



# **2020-21**

# **LIHEAP Vendor**

# **Guidelines**

Updated September 2020

LIHEAP Vendor Guidelines provide vendors with policy and procedures for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), operated by Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) through County Assistance Offices (CAOs). For additional information about LIHEAP, including a copy of these guidelines see: <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/LIHEAP-Vendors.aspx>

**Key points for the 2020-21 LIHEAP program year:**

- LIHEAP Cash and Crisis components begin on Monday, Nov. 2, 2020, and are expected to end on Friday, April 9, 2021.
- To avoid a backlog of applications in November, most customers who received a 2019/20 LIHEAP cash or crisis grant will receive an pre-season application or post card in October 2020, allowing them to apply before the start of the season. Pre-season application processing will generate 2020-21 LIHEAP cash grants to vendors in October 2020.
- The minimum Cash benefit is \$200 and the maximum is \$1,000.
- The season maximum for Crisis is \$800 per household.
- The LIHEAP Cash grant is considered to be available for resolving a heating emergency, including a LIHEAP Cash grant that has been authorized and not yet received by the vendor. A system enhancement this season will allow LIHEAP credits to be entered in the Crisis claims processing system, not just on the documentation.

**Important Vendor Information:**

- LIHEAP Vendor Agreements are typically updated every two years. The 2019 LIHEAP Vendor Agreement is active through June 30, 2021.
- A LIHEAP vendor must participate in both the Cash and Crisis components.
  - No action is required by the vendor to receive Cash grants.
  - Vendors must data-enter information into **PROMISE™**, the Commonwealth's claims management system, and submit proof of the termination or delivery before receiving payment. The PROMISE website: <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us>
- Vendors must submit Crisis claims in PROMISE™ within 30 days of authorization to allow another Crisis to be authorized if necessary and to streamline the payment process.
- 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 given or refunded to a customer or to a local CAO. The money must be returned to LIHEAP headquarters in Harrisburg.
- Payment details (vouchers/RA) are posted in a PDF format to PROMISE™ 9 days before the Treasury pay date for vendors to credit customer accounts and schedule deliveries.

### **The LIHEAP Cash Grant:**

Eligibility for a Cash grant is determined at the CAO based on type of heat, household size, heating region and annual income. The Pennsylvania Treasury sends Cash grants to vendors on a weekly basis by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT/direct deposit) or by paper check.

- A household is eligible for only **one** Cash grant during the heating season.
- Current-year Cash grants can't be used to pay for oil, blended fuel, propane, coal, kerosene or wood that was delivered before Oct. 1, 2020, which is the first day of the federal fiscal year and the start of the 2020-21 heating season.
- LIHEAP Cash grants and \$100 Supplements remaining from the 2019-20 LIHEAP season can be used until June 30, 2021.
- Cash grants from the current season (2020-21), which began on Oct. 1, 2020, can be used for deliveries made Oct. 1, 2020 or later, until June 30, 2022.

### **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. LIHEAP Cash grant credits, including those authorized and not yet received by the vendor, must be used first to resolve the heating emergency.

Households must meet one of the following criteria to be considered in Crisis:

- The main or secondary (electricity if needed to operate the main) heating source is a utility and has been shut off or faces termination.
- Solid/liquid fuel is the main heating source and is completely depleted.
- Solid/liquid fuel is the main fuel type and 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, 2020, through April 9, 2021.
- Every authorization is good for a **one-time-only** delivery or pickup of fuel.
- A vendor should **NOT** provide LIHEAP Crisis fuel to a customer until authorized to do so by a CAO representative. Deliveries made w/out a Crisis 'pledge' will not be paid by LIHEAP.
- A Crisis grant cannot be used to pay for fuel that already was provided to a customer.
- **When a CAO representative contacts a vendor to authorize a Crisis delivery of fuel and refers to the customer's Cash grant, vendor representatives must make sure they haven't already used that money for a previous delivery.**
- A Crisis authorization is not paid until data entry is completed by the vendor on PROMISE at <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us> and documentation of the delivery or the termination/reconnection notice is submitted by online upload, fax or mail.

**Crisis issuances:**

- The minimum Crisis benefit is typically \$25. The maximum Crisis grant is \$800.
- A household could qualify for more than one authorization if the first Crisis is resolved for less than the \$800 season limit.
- The combined total of the household's Crisis grants cannot exceed \$800 during the LIHEAP season, which runs from Nov. 2, 2020, through April 9, 2021.

**Crisis policy and procedures:**

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

When a Crisis request is received, the CAO representative will review the customer's case record and contact the vendor regarding the status of the Cash grant and any remaining 2019-20 credits to determine if sufficient credit is already available to resolve the customer's emergency.

**NOTE:**

- Customers who are on **automatic delivery** may receive help from LIHEAP Crisis, but they must make a request for help to the CAO, and the CAO must contact the vendor to make a LIHEAP Crisis pledge, before the automatic delivery is made.

**The CAO representative will talk with the vendor to determine if:**

- The Cash grant and any remaining 2019-20 LIHEAP credits are enough to make a delivery or otherwise resolve the emergency.
  - If they are sufficient, vendors may advise the CAO that a Crisis grant is not needed.
  - If available credits 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 \$800).

**NOTE:** Customer credits used toward a Crisis delivery must be identified on the delivery ticket or termination notice and must be entered in PROMISE™.

- If there are no LIHEAP credits from 2019-20 LIHEAP grants, the CAO representative will evaluate whether the household's 2020-21 Cash grant is enough to resolve the Crisis (if going to the same vendor), and if not, will initiate a Crisis Authorization # to the vendor.
- The CAO representative will:
  - provide the solid/liquid fuel dealer with an "up-to" amount that is available to the customer for a one-time delivery or pickup, not to exceed the season maximum. If funds are sufficient, the vendor should fill the customer's tank.

- Ask a natural gas or electricity provider for the minimum amount needed to reconnect service or stop termination proceedings. The CAO representative may authorize no more than the season maximum of \$800.

**REMEMBER:** Every Crisis authorization to a solid/liquid fuel vendor is good for a ***one-time-only*** delivery or pickup of fuel. If a customer needs another Crisis delivery or pickup and the household has not reached the season limit, the customer must ask the CAO for a new authorization. A CAO representative will contact the vendor if a new Crisis authorization is approved. An exception is if a customer needs to pick up fuel every few days/several times a month. In this example the vendor may combine/tally invoices and submit several pickups on the same Crisis authorization number as long as the claim is processed within 30 days of the date of authorization.

### **Time frames and other compliance with CAO:**

1. When a CAO representative determines a household is without heat, the representative will contact the vendor to request a delivery or have service reconnected within 48 hours. If the representative determines that a household member's life is at risk, the deadline is 18 hours.
2. A household may contact the CAO to request help with a Crisis delivery **when it is within 15 days of being without heat.**
3. The CAO representative will ask the vendor to accommodate the request for a delivery/service restoration within a designated time frame, established by discussion with the customer (see #1, #2 above). If the vendor is not able 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 CAO representative so that alternative measures can be taken. This could include authorizing the delivery to be made by another vendor.
4. After authorization from a CAO representative, the vendor **must contact the customer to discuss and make arrangements for delivery/reconnection.** The discussion should include confirming the address, referencing the date of the previous delivery, evaluating how much fuel exists in the tank, and discussion about whether the customer has enough fuel to last until the next time the vendor is in their area or if an off-route delivery must be scheduled to accommodate the customer's need, making them aware of any fees associated with off-route or urgent deliveries.
5. Fuel delivery must be for no more than the amount agreed upon with the CAO 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. Record retention: 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™:**

- A PowerPoint and Tip Sheet providing detailed information about PROMISE data entry, including screen shots, are available on the LIHEAP Vendor Website.

- Data entry can begin in PROMISE™ <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us> on November 3, 2020, and is accessible to LIHEAP vendors 24 hours a day.
- Only deliveries made with a Crisis authorization are data-entered in PROMISE™.
- PROMISE™ allows LIHEAP vendors to view all Crisis authorizations, submit Crisis claims and review all Crisis claims submitted during the heating season.
- The PROMISE™ system was designed to use an MS Windows operating system with Internet Explorer. It may not be possible to file PROMISE claims on any other web browsers, such as Google Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or using an Apple product.

**IMPORTANT:** In addition to data entry in PROMISE™, vendors must submit proof of the Crisis delivery (shutoff notice, metered trip ticket, etc.) by using one of these methods:

- The preferred way to submit documentation is by scanning/uploading to PROMISE™
- Fax accompanied by a Crisis Cover Sheet to **717-207-7997 or 717-207-7994.**
- Mail with Crisis Cover Sheet to: DHS–LIHEAP Crisis Documentation, PO Box 69028, Harrisburg, PA 17106.
- The Commonwealth’s secure document transfer: SeGov/MOVEit can be used to upload multiple Crisis cover sheets and documents. Contact the LIHEAP Vendor Unit for additional information to enroll in this program.

**Helpful hints for successful PROMISE™ submissions:**

- Use the **Worklist** to manage Active and In-Progress Crisis authorizations. The *Worklist* provides information on the status of Crisis claims that have not yet been paid. Vendors can navigate from the *Worklist* to process a claim and return to the *Worklist* to process another claim. This seamless transition allows vendors to view and process claims quickly.
- If a CAO representative says the customer is eligible for up to \$800 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 \$800. The vendor is prohibited from filing a \$800 claim and then keeping the extra Crisis dollars for a future delivery.
- **Vendors should use just one trip ticket for a delivery rather than splitting it into multiple tickets to reflect multiple funding sources.** Instead, write the amount of the Cash grant on the trip ticket and show the subtraction from the total amount of the delivery. Then, enter LIHEAP credits in PROMISE™. Credits will automatically be subtracted from the overall delivery costs and display the final amount that will be submitted for payment with LIHEAP Crisis funds.
- Never enter a Crisis claim for more than the maximum season Crisis grant of \$800. Entering a higher amount – even by just a penny (\$800.01) -- will delay payment.
- The customer’s account number is displayed on the *Active Authorization* page and will automatically appear when the vendor processes a claim in PROMISE. **The vendor has the ability to change the account number if the one that displays is incorrect.** The corrected account number will appear on the vendor’s remittance advice listing the payment.

- 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.
- Vendors should call the LIHEAP Vendor Unit Helpline, **1-877-537-9517**, for help to:
  - Retract an *Active* Crisis authorization that is not needed for the delivery or one that was issued in error. A Vendor Unit retraction removes the authorization from the vendor's Worklist in PROMISE™.
  - print the *LIHEAP Cover Sheet* with the specific numbers pertaining to the authorization. Vendors must NOT hand-write anything on the cover sheet.

**LIHEAP Payments:**

- All payment activity for the LIHEAP Crisis program is centralized in Harrisburg.
- The Pennsylvania Treasury typically sends LIHEAP payments by U.S. mail or direct deposit on Wednesdays.
- Customer payments are included on one check (or direct deposit). LIHEAP vendors will not receive a separate check (or direct deposit) for each customer.
- Weekly payments include all Cash grants that were approved during a designated week and the Crisis grants that were finalized by vendor data entry and submission of documentation.
- **Direct Deposit/Electronic Funds Transfer** is an option for vendors, who 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 from the LIHEAP Vendor Website:  
<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/LIHEAP-Vendors.aspx>
  - Return form/voided check to [RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov](mailto:RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov) or fax to (717) 231-5516.

**Remittance Advice (RA)/Vouchers:**

- Remittance Advice documents also are referred to as RA's or vouchers.
- Vouchers are posted weekly in PROMISE, where vendor representatives can access them as early as 9 days before the Treasury pay date.
- Vendors can access payment vouchers on PROMISE for the entirety of the LIHEAP season but should save the vouchers on their computer or USB drive for long-term keeping.
- Accessing LIHEAP vouchers in PROMISE in advance of the Treasury payment allows vendors to apply credits to individual customer accounts and arrange for deliveries.
- Vendors also have the option to receive weekly RA's by U.S. mail or via the SeGOV (MOVEit) secure website. Vendors must have a static IP address to use SeGOV. If interested in receiving vouchers in one of these methods, call the LIHEAP Vendor Unit at (877) 537-9517 to share the IP address and name of a designated staff person who will be given a password to access SeGOV. It conveys vouchers to vendors a week before the Treasury pay date.

**Important:** Record the voucher number **and individual (INDIV) number** associated with each customer listed on the RA, as these numbers are needed when LIHEAP funds are returned to DHS.

**Returning funds to DHS:** LIHEAP funds **never** should be sent to a customer. As noted on the LIHEAP Vendor Agreement, LIHEAP funds may need to be refunded. Some examples are:

- Customer moves to a location the vendor does not serve.
- Customer dies.
- Customer requests a vendor change.
- CAO 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 7 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 refund the money to DHS accompanied by a *LIHEAP Refund Form*. Dunning letters may also be sent to advise vendors to return funds. These letters identify the customer and the dollar amount that must 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. LIHEAP funds not returned by a vendor at the request of DHS will be recouped from a future treasury check. If that avenue is not available, the request will be referred to the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General for collection.

**NOTE:** Vendors can opt for **Expedited Recoupment** that will allow the refund to be subtracted from the vendor's next payment, eliminating 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:**

- LIHEAP Vendor Helpline: (877) 537-9517 Mon-Fri from 8:00 to 4:00
- Address: LIHEAP Vendor Unit, PO Box 2675 (WOB-224), Harrisburg, PA 17105
- E-mail address: [RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov](mailto:RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov)
- Fax: 717-231-5516
- web: <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/LIHEAP-Vendors.aspx>

**Assistance provided by LIHEAP Vendor Helpline representatives:**

- Verify and retract Crisis authorizations.
- Provide information and assistance with connectivity to PROMISE™.
- Help vendors resolve LIHEAP Cash and Crisis payment issues.
- Answer all vendor policy and procedure questions.
- Facilitate communication between the County Assistance Office and the vendor.
- Help vendors with remittance advice (vouchers).
- Enroll vendors in direct deposit for their LIHEAP payments.
- Provide information regarding refunds and reissuance of payments.
- Enroll and deactivate companies as vendors.