

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: December 2022

TO: Newspapers - Editor

FROM: YCAP-Yamhill Community Action Partnership
Brittany Hanson, Energy Assistance Program Coordinator
For press release only contact 503.687.1487

SUBJECT: LIHEAP Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

+++++

Energy Assistance Funds are now available to income eligible households within Yamhill County.

Preliminary numbers for Yamhill County show over \$577,000.00 of LIHEAP funding will be available for bill assistance this year. It is estimated that over 1500 households will receive assistance this heating season.

- ❑ Pre-Screening of Senior and Disabled households began on October 1st 2022.
- ❑ On December 1st 2022 the department began accepting requests/referrals for the general public and placing them on a referral list. On a weekly basis, the department will continue to select a number of potential applicants off the list and mail them an application packet.
- ❑ To date, 356 households have been approved for assistance through the LIHEAP program.
- ❑ Assistance is available to help with various heating sources: Electricity, Propane, Natural Gas, Heating oil, Pellets, or Firewood.
- ❑ LIHEAP: Last year, 942 households in Yamhill County were served with an average payment of \$353.00
- ❑ Assistance may be available for emergency heating system repairs/replacements for situations meeting program eligibility requirements.

Please note changes have occurred with income guidelines. The 60% state median income has increased, see the chart below. Contact YCAP for further information.

Tips for Households facing Disconnects

It is always best for households to remain connected to their heat or power source. Reconnections are costly and may require deposits and additional fees on top of the payment of the billed amount. Assistance funds are increasingly limited. Households are strongly encouraged to use these guidelines:

1. Continue honest communication with your utility/heating source provider. Build positive relations by working with them and not against them. They are able to provide their best services to you when you work with them to keep your services in place without disruption.
2. Follow through with your commitments. Some form of payment is better than none at all. Check on payment plans, rate discount plans, or equal pay programs with your utility.
3. Potential applicants for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program should apply at once. It's important to take early action before the funds run out. Expensive reconnection fees can be avoided with fast action which saves time and trouble.
4. If you have been approved for Energy Assistance, continue to make payments on your account, at least until you see the credit appear on your monthly bill. Remember that the Energy Assistance Program is a one-time payment to help offset the high heating cost in the winter. It is NOT a substitute for the need to continue regular monthly payments toward on-going winter utility bills.

Program Description

Funded by the federal government, YCAP's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (*LIHEAP*) is intended to provide supplemental financial support to eligible households to offset residential energy expenses. In enacting the authorizing legislation, Congress has found that there have been dramatic increases in home energy expenses and that these costs impose a disproportionately larger burden on fixed-income, low-income, and lower-to-middle-income households. The legislation recognizes that adequate home heating is a necessary aspect of shelter and that deficiencies in home heating pose a threat to life, health, and/or safety.

Eligibility

Participation guidelines are established by the federal government and are based upon total family pre-tax income (*see below*). For the purpose of this program, “income” does not include assets or funds over which the applicant has no control.

Income Limit Guidelines

For a family size of:	<u>Gross</u> monthly income cannot be over:
1	\$ 2,605.50
2	\$ 3,407.17
3	\$ 4,208.83
4	\$ 5,010.50
5	\$ 5,812.25
6	\$ 6,613.92
7	\$ 6,764.25
8	\$ 6,914.50

Please contact YCAP for income levels for households with 9 or more persons.

Note: The gross income limits have been increased for the program year beginning 10/01/22. Deductions, such as out of pocket medical expenses, childcare, and student expenses, etc. are not deducted from the gross income. This program is available to renters and owner-occupant households that meet the Income Limit Guidelines. Applicants who receive certain housing subsidies are also eligible to participate but may receive reduced benefits due to utility allowances built into their rent payments.

Types of Assistance

LIHEAP provides a one-time regular assistance payment per eligible household per program year. The current program year runs from Oct. 1, 2022 through Sept. 30, 2023. Households are served based upon availability of funds; LIHEAP is not an “entitlement” program. Federal guidelines may require prioritization of applicants based upon age, disabilities, and age of children. Payments may be tendered directly to the applicant’s primary heat source provider (*i.e. utility company, oil distributor, etc.*). The primary heat source is the principal type of fuel used to provide more than 50% of the heat to the residence. **Depending on funding availability** assistance may be available for heating equipment repairs or additional heating crisis assistance.

Procedure

Applications are processed through the mail. Senior or Disabled households who have received Energy Assistance for the previous year will receive notification during the months of October or November. New applicants may be referred by other social service agencies or may request an application packet by phoning the YCAP office. (**Energy Assistance Main Line 503-472-0457 ext. 1480 or 1-855-216-5289 ext 1480**) Program dates are subject to change based upon actions of the federal government.