportunity to take applications and they choose not to, document the agencies contacted, whom you talked with, and the outcome.

The application-taking requirements have been met by contacting one of these agencies, regardless of whether it chooses to take applications.

If an outside agency takes applications, it is suggested that you have a Memorandum of Understanding or written agreement with the agency. This agreement is needed to ensure compliance with deadlines for application processing and with confidentiality requirements.

B. The county director or designee must meet with the agencies which will be taking applications and discuss the following:

1. Explanation of the LIEAP Application Process
2. Forms needed to take applications and how they will be supplied
3. Training needs for staff who will take applications
4. Coordination procedures between the county department of social services and other agencies
5. Dates for LIEAP application-taking
6. Critical time frames for receiving applications
7. Procedures to avoid duplication
8. Memorandum of Understanding or written agreement

C. County Department's Responsibilities

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If an outside agency takes applications, the county director or his designee is responsible for:

1. Training the other agency's staff.
2. Maintaining fiscal responsibility for the program.
3. Maintaining confidentiality. Disclosure of information in case records to other agencies about any Work First, Food and Nutrition Services, MA, Energy, or Service applicant/recipient (a/r) is not allowed.
4. Requesting and verifying information needed to process applications.
5. Processing applications within the prescribed time frames.

**200.04            OUTREACH PLAN**

The county director or designee is required to develop an Energy Programs Outreach Plan, which addresses outreach, application activities, and eligibility guidelines for LIEAP and CIP (including the heating, cooling, and non-federal components). As a part of the plan, counties must also address how to meet the requirement for outreach and application taken by outside agencies. This information must be included for your plan to be approved. Each year, auditors review the plans to ensure we are complying with outreach and monitoring requirements. Therefore, it is critical that these plans be comprehensive. See DSS 8119ia.

**NOTE:** Each county's Outreach Plan is specifically designed to meet the needs of its current population. Outreach Plans will differ between counties.

Include the following in your Outreach and Application-taking Plan.

A. Outreach

1. Groups to be contacted to participate on an interagency committee
2. Dates for committee meetings
3. Names of agencies which will assist in outreach (NOTE: Agencies may do outreach and/or take applications.)
4. What outreach activities the agencies will provide
5. How outreach will be coordinated between the county department of social services and these other agencies
6. Newspaper, radio stations, social media, and television stations contacted to publicize the Energy Program

B. Application Plan

1. Names of agencies which will assist in taking applications (NOTE: Agencies may do outreach and/or take applications.)

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2. How the application plan will be coordinated between the county department of social services and these other agencies
  3. Dates and times planned for after hours and/or weekends for taking applications
  4. Outpost sites planned for taking applications
- C. Determining a Crisis
1. An event beyond its control
  2. Heating or cooling source is in jeopardy
  3. Life at risk because of no heating or cooling source, current outside temperature, or weather condition
  4. Alleviating crisis besides using CIP
  5. Reasons eligible for CIP
  6. Reasons ineligible for CIP

**200.05      DUE DATES FOR PLAN SUBMITTAL AND APPROVAL**

The Economic and Family Services Section must receive the plan no later than August 1st of each year. To submit the plan, follow instructions given via communications regarding Energy Programs Outreach Plans. Notification of approval or denial will be given. If the plan is not approved and the areas that need to be corrected will be communicated as well as if it is approved and be implemented.

**200.06      POTENTIAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY OTHER LOCAL AGENCIES AND VOLUNTEERS**

Following are examples of some of the services that might be provided by other local agencies and volunteer groups:

- A. Provide transportation
- B. Distribute informational literature
- C. Give energy program referrals
- D. Serve as authorized representatives
- E. Take applications (See EP-300)

**NOTE:** Volunteers can take applications but not process the application.

**200.07      OUTREACH EFFORTS**

- A. Division of Social Services Outreach Efforts

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The following are some of the activities planned by the Division of Social Services to supplement county outreach efforts.

1. Work with other state agencies and advocacy groups to assist in coordination of outreach at the local level. Each agency will work with his local counterpart to ensure coordination.
2. Prepare press releases for distribution to newspapers and social media outlets throughout the State. The county director is informed prior to such releases.
3. Prepare and distribute public service announcements to radio stations throughout the State.
4. Develop a pamphlet (DSS-8117) to be distributed to county departments and other agencies regarding basic eligibility requirements and method of application.

**B. County Department of Social Services Outreach Efforts**

The following are some of the outreach efforts the county director or his designee may conduct.

1. Ensure that all Department of Social Services' employees are aware of the energy programs offered, basic eligibility requirements, and the county's referral process.

Suggested methods of notification are:

- a. A memorandum from the director or designee to each employee outlining the energy programs.
  - b. Having a member of the energy staff attend unit or section meetings to discuss the energy programs.
2. Publicize the energy programs whenever possible.

**200.08 OTHER SERVICES**

**A. Utilities Moratorium**

1. The North Carolina's Utilities Commission order regarding disconnection/termination of services is listed below.

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a. This order applies to the regulated electric and gas companies listed below:

Dominion North Carolina Power

Duke Energy Carolinas

Duke Energy Progress

North Carolina Electric Membership Corporations

New River Light and Power Company

Western Carolina University

Piedmont Natural Gas Company, Inc.

PSNC Energy (Dominion) Frontier Natural Gas Company

Toccoa Natural Gas

2. Terminations of Services for all Customers

Before one of the regulated utilities companies discontinues services, the customers must:

- a. Receive a written notice; **and**
- b. Be contacted personally to the extent possible; **and**
- c. Be provided an opportunity to make installment payments over six months for past and current bills.

3. Limited Moratorium on Termination of Services

Regulated utility companies cannot discontinue service from November 1 through March 31 of each year for certain eligible households that:

- a. Contain a member who is elderly (age 65 or over) or is disabled; **and**
- b. Cannot pay the utility bill in part or in full; **and**
- c. Meet the eligibility requirements for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP); **and**
- d. Have been certified as being eligible for LIEAP. The household does not actually have to receive assistance through LIEAP to qualify.

4. Application Procedures



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a. General Information

You must:

- (1) Cooperate in certifying households for the limited moratorium.
- (2) Disseminate information to other social services programs in order that people who may be receiving assistance from these programs will be aware of the moratorium.
- (3) Certify eligible households for the moratorium and tell them about the installment plan. (Use of this moratorium may enable you to stretch your county funds further.)

b. Procedures for completing the DSS-8118, Certification Utilities Moratorium.

- (1) To certify the eligible households, complete the DSS-8118, Certification Utilities Moratorium;
- (2) Forward the original DSS-8118 to the utility company; and
- (3) Give/mail the applicant a copy; and
- (4) Retain one copy in your file.
- (5) Attach any documentation used to determine eligibility for LIEAP to the file copy.

c. Verification and Documentation

- (1) You can accept the client's statement regarding age and disability. An applicant certifies that he and/or a member of the household meets the definition of an aged or disabled person when he signs the DSS-8118.
- (2) Do not forward any verification information to the utility company.

5. Hearing Process

Applicant's/Recipient's (A's/R's) Rights

Filing a Complaint:

a. Address the complaint to:

Chief Clerk

North Carolina Utilities Commission

4325 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699-4300

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b. Additional information can be found at:  
<https://www.ncuc.net/Consumer/complaint.html>

**200.09 MONITORING**

A. County Level Monitoring

The county director or designee must ensure that activities are being conducted according to the Energy Programs Outreach Plan and monitor the need for adjustment. Review information presented in the plan quarterly to ensure adequate staffing, outreach, and training for LIEAP, and CIP programs has been completed.

B. State Level Monitoring

Economic and Family Services monitoring staff will monitor counties to ensure compliance with the approved Energy Programs Outreach Plan. If a compliance issue is discovered, monitors will assist the county in developing and implementing an appropriate Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).

Monitoring staff will select a sample of approved and denied actions for review. Provide these cases to the assigned monitor upon request to determine the accuracy of action taken on each case. Corrective Action will be requested when appropriate.