



Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

2015 - 2016

Vendor Guidelines

LIHEAP Vendor Guidelines provide information about the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), operated by Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS). Documents referenced in this document can be found on the LIHEAP Vendor website at <http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>.

Key points for the 2015/16 LIHEAP program year:

- LIHEAP Cash and Crisis components will begin on Monday, November 2, 2015, and are expected to end on Friday, April 1, 2016.
- The minimum Cash benefit for 2015/16 is \$100 and the maximum is \$1,000.
- A \$70 Supplemental Cash grant will be issued this season to households that include a disabled individual, someone 60 or older, or someone 5 or younger.
- The Supplemental Cash grant will be issued as a separate payment but should be received on the same voucher as the customer's regular Cash grant.
- Cash and Supplemental grants are considered to be available for resolving an emergency situation if those grants are processed before the date of a Crisis request. Any credit balance, as well as the LIHEAP Cash and Supplemental grants that have been authorized and not yet received, must be considered to be available to the vendor to resolve the emergency before a Crisis grant is authorized.

Important Vendor Information:

- LIHEAP Vendor Agreements are typically updated every two years.
- A LIHEAP vendor must agree to participate in both the Cash and Crisis components.
- For LIHEAP purposes, "Blended Fuel" is defined as a 50/50 mix of oil and kerosene. An additive mixed with heating oil and a 70/30 mix of oil/kerosene are not "blended."
- A vendor must agree to charge the lowest price for LIHEAP deliveries when it has a variable-pricing structure determined by factors such as when payment is received.
- Vendors must retain LIHEAP payment and delivery documents for at least four years.
- LIHEAP funds should NEVER be returned directly to a customer.
- Vendors must submit Crisis claims in PROMISE™ within 30 days of authorization to allow another Crisis to be authorized and to streamline payment processing.

The LIHEAP Cash Grant:

Eligibility for a Cash grant is determined by a DHS county assistance office (CAO) representative based on type of heat, household size, heating region and annual income. Cash grants are sent to vendors on a weekly basis. Additionally,

- A household is eligible for only **one** Cash grant during the heating season.
- Current-year Cash and Supplemental grants cannot be used to pay for oil, blended fuel, propane, coal, kerosene or wood delivered before Oct. 1, 2015, which is the first day of the federal fiscal year and also the start of the 2015/16 heating season.
- Cash grants remaining from the 2014/15 LIHEAP season can be used until June 30, 2016. Cash grants from the current season (2015/16) can be used until June 30, 2017. See condition #12 of the LIHEAP Vendor Agreement for additional information about this time frame and returning unused LIHEAP credits to DHS.

The LIHEAP Crisis grant

Eligibility for a Crisis grant is based on the existence of an emergency in which the household is without heat or in danger of being without heat.

Definition of a Crisis: Households in crisis must meet one of the following criteria:

- A household's main or secondary heating source (if needed to operate the main heating source) is not working because of faulty equipment or service termination.
- Main or secondary heating source is pending termination.
- Fuel that is deliverable or picked up is completely depleted.
- Fuel that is deliverable or picked up is expected to be depleted WITHIN 15 DAYS.

Basic information about the Crisis grant:

- Households that are without heat or are in danger of losing heat may be eligible to receive a Crisis benefit from Nov. 2, 2015, through April 1, 2016.
- A DHS representative must contact the vendor to authorize every Crisis delivery or pickup before the vendor makes a delivery.
- Every authorization is good for a **one-time-only** delivery or pickup of fuel.
- A vendor should **NOT** provide Crisis fuel to any customer until being contacted by a DHS representative. Fuel delivery or pickup must take place **after** the DHS representative contacts the vendor to authorize the fuel.
- A Crisis grant cannot be authorized to pay for fuel that was already provided to a customer.
- When a DHS representative authorizes a Crisis delivery of fuel and refers to the customer's Cash or Supplemental grant, vendor representatives should make sure they haven't already used that money for a previous delivery.
- Customers who participate in a vendor's automatic-delivery schedule are not eligible for a Crisis grant, since they are protected from running out of fuel.
- A Crisis authorization is not paid automatically. Payment requires action by the vendor through data entry into the PROMISe™ Internet site <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us> and submission of documentation of the delivery/pickup or the termination/reconnection notice by upload, fax or mail.

Crisis issuances:

- The minimum Crisis benefit for 2015/16 is \$25 and the maximum is \$500.
- A household could qualify for more than one Crisis authorization if the first Crisis situation is resolved for less than the \$500 season limit.
- The combined total of the household's Crisis grants cannot exceed \$500 during the LIHEAP season, which runs from Nov. 2, 2015, through April 1, 2016.

Crisis policy and procedures:

Customers must make a request for Crisis consideration to their local CAO if they are facing a heating emergency caused by being without fuel, being in imminent danger of being without fuel (within 15 days of running out) or due to utility termination or threat of termination.

When a Crisis request is received, the DHS/CAO representative will review the customer's case record and contact the vendor to determine the status of the Cash and Supplemental grants and see if there are sufficient funds already available to resolve the customer's emergency.

NOTE: Condition 7 e) of the LIHEAP Vendor Agreement states that if a Cash grant was authorized before the day of the Crisis request, the Cash grant is considered to be available to resolve the emergency. If the LIHEAP Cash grant has not been approved at the time of the request for Crisis, the vendor may request that a Crisis grant be used to resolve the emergency, allowing the Cash grant to be placed on the customer's account as a credit for future usage.

If the Cash and Supplemental grants have not been delivered or credited in full to the customer's account, the DHS representative will discuss with the vendor to determine if:

- The Cash and Supplemental grants (whether authorized or received) are enough to make a delivery or otherwise resolve the Crisis.
 - If they are sufficient, a Crisis grant is not authorized. The vendor must use the Cash and Supplemental grants to resolve the customer's heating emergency.
 - If they are not enough to resolve the emergency, the credit balance must be used first and a Crisis grant can be authorized to cover the remaining amount needed to resolve the emergency (up to the season maximum of \$500).

NOTE: Only the portion of the delivery that was authorized with Crisis funds must be submitted and documented through PROMISE™.

- If the Cash and Supplemental grants have already been delivered or credited to a customer's account and no credit remains, the DHS representative will evaluate eligibility for a Crisis grant.

Authorizing a Crisis delivery

When considering a Crisis grant, the DHS representative will ask:

- if the Cash and Supplemental grants have been used and will determine whether a previous Crisis delivery was authorized. If the customer is deemed eligible for Crisis, the DHS representative will ask a deliverable-fuel dealer to provide up to the season maximum.
- a natural gas or electricity provider how much it would cost to reconnect the utility service or suspend termination proceedings. The DHS representative may authorize no more than the season maximum of \$500.

REMEMBER: Every Crisis authorization is good for a ***one-time-only*** delivery or pickup of fuel. If a customer wants another Crisis delivery or pickup because the household has not reached the season limit, the customer must first contact the CAO. A DHS/CAO representative will then contact the vendor if a new Crisis delivery is approved.

Vendor compliance with DHS:

1. When a DHS representative determines that a household is without heat, the representative will contact the vendor to make a request for delivery or have utility service reconnected within 48 hours. If the representative determines that someone's life is at risk, the deadline is 18 hours.
2. Regardless of whether the household is without heat or is in danger of being without heat, the vendor must do its best to accommodate the request for a delivery/service restoration within the time frame requested by the DHS representative.
3. If the vendor is unable to make a delivery or restore service to the household without heat or before the household runs out of heat, the vendor must advise the DHS representative so that alternative measures can be taken. This could include authorizing the delivery to another vendor.
4. After contact from a DHS representative, the vendor must contact the customer to discuss and make arrangements for delivery/reconnection. This conversation could include making the customer aware of emergency delivery fees.
5. Fuel delivery must be in the amount agreed upon with the DHS representative unless the customer agrees to pay for the overage. The delivery may be for a lesser amount if the energy product doesn't fit into the customer's tank or storage space.
6. Vendors must save fuel-delivery documentation for four years regardless of whether it is a Crisis, Cash or Supplemental grant delivery.

Submitting Crisis claims for payment using PROMISE™ :

- Data entry is available in PROMISE™ at <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us> beginning November 3, 2015, and is accessible to LIHEAP vendors 24 hours a day.
- Only deliveries made with a Crisis authorization are data-entered in PROMISE™.
- LIHEAP vendors may view all Crisis authorizations, submit Crisis claims and review all of the Crisis claims submitted during the heating season.
- The LIHEAP PROMISE™ system was designed to use an MS Windows operating system with Internet Explorer. You will not be able to use PROMISE™ with an Apple product or with Google Chrome.

IMPORTANT: In addition to data entry in PROMISE™, vendors must also submit proof of the Crisis delivery (shutoff notice, metered trip ticket, etc) within 30 days in one of these methods:

- The preferred way to submit documentation is by scanning/uploading to PROMISE™
- Fax to **717-207-7997 or 717-207-7994.**
- Mail to DHS – LIHEAP Crisis Documentation, PO Box 69028, Harrisburg, PA 17106.

NOTE: A Cover Sheet must be printed from PROMISE™ when submitting by mail or fax

Helpful hints for successful PROMISE™ submissions:

- If a DHS representative says the customer is eligible for up to \$500 in Crisis but the vendor finds the customer can only use \$200 worth of fuel, the vendor should submit a claim in PROMISE™ for \$200, not for \$500. The vendor is prohibited from filing a \$500 claim and then retaining the additional Crisis funds for a future delivery.
- Never enter a Crisis claim for more than the maximum season Crisis grant of \$500. Entering a higher amount – even by just a penny (\$500.01) -- will delay payment.
- Vendors should use just one trip ticket for a delivery rather than splitting it into multiple tickets to reflect multiple funding sources. The best way to show that is to write the Cash and Supplemental grant amounts, for instance, on the trip ticket.
- The customer's account number is displayed on the *Active Authorization* page and will automatically appear when the vendor uses the Express Option button when submitting claims. The vendor has the ability to change the account number if it is incorrect.
- The LIHEAP Vendor Unit Helpline, **1-877-537-9517**, can retract *Active* Crisis authorizations when notified by the vendor that no delivery will be made or, in the case of a utility, no shutoff notice issued. This function removes the authorization from the vendor's *Active* authorization page(s) in PROMISE™.
- The status *In Progress* appears for authorizations the vendor has already submitted for reimbursement. Once claims are paid, the status changes to *Completed*. A search function allows vendors to sort and view claims by *In Progress*, *Completed* or *Active*.
- Crisis authorizations should be available to view in PROMISE™ the day after a DHS representative calls the vendor to request delivery. An overnight batch process prevents vendors from submitting a claim in PROMISE™ on the same day it is authorized.
- Vendors should call the Vendor Helpline (877-537-9517) for assistance when they are unable to print the *LIHEAP Cover Sheet* with the specific numbers pertaining to the authorization. Vendors should NOT hand-write the numbers on the cover sheet, as PROMISE™ will not accept those submissions.
- Vendors must click on the "Submit" button on the *Claim Submission Page* where the fuel type and delivery date are entered in PROMISE™. Failure to click on "Submit" means the claim has not been made even if the vendor faxes or mails in the documentation.

LIHEAP Payments:

- All payment activity for the LIHEAP Crisis program is centralized in Harrisburg.
- LIHEAP vendors are **NOT** paid with individual checks for each customer.

- LIHEAP payments are sent by mail or direct-deposit on a weekly basis by the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury.
- Weekly payments will include all of the Cash and Supplemental grants that were approved during a designated week and also Crisis grants that were finalized by vendor data entry and submission of documentation.
- **Direct Deposit/Electronic Funds Transfer** is an option for vendors. Vendors are encouraged to sign up for direct deposit into a bank or financial institution of their choice. EFT eliminates mail time and prevents loss. The EFT form can be downloaded at <http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>.
 - Complete and send with a copy of a voided check by email to RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov or fax to (717) 231-5516.

Remittance Advice/Vouchers:

- Remittance Advice documents also are referred to as RA's or vouchers. They are sent on a weekly basis to LIHEAP vendors who will receive a LIHEAP payment in the following few days. The RA lists the customers associated with the LIHEAP Cash, Supplemental and Crisis grant payments.
- Vendors are expected to apply the LIHEAP payment to the individual customer accounts and ensure that credit and/or deliveries are made.
- **Important:** Record the voucher number and individual number associated with each customer listed on the RA, as these numbers are needed if/when LIHEAP funds are returned to DHS. The Individual Number or "INDIV" is found on the right side of the RA.
- **Electronic Remittance Advice** is available to all LIHEAP vendors via a secure website, eliminating the need to wait for post office delivery. The electronic RA contains the same information as the paper RA for each payment cycle. Vendors must have a 'static IP address' to use this method. If interested, call the LIHEAP Vendor Unit at (877) 537-9517 and be prepared to share your IP Address and the name of a designated staff person who will be given a password to access SeGOV to retrieve the weekly RA.

Returning funds to DHS:

LIHEAP funds never should be sent to a customer. There are circumstances in which a LIHEAP vendor may receive funds that will need to be returned to DHS. Some examples are:

- Customer moves to a location the vendor does not serve.
- Customer dies.
- Customer requests a vendor change.
- DHS representative sends LIHEAP funds to the wrong vendor.
- Vendor terminates participation in LIHEAP and customers have LIHEAP credit.
- Extended time frame for delivery of fuel/utility ends (see Condition 12 of the LIHEAP Vendor Agreement). A LIHEAP Cash grant must be used by June 30 of the year following the LIHEAP season for which the payment was made.

Vendors who need to return LIHEAP funds for any of these reasons must return the money to DHS accompanied by a *LIHEAP Refund Form*. Dunning letters may also be sent by DHS to advise vendors to return funds. These letters identify the customer and the dollar amount that needs to be returned. The *LIHEAP Refund Form* and a check made payable to *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* should be submitted to the address printed on the form, which may be found at <http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>.

NOTE: Vendors have the option to request **Expedited Recoupment** for all refund payments or only for specific circumstances. Expedited Recoupment allows the refund to be subtracted from the vendor's next voucher and eliminates the need to submit a paper check. A form to request Expedited Recoupment is found on the LIHEAP Vendor Website.

LIHEAP Vendor Helpline Contact Information:

The LIHEAP Vendor Unit answers questions and provides assistance with PROMISe™.

- Toll-free LIHEAP Vendor Helpline: **(877) 537-9517 Mon-Fri from 8:00 to 4:00**
- Address: **LIHEAP Vendor Unit, PO Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105**
- E-mail address: RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov
- Fax: **717-231-5516**
- Vendor website:

<http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>

Assistance provided by LIHEAP Vendor Helpline representatives:

- Verify Crisis authorizations.
- Provide information and assistance on PROMISe™.
- Help vendors resolve LIHEAP Cash and Crisis payment issues.
- Answer all vendor policy and procedure questions.
- Help vendors with electronic remittance advice (vouchers).
- Enroll vendors in direct deposit for their LIHEAP payments.
- Provide information regarding refunds and reissuance of payments.
- Make changes to vendor information.
- Enroll and disenroll companies as vendors.
- Update vendor information, including LIHEAP vendor agreements.

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