



**For Immediate Release: 10/26/2023**

## **Heating Assistance Available to Help Ohioans Avoid Winter Chill**

The Ohio Department of Development and West Ohio CAP want to ensure Ohioans stay warm and comfortable this winter by helping alleviate the burden of costly energy bills.

From Nov. 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024, income-eligible Ohioans can receive one-time assistance with their home energy bill through the Department of Development's [Home Energy Assistance Winter Crisis Program](#).

The Winter Crisis Program assists Ohioans facing service disconnection, have been disconnected, need to establish new service, need to pay to transfer service, have a [Percentage of Income Payment Plan \(PIPP\)](#) default, need to make their first PIPP payment, or have 25 percent or less supply of bulk fuel in their tank to maintain service. Qualifying households must have a gross annual income of at or below 175 percent of the federal poverty level. For a family of four, that is up to \$52,500.

Last year, the Winter Crisis Program assisted more than 67,000 households in Ohio, providing a total of \$19 million in benefits.

"A warm and comfortable home should not be a luxury only some people can afford," said Lydia Mihalik, director of the Department of Development. "This program does more than just provide financial assistance; it shows some of our most-vulnerable residents that we're here to lend a helping hand when they need it most."

Households serviced by a Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO)-regulated utility must sign up for PIPP or another payment plan if there is still an outstanding balance on the utility bill after receiving assistance.

Ohioans can start their application online but will need to schedule an appointment with their local energy assistance provider to complete the application. Depending on the agency, the appointment may be in person, on the phone, or virtual. The application and list of providers can be found online at [energyhelp.ohio.gov](#). Ohioans can also call 800-282-0880 to find their local provider. Hearing impaired customers may dial 711 for assistance.

According to Kim Bruns at West Ohio Community Action Partnership last year more than 1269 families in Allen, Auglaize, and Mercer Counties were assisted through the Home Energy Assistance Winter Crisis Program.

Clients need to bring copies of the following documents to their appointment:

- Copies of their most-recent energy bills.
- A list of all household members and proof of income for the last 30 days or 12 months for each member.
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency for all household members.
- Proof of disability, if applicable.

HEAP benefits are applied to an individual's energy bill after Jan. 1. If you need immediate assistance with your energy bills, please contact your local Energy Assistance Provider. A list of providers can be found at [energyhelp.ohio.gov](http://energyhelp.ohio.gov).

Applications for the HEAP Winter Crisis program must be received by March 31, 2024. The last day to apply for the regular HEAP benefit is May 31, 2024. For more information on the programs, visit [energyhelp.ohio.gov](http://energyhelp.ohio.gov) or call your local Energy Assistance Provider.

Call 419-516-0063 to schedule an appointment for Allen, Auglaize, and Mercer counties or call 419-227-2586 for more information.

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