



Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

FACT SHEET

October 2021

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) uses state and federal money to help income-eligible consumers pay their utility bills.

Who is eligible for LIHEAP?

LIHEAP is for households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level ([consult this link to see if you qualify](#)). Applicants must have an active account with the utility.

Applicants whose natural gas or electricity service is disconnected or whose propane or home heating oil tanks are empty are eligible for additional reconnection assistance. In certain circumstances, additional funding can be awarded to prevent the disconnection of service or to keep a fuel tank from becoming completely empty.

Households that rent—with the gas, electricity and/or fuel included in the rent—may receive a different grant if monthly rent costs are greater than 30 percent of the household's income for the past 30 days.

Contact your [Community Action Agency](#) to start the application process. If you have questions, call the LIHEAP Hotline at 1-877-411-9276.

What documents do I need to apply?

- Proof of gross income from all household members for the 30-day period beginning with the date of application.
- A copy of current heat and electric bills issued within the last 30 days (if energy directly paid for).
- A copy of rental agreement (if renting) showing that utilities are included, the monthly rental amount and landlord contact information.
- Proof of Social Security numbers or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) for all household members. (Individuals without an SSN or ITIN can still apply, and their Local Administering Agency will advise accordingly).
- Proof the household received TANF or other benefits, such as SNAP, if receiving assistance from the Illinois Department of Human Services.

What LIHEAP programs are available?

Direct Vendor Payment (DVP)/ Reconnection Assistance (RA). DVP/RA is a grant provided directly to the energy provider on behalf of the LIHEAP recipient. The assistance amount is determined by income, household size, fuel type and location. RA is a supplemental block grant added to maintain or restore energy service and is determined by the amount of the bill.

Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP). LIHEAP clients who are customers of Ameren, ComEd, Nicor Gas and Peoples Gas/North Shore Gas may choose to enroll in PIPP. Under PIPP, clients pay a percentage of their income, receive a monthly benefit toward their utility bill and receive a reduction in overdue payments for every on-time payment they make by the bill due date.

Emergency Furnace Assistance. This program is designed to repair or replace a home's heating system if it is not operational or has been found unsafe by their utility. Households must meet all regular LIHEAP qualifications and may still apply for any and all other LIHEAP programs once the heating system is functional. Emergency Furnace Assistance is only available for homeowners. Renters with a broken or unsafe heating system should report their landlord if the situation is not corrected in a timely manner.

Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP). This program provides customers with weatherization services for their homes. Work may include:

- Air sealing
- Attic and wall insulation
- HVAC repair or replacement
- Water heater repair or replacement
- Lighting and refrigerator replacement
- Ventilation and moisture control measures

To apply for the IHWAP program, households need to provide many of the same documents needed to apply for LIHEAP. However, IHWAP is based on annual household income rather than monthly income. The household's combined income must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level for state funds and 200 percent of the federal poverty level if using federal funding.

Weatherization is geared toward homeowners, but renters can qualify with cooperation of the property owner.

Unlike LIHEAP, IHWAP accepts applications throughout the year until funds are exhausted. For complete details for your area, contact your local LIHEAP agency.

When can my household apply for assistance?

The LIHEAP application period is September 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022, or until funding is exhausted.

How is LIHEAP funded?

LIHEAP and IHWAP are paid for by a combination of federal and state money. The U.S. Departments of Energy and Health and Human Services provide funds annually through the federal budget process. Meanwhile, Illinois gas and electric customers pay 48 cents a month on their bills (\$4.80 for commercial accounts), which goes into a special state fund that supplements the federal allocation.

Are there any other resources for help paying or reducing my utility bills?

LIHEAP and IHWAP are the only government-funded programs that are equally available throughout the state. Most major utilities run their own assistance programs. Some smaller utility companies and co-ops may offer similar programs.

Organizations like Catholic Charities, Heartland Alliance and Salvation Army can help with utility bills under certain circumstances. Local faith-based institutions and community organizations sometimes assist as well. Your municipality or your township may also offer some form of assistance.

If you are struggling to afford your utility bills, you should contact utility providers, government offices and nonprofit organizations in your area—or visit their websites—to explore your options.

Also, call CUB's Consumer Hotline, at **1-800-669-5556**, to find out exactly what your rights are if you do get behind.

What if I am signed up with an alternative gas or electric supplier?

CUB has found that the vast majority of unregulated gas and electric offers may cost more than standard prices through your regulated public utility.

For the LIHEAP household, a bad energy deal can be particularly damaging. Excess charges can “eat up” a DVP grant. Customers enrolled in PIPP may end up with bills so large they “max out” and the program requires an additional out-of-pocket contribution from them—above and beyond the percentage of income calculated by the PIPP law. Some customers, in particular those with alternative gas suppliers on their utility accounts, may not be able to apply for PIPP at all.

The Home Energy Affordability Transparency (HEAT) Act protects many low income households from predatory marketers. Passed in 2020, the HEAT Act requires alternative energy companies to file a “guaranteed savings plan” with the Illinois Commerce Commission if they want to sell to low-income customers. If a utility account has received LIHEAP funds within the past 12 months, it cannot be released to an energy supplier. So that's another reason to make sure you apply for LIHEAP if you are eligible – ensure your account is protected from overcharging!

Questions?

For any questions about these programs and eligibility, please call the LIHEAP Hotline at **1-877-411-9276**.