



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Responses to Second Set of Data Requests:

IN RE: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES :
 PROPOSED LIHEAP ENHANCEMENT : DOCKET 4290
 CHARGE FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2020

COMMISSION'S SECOND SET OF DATA REQUESTS ISSUED TO DHS
 (Issued October 28, 2019)
 Please respond by November 15, 2019

PUC 2-1

Please provide documentation as to the breakdown of LIHEAP grants by municipality and by CAP agency.

RI LIHEAP Grants by Municipality FFY 2019 Non-Crisis and Crisis Grants			
Barrington	142	Narragansett	212
Block Island	4	Newport	376
Bristol	491	North Kingstown	707
Burrillville	576	North Providence	1194
Central Falls	1052	North Smithfield	171
Charlestown	268	Pawtucket	3355
Coventry	1045	Portsmouth	225
Cranston	3141	Providence	10552
Cumberland	587	Richmond	176
East Greenwich	148	Scituate	21
East Providence	1425	Smithfield	386
Exeter	144	South Kingstown	433
Foster	138	Tiverton	566
Glocester	309	Warren	400
Hopkinton	244	Warwick	2083
Jamestown	28	West Greenwich	111
Johnston	1372	West Warwick	1243
Lincoln	343	Westerly	850
Little Compton	66	Woonsocket	1754
Middletown	167		
		Total	36505

RI LIHEAP Grants FFY 2019 Non-Crisis and Crisis Grants	
Agency	Grants
BVCAP	5452
CAPP	10285
CCA	1817
CCAP	3542
EBCAP	3885
TRI NORTH	3855
TRI SOUTH	3150
WBCAP	4519
Total	36505

PUC 2-2

Please indicate what type of communication exists between DHS and the CAP agencies.

DHS and the CAP agencies communicate regularly in the following ways:

- Weekly through email or phone calls regarding programmatic questions, preparing fuel payment requests, program operations invoices, budget requests, contracts, software issues, vendor updates, client data, special initiatives, and outreach coordination
- Monthly in-person at LIHEAP coordinator meetings (eleven months out of year and as needed for special programs)
- DHS is the system administrator of the software the agencies use to implement LIHEAP (intake, eligibility determination, vendor management, client data, and agency invoicing) and reviews activities on the system weekly if not daily.

PUC 2-3

Please state whether the DHS conducts any meetings, trainings or seminars with CAP agencies.

- DHS holds monthly meeting with agency LIHEAP coordinators to address timely topics and issues about LIHEAP.
- DHS holds LIHEAP software training for agency program and fiscal staff.
- DHS encourages agencies to include funds in their LIHEAP budget requests for national and regional trainings for LIHEAP staff.

PUC 2-4

Please describe DHS’s administrative process for the administering the LIHEAP program, including descriptions of any changes that have occurred during this program for the past two years and any proposed changes for the upcoming LIHEAP season.

The CAP agencies comply with the policies and procedures set forth in a LIHEAP Manual which is updated by DHS annually. The Manual is not intended to be a reiteration of applicable federal and state statutes and regulations that govern LIHEAP program management, nor is it meant to provide specific details on how to deal with all possible circumstances. Instead, the Manual is intended to provide guidance for program implementation.

The policies and procedures included in the Manual are standards for determining eligibility, delivering benefits and administering the program. It is impossible to foresee and give examples for all situations; therefore, Agency staff is encouraged to use reason and apply good judgment in making decisions when rare and/or unusual situations are encountered. Decision-making by staff based on the best information available, common sense, program knowledge, experience and expertise in a particular situation is referred to as the Prudent Person Principle. The Agency shall document the rationale used to make a decision and any applicable Manual references and policy interpretations.

Agency staff involved in LIHEAP implementation are required to read, accept the provisions thereof, and refer to the Manual in performing program management. The Agency LIHEAP Program Coordinator is responsible for maintaining the Manual to reflect current policy guidance and any related Operations Memoranda issued by the RI DHS.

The RI DHS reviews the Manual each year and update as necessary to address procedure, program or policy changes. In addition, communications will be issued to address specific issues regarding LIHEAP administration as they arise throughout the year.

An administrative change was made for the 2018-2019 heating season (and continuing) by which CAP agencies began the re-certification and application process in August to avoid the rush and anxiety of trying to accomplish a lot of work just before the arrival of colder months. The CAPs were also allowed to submit invoices to RI DHS earlier so that information and payment can be sent to the fuel vendors sooner. This has allowed fuel deliveries to begin in mid-November rather than waiting until late November or early December. The notification of clients was also changed so that clients who heat with gas or electric would be informed earlier about the amount of the federal and Enhancement Funds grants and the timing of those grants being applied to their accounts.

Another change that was implemented in 2019 after the Manual was updated, is the process for distributing grants outside of the heating season to people experiencing homelessness. This process is called the Restart Energy Assistance Program and is funded by the ratepayers through the Enhancement Fund. The agencies implement a process to help people by paying a portion of their utility back balance, so they can have their utilities turned on when they move into housing. The CAPs, the caseworkers at the homeless service providers, DHS, and the National Grid advocates work closely together to shepherd applicants who come through the Coordinator Entry System, through the process. Community Action Partnership of Providence was a partner in developing the process, along with DHS, National Grid, RI Coalition for the Homeless, House of Hope, and Crossroads RI.

All CAP agencies were briefed of this new process at monthly meetings and feedback was encouraged. Final process steps were issued by DHS to the CAPs in August 2019.

PUC 2-5

Please indicate how DHS determines allocations of funds to specific CAP agencies.

The funding level for each agency uses this formula: 50% of the award is based on the number of people in the agency’s service area living below the federal poverty level as a percentage of the statewide number of people below the poverty level (using the latest American Community Survey numbers). The other 50% is based on an average of fuel assistance expenditures over the last three years. The intent is to allocate the funds based on both need and performance.

PUC 2-6

Please report on the LIHEAP grants from last season to indicate how many grants were made within each of the five poverty tiers described in DHS’s answers to last year’s data request, PUC 1-2.

LIHEAP Grants by Poverty Tiers FFY 2019 Non-Crisis and Crisis Combined				
Under 75% FPL	75-100% FPL	101- 125% FPL	126- 150% FPL	Above 150% FPL
6054	7373	5948	5624	11506