

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)

DETAILED PLAN (Required Every Three Years)

PUBLIC LAW 97-35, AS AMENDED

FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2013

GRANTEE STATE of VERMONT

EIN: 1-036000274-A8

ADDRESS 103 South Main Street

Waterbury, VT 05671-5501

NAME OF LIHEAP COORDINATOR Richard Moffi, Fuel Assistance Program Chief

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PLEASE CHECK ONE: TRIBE _____ STATE X INSULAR AREA _____

Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Services
Washington, DC 20447

August 1987, revised 05/92, 02/95, 03/96, 12/98, 11/01

OMB Approval No. 0970-0075

Expiration Date: 09/30/2011

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13)

Use of this model plan is optional. However, the information requested is required in order to receive a Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) grant in years in which the grantee is not permitted to file an abbreviated plan. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Assurances

The State of Vermont agrees to:
(Grantee Name)

(1) use the funds available under this title to--

(A) conduct outreach activities and provide assistance to low income households in meeting their home energy costs, particularly those with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, consistent with paragraph (5);

(B) intervene in energy crisis situations;

(C) provide low-cost residential weatherization and other cost-effective energy-related home repair; and

(D) plan, develop, and administer the State's program under this title including leveraging programs,

and the State agrees not to use such funds for any purposes other than those specified in this title;

(2) make payments under this title only with respect to--

(A) households in which one or more individuals are receiving--

(i) assistance under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act;

(ii) supplemental security income payments under title XVI of the Social Security Act;

(iii) food stamps under the Food Stamp Act of 1977 as amended; or

(iv) payments under section 415, 521, 541, or 542 of title 38, United States Code, or under section 306 of the Veterans' and Survivors' Pension Improvement Act of 1978; or

(B) households with incomes which do not exceed the greater of—

(i) gross income in an amount equal to 185 percent of the 2012 federal poverty level guidelines for seasonal fuel assistance;

(ii) gross income in an amount equal to 200 percent of the 2012 federal poverty level guidelines for crisis fuel assistance; and

(iii) based on household size for seasonal and crisis assistance incomes shall not exceed maximums established by LIHEAP; and

except that a State may not exclude a household from eligibility in a fiscal year solely on the basis of household income if such income is less than 110 percent of the poverty level for such State, but the State may give priority to those households with the highest home energy costs or needs in relation to household income.

(3) conduct outreach activities designed to assure that eligible households, especially households with elderly individuals or disabled individuals, or both, and households with high home energy burdens, are made aware of the assistance available under this title, and any similar energy-related assistance available under subtitle B of title VI (relating to community services block grant program) or under any other provision of law which carries out programs which were administered under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 before the date of the enactment of this Act;

(4) coordinate its activities under this title with similar and related programs administered by the Federal Government and such State, particularly low-income energy-related programs under subtitle B of title VI (relating to community services block grant program), under the supplemental security income program, under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act, under title XX of the Social Security Act, under the low-income weatherization assistance program under title IV of the Energy Conservation and Production Act, or under any other provision of law which carries out programs which were administered under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 before the date of the enactment of this Act;

(5) provide, in a timely manner, that the highest level of assistance will be furnished to those households which have the lowest incomes and the highest energy costs or needs in relation to income, taking into account family size, except that the State may not differentiate in implementing this section between the households described in clauses 2(A) and 2(B) of this subsection;

(6) to the extent it is necessary to designate local administrative agencies in order to carry out the purposes of this title, to give special consideration, in the designation of such agencies, to any local public or private nonprofit agency which was receiving Federal funds under any low-income energy assistance program or weatherization program under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 or any other provision of law on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act, except that—

(A) the State shall, before giving such special consideration, determine that the agency involved meets program and fiscal requirements established by the State; and

(B) if there is no such agency because of any change in the assistance furnished to programs for economically disadvantaged persons, then the State shall give special consideration in the designation of local administrative agencies to any successor agency which is operated in substantially the same manner as the predecessor agency which did receive funds for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the determination is made;

(7) if the State chooses to pay home energy suppliers directly, establish procedures to --

(A) notify each participating household of the amount of assistance paid on its behalf;

(B) assure that the home energy supplier will charge the eligible household, in the normal billing process, the difference between the actual cost of the home energy and the amount of the payment made by the State under this title;

(C) assure that the home energy supplier will provide assurances that any agreement entered into with a home energy supplier under this paragraph will contain provisions to assure that no household receiving assistance under this title will be treated adversely because of such assistance under applicable provisions of State law or public regulatory requirements; and

(D) ensure that the provision of vendor payments remains at the option of the State in consultation with local grantees and may be contingent on unregulated vendors taking appropriate measures to alleviate the energy burdens of eligible households, including providing for agreements between suppliers and individuals eligible for benefits under this Act that seek to reduce home energy costs, minimize the risks of home energy crisis, and encourage regular payments by individuals receiving financial assistance for home energy costs;

(8) provide assurances that,

(A) the State will not exclude households described in clause (2)(B) of this subsection from receiving home energy assistance benefits under clause (2), and

(B) the State will treat owners and renters equitably under the program assisted under this title;

(9) provide that--

(A) the State may use for planning and administering the use of funds under this title an amount not to exceed 10 percent of the funds payable to such State under this title for a fiscal year; and

(B) the State will pay from non-Federal sources the remaining costs of planning and administering the program assisted under this title and will not use Federal funds for such remaining cost (except for the costs of the activities described in paragraph (16));

(10) provide that such fiscal control and fund accounting procedures will be established as may be necessary to assure the proper disbursement of and accounting for Federal funds paid to the State under this title, including procedures for monitoring the assistance provided under this title, and provide that the State will comply with the provisions of chapter 75 of title 31, United States Code (commonly known as the "Single Audit Act");

(11) permit and cooperate with Federal investigations undertaken in accordance with section 2608;

(12) provide for timely and meaningful public participation in the development of the plan described in subsection (c);

(13) provide an opportunity for a fair administrative hearing to individuals whose claims for assistance under the plan described in subsection (c) are denied or are not acted upon with reasonable promptness; and

(14) cooperate with the Secretary with respect to data collecting and reporting under section 2610.

(15) * beginning in fiscal year 1992, provide, in addition to such services as may be offered by State Departments of Public Welfare at the local level, outreach and intake functions for crisis situations and heating and cooling assistance that is administered by additional State and local governmental entities or community-based organizations (such as community action agencies, area agencies on aging and not-for-profit neighborhood-based organizations), and in States where such organizations do not administer functions as of September 30, 1991, preference in awarding grants or contracts for intake services shall be provided to those agencies that administer the low-income weatherization or energy crisis intervention programs.

*** This assurance is applicable only to States, and to territories whose annual regular LIHEAP allotments exceed \$200,000. Neither territories with annual allotments of \$200,000 or less nor Indian tribes/tribal organizations are subject to Assurance 15.**

(16) use up to 5 percent of such funds, at its option, to provide services that encourage and enable households to reduce their home energy needs and thereby the need for energy assistance, including needs assessments, counseling, and assistance with energy vendors, and report to the Secretary concerning the impact of such activities on the number of households served, the level of direct benefits provided to those households, and the number of households that remain unserved.

Certification to the Assurances: As Chief Executive Officer, I agree to comply with the sixteen assurances contained in Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, as amended.* By signing these assurances, I also agree to abide by the standard assurances on lobbying, debarment and suspension, and a drug-free workplace.

Signature of the Tribal or Board Chairperson or Chief Executive Officer of the State or Territory.**

Signature: Christine M Oliver

Title: Christine M. Oliver, Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Human Services

Date: 8/17/12

*** Indian tribes/tribal organizations, and territories with annual regular LIHEAP allotments of \$200,000 or less, are not subject to assurance 15, and thus must only certify to 15 assurances.**

**** If a person other than the Chief Executive Officer of the State or territory, or Tribal Chairperson or Board Chairperson of a tribal organization, is signing the certification to the assurances, a letter must be submitted delegating such authority. (PLEASE ATTACH DELEGATION of AUTHORITY.) The delegation must include authority to sign the assurances, not just to administer the program.**

***** HHS needs the EIN (Entity Identification Number) of the State, territory or Tribal agency that is to receive the grant funds before it can issue the grant.**

In the above assurances which are quoted from the law, "State" means the 50 States, the District of Columbia, an Indian Tribe or Tribal Organization, or a Territory; "title" of the Act refers to Title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981 (OBRA), as amended, the "Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act"; "section" means Section 2605 of OBRA; and, "subsection" refers to Section 2605(b) of OBRA.

statutory
references

2605(a)
2605(b)(1) → Please check which components you will operate under the LIHEAP program.
(Note: You must provide information for each component designated here as requested elsewhere in this plan.)

		<u>Dates of Operation</u>
(use of funds)	<u> X </u> heating assistance	November 1 to April 30
	<u> </u> cooling assistance	<u> </u>
	<u> X </u> crisis assistance	The last Monday in November to the last business day in April
	<u> </u> weatherization assistance	Year round

2605(c)(1)(C) → Please estimate what amount of available LIHEAP funds will be used for each component that you will operate: **The total of all percentages must add up to 100%.**

(use of funds)	<u> 69.92 </u> % heating assistance
	<u> 0.0 </u> % cooling assistance
	<u> 16.0 </u> % crisis assistance
2605(k)(1)	<u> 0.0 </u> % weatherization assistance
	<u> 3.0 </u> % carryover to the following fiscal year
2605(b)(9)	<u> 10.0 </u> % administrative and planning costs
2605(b)(16)	<u> 1.0 </u> % services to reduce home energy needs including needs assessment (assurance 16)
	<u> 0.08 </u> % used to develop and implement leveraging activities (limited to the greater of 0.08% or \$35,000 for States, the greater of 2% or \$100 for territories, tribes and tribal organizations).
	<u> 100.0% </u> TOTAL

statutory references

2605(c)(1)(C)

→The funds reserved for winter crisis assistance that have not been expended by March 15 will be reprogrammed to:

(alternate use of crisis assistance funds)

_____ heating assistance:

_____ cooling assistance

_____ weatherization assistance

X Other(specify): crisis assistance to the last business day in April

→Do you accept applications for energy crisis assistance at sites that are geographically accessible to all households in the area to be served? (This is required by the statute.)

Yes X No _____

2605(b)(2)
2605(c)(1)(A)

→What are your maximum eligibility limits?
(Please check the components to which they apply.)
Current year guidelines must be used.

(eligibility)

X 185% of the poverty guidelines:
heating X cooling _____ crisis _____ wx _____

X 200% of the poverty guidelines:
heating X cooling _____ crisis X wx _____

_____ 110% of the poverty guidelines:
heating _____ cooling _____ crisis _____ wx _____

_____ 60% of the State's median income:
heating _____ cooling _____ crisis _____ wx X

_____ Other (specify for each component)

X Households automatically eligible **if all members of the household** are receiving

X TANF, X SSI/AABD, _____ SNAP, _____ Certain means-tested veterans programs (heating X cooling _____ crisis _____ wx _____)

statutory
references

2605(c)(1)(A)
2605(b)(2)
(eligibility)

→Do you have additional eligibility requirements for:
HEATING ASSISTANCE _____ Yes X No)

→Do you use: Yes No

Assets test? _____ X

→Do you give priority in eligibility to:

Elderly? _____ X

Disabled? _____ X

Young children? _____ X

Other: _____
(If Yes, please describe)

statutory
references

2605(c)(1)(A)
2605(b)(2)

→Do you have additional eligibility requirements for:
COOLING ASSISTANCE (____ Yes ____ No) N/A

(eligibility)

→Do you use: Yes No

Assets test? _____

→Do you give priority in eligibility to:

Elderly? _____

Disabled? _____

Young children? _____

Other: _____
(If Yes, please describe)

statutory
references

2604(c)
2605(c)(1)(A)

(eligibility)

→ Do you have additional eligibility requirements for:
CRISIS ASSISTANCE (X Yes No)

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
→ Do you use:		
Assets test? Limited resources are allowed for elderly or disabled	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Must the household have received a shut-off notice or have an empty tank?	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Must the household have exhausted regular benefit?	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
Must the household have received a rent eviction notice?	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>
Must heating/cooling be medically necessary?	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>
Other (Please explain):	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
May receive crisis assistance when at or below ¼ of a tank		
Must account for use of past month's income		
Elderly or disabled may apply by phone and not in person.		
Area agency on aging case manager may represent an elderly client		

→ What constitutes a crisis? (Please describe)
An extenuating or unpredictable circumstance(s) that result in lack of heating capacity for the household (out of home heating fuel or electric service disconnection when electricity is required to run the heating system)

statutory
references

2605(c)(1)(A)

→Do you have additional eligibility requirements for:

WEATHERIZATION (Yes No)

(eligibility)

→Do you use: Yes No

Assets test? X

Priority groups? (Please list) X

Households with members elderly, disabled or under the age of 6
Lowest income households served first

→Are you using Department of Energy (DOE) Low
Income Weatherization Assistance Program
(LIWAP) rules to establish eligibility or to establish
priority eligibility for households with certain
characteristics?

X

→If Yes, are there exceptions?
Please list below.

 X

statutory
references

2605(b)(3)
2605(c)(3)(A)

(outreach)

→ Please check the outreach activities that you conduct that are designed to assure that eligible households are made aware of all LIHEAP assistance available:

X provide intake service through home visits or by telephone for the physically infirm (i.e. elderly or disabled) served by case managers from the local area agency on aging.

X place posters/flyers in local and county social service offices, offices of aging, Social Security offices, VA, etc.

X publish articles in local newspapers or broadcast media announcements.

 include inserts in energy vendor billings to inform individuals of the availability of all types of LIHEAP assistance.

X make mass mailing to past recipients of LIHEAP.

X inform low income applicants of the availability of all types of LIHEAP assistance at application intake for other low-income programs.

X execute interagency agreements with other low-income program offices to perform outreach to target groups.

X other (Please specify):

Regulated utility companies include a fuel assistance announcement in bill stuffers or as a notice on bills

Statewide trainings for advocates and community partners during the summer for seasonal fuel assistance and in November prior to the start of crisis fuel assistance.

Program information and updates emailed regularly to program-certified fuel and energy suppliers.

statutory
references

2605(b)(4)

→ Please describe how you will assure that LIHEAP is coordinated with similar and related programs. The description provided applies to all components unless specifically noted.

(coordination)

Coordination of activities is accomplished within normal and existing relationships established by virtue of the State Office of Economic Opportunity, Department of Disabilities and Independent Living and the Department for Children and Families all being part of the Vermont Agency of Human Services; reliance upon the SDX and Bendex for communication with the Social Security Administration; and through a referral arrangement with the State Office of Economic Opportunity to meet Vermont's statutory requirement that, as a condition of eligibility, all recipients of seasonal fuel assistance consent to receive services through the Weatherization assistance program.

2605(b)(5)

2605(b)(2)

2605(b)(8A)

→ The statute requires that there be no difference in the treatment of households eligible because of their income and those eligible because they receive benefits under TANF, SNAP, SSI, or certain means-tested veterans programs ("categorically eligible"). How do you ensure there is no difference when determining eligibility and benefit amounts? This applies to all components unless specifically noted below.

(benefit
levels)

Vermont's benefit levels for the Seasonal Fuel Assistance component of the program increase as the household income decreases, taking household size into account. Payment to households is based on annual cost of heating fuel or energy. Grants under the Crisis Fuel Assistance component are made in the amount necessary to alleviate the crisis following careful assessment of the individual circumstances on a much broader basis. Whether or not a household meets the criteria of section 2506(b)2(A) is not a consideration in benefit eligibility or benefit amount.

statutory
references

HEATING COMPONENT

2605(b)(5) → Please check the variables you use to determine your benefit levels (check all that apply):

(determination
of benefits)

- income
- family (household) size
- home energy cost or need
 - fuel type
 - climate/region
 - individual bill
 - dwelling type
 - energy burden
(% of income spent on home energy)
 - energy need
 - other (describe)
- Dwelling size by number of bedrooms

Estimated consumption based on fuel type, dwelling type and dwelling size (by number of bedrooms) are taken from standard heating cost tables (Vermont Fuel Procedures)

2605(b)(5)
2605(c)(1)(B) → Describe how you will assure that the highest benefits go to households with the lowest incomes and the highest energy costs or needs in relation to income, taking into account family size.
(benefit levels) Please describe benefit levels or attach a copy of your payment matrix.

See 2943 Fuel Program Tables of the Vermont Fuel Rules – as follows:

2943 Fuel Program Tables (date reference)

The following tables are adopted for the purposes of determining benefit amounts for eligible Fuel Program applicants:

Fuel Program Benefit Levels

Table I	Table II
Household Income as a Percentage of Poverty	Heating Cost Percentage
175% - 185%	27%
165% - 174%	30%
155% - 164%	33%
=====	=====
145% - 154%	66%
135% - 144%	69%
125% - 134%	72%
115% - 124%	75%
105% - 114%	78%
95% - 104%	81%
85% - 94%	84%
75% - 84%	87%
Under 75%	90%

→ Do you provide in-kind (e.g., blankets, space heaters) and/or other forms of benefits?

Yes No If Yes, please describe.

statutory
references

2605(b)(5)
2605(c)(1)(B)

COOLING COMPONENT

→ Please check the variables you use to determine your benefit levels
(check all that apply):

(determination
of benefits)

N/A

- income
- family (household) size
- home energy cost or need
 - fuel type
 - climate/region
 - individual bill
 - dwelling type
 - energy burden
(% of income spent on home energy)
 - energy need
 - other (describe)

2605(b)(5)
2605(c)(1)(B)

(benefit
levels)

→ Describe how you will assure that the highest
benefits will go to households with the lowest
incomes and the highest energy costs or needs
in relation to income, taking into account family size. Please describe
benefit levels or attach a copy of your payment matrix.

→ Do you provide in-kind (e.g. fans) and/or other forms of benefits?

Yes No If Yes, please describe.

statutory
references

2605(b)(5)
2605(c)(1)(B)

(determination
of benefits)

CRISIS COMPONENT

➔How do you handle crisis situations?

 X separate component other (please explain)

➔If you have a separate component, how do you determine crisis assistance benefits?

 X amount to resolve crisis, up to maximum
 other (please describe)

(benefit
levels)

➔Please indicate the maximum benefit for each type of crisis assistance offered.

heating \$ * maximum benefit

cooling \$ N/A maximum benefit

year-round \$ N/A maximum benefit

* Dollar amount necessary for up to 125 gallons of liquid fuel, one ton of coal, or one cord of firewood, plus applicable special trip or related charges in certain circumstances. If a utility disconnect, the minimum amount necessary to remove customer from disconnect status.

➔Do you provide in-kind (e.g. blankets, space heaters, fans) and/or other forms of benefits?

 Yes X No If Yes, please describe.

statutory
references

2605(b)(5)
2605(c)(1)
(B) & (D)

**WEATHERIZATION & OTHER ENERGY RELATED
HOME REPAIR AND IMPROVEMENTS**

(types of
assistance)

→What LIHEAP weatherization services/materials do you provide?
(Check all categories that apply.)

- Weatherization needs assessments/audits.
- Caulking, insulation, storm windows, etc.
- Furnace/heating system modifications/repairs
- Furnace replacement
- Cooling efficiency mods/repairs/replacement
- Other (Please describe)

The five Vermont community action agencies that administer the Crisis component of LIHEAP also determine client eligibility for Weatherization's Emergency Home Heating System Repair or Replacement grant program.

(benefit
levels)

→Do you have a maximum LIHEAP weatherization benefit/expenditure per household? Yes No
If Yes, what is the maximum amount? \$ _____

(types of
rules)

→Under what rules do you administer LIHEAP weatherization? (Check only one.)

- Entirely under LIHEAP (not DOE) rules
- Entirely under DOE LIWAP rules
- Mostly under LIHEAP rules with the following DOE LIWAP rule(s) where LIHEAP and LIWAP rules differ (Check all that apply):
 - Weatherize buildings if at least 66% of units (50% in 2- & 4-unit buildings) are eligible units or will become eligible within 180 days
 - Weatherize shelters temporarily housing primarily low income persons (excluding nursing homes, prisons, and similar institutional care facilities).
 - Other (Please describe)
- Mostly under DOE LIWAP rules, with the following LIHEAP rule(s) where LIHEAP and LIWAP rules differ (Check all that apply.)
 - Weatherization not subject to DOE LIWAP maximum statewide average cost per dwelling unit.
 - Other (Please describe.)

State Weatherization is administered separately from LIHEAP

2605(b)(6) The state or tribe administers LIHEAP through the following local agencies:

- county welfare offices
- community action agencies (weatherization component only)
- community action agencies for crisis only
- charitable organizations
- (agency designation) not applicable (i.e. state energy office) *
- tribal office
- other, describe:

* The Seasonal Fuel Assistance component is administered state-wide through the state Department for Children and Families, Economic Services Division, Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance. The Crisis Fuel Assistance component is administered through grant agreement between the ESD Fuel Assistance Office and Vermont's five community action agencies.

→ Have you changed local administering agencies from last year?
 Yes No

If Yes, please describe how you selected them.

→ What components are affected by the change?

2605(c)(1)(E) → Please describe any additional steps (other than those described elsewhere in this plan) that will be taken to target assistance to households with high home energy burdens. **(This applies to all components. If all steps to target households with high home energy burdens are described elsewhere in the plan, no further information is required here.)**

(targeting of assistance)

Described elsewhere in the plan.

A LIHEAP-funded furnace "Clean and Tune" program serves those clients with the highest oil or kerosene consumption. Seasonal fuel assistance households are required as a condition of receipt of benefits to accept Weatherization services. Wx offices have access to fuel consumption records to target highest consumption households.

statutory
references2605(b)(7)
(energy
suppliers)

→ Do you make payments directly to home energy suppliers?

Heating Yes NoCooling Yes NoCrisis Yes NoIf Yes, are there exceptions? Yes No

If Yes, please describe.

The exception for Seasonal Fuel Assistance is for benefits paid to households who heat with firewood or wood pellets. Their benefit is issued directly to the head of household to be used with any wood or pellet supplier they choose. Wood and pellet suppliers are not certified by the Vermont Fuel Assistance Office.

An additional exception is for heads of households who have their home heat included in their housing rental payment. "Heated renters" receive a benefit equal to 30 percent of the benefit the household would have received if the household were purchasing heating fuel directly, or \$50 whichever amount is greater. Roomers receive an annual benefit in the amount of \$50. Households in public, assisted or Section 8 housing where heat is included in the rent receive an annual benefit in the amount of \$5. Heated renters receiving SNAP benefits and not in receipt of any other Seasonal Fuel benefit receive an annual \$3 benefit.

2605(b)(7)(A)

→ If you make payments directly to home energy suppliers, how do you notify the client of the amount of assistance paid? (Please describe)

Seasonal Fuel Assistance: client is notified in writing at the time the benefit is paid to the client's fuel supplier.

Crisis Fuel Assistance: client is notified at the time the grant is made, either in person or over the telephone.

statutory
references

2605(b)(7)
(B) & (C)

→How do you make sure the home energy supplier performs what is required in this assurance? If vendor agreements are used, they may be attached. Indicate each component for which this description applies.

Seasonal Fuel Assistance: vendor certification agreement – see Fuel Rules 2902

Crisis Fuel Assistance: vendor certification agreement also covers crisis component of program.

For both components, also through direct contact with supplier and client.

statutory
references

2605(b)(8)(B)

→ Is there any difference in the way owners and renters are treated? If Yes, please describe.

(owners
and
renters)

HEATING ASSISTANCE

Yes No

Not for eligibility, only for benefit amount based on energy burden.

COOLING ASSISTANCE

Yes No

CRISIS ASSISTANCE

Yes No

Only relating to crisis furnace repairs or replacement, where the liability for system repair or replacement between a landlord and tenant must be determined, otherwise there is no difference in the way owners and renters are treated.

WEATHERIZATION

Yes No

For renters, the landlord is required to make a financial contribution toward the work.

statutory
references

2605(b)(10)

→How do you ensure good fiscal accounting and tracking of LIHEAP funds? (Please describe. Include a description of how you monitor fiscal activities.)

(program, fiscal
monitoring, and
audit)

The Economic Services Division of the Vermont Department for Children and Families together with the business/accounting office of the Agency of Human Services monitor the LIHEAP funds. This dual process is a way of providing checks and balances on the management of program funds.

All expenditures, check returns and refunds are recorded on a daily basis. The program benefit financial status is known daily. Monthly, these accounts are balanced against the monthly statement from the State Finance Department and if there are any discrepancies, they are accounted for. The state has contracted with the firm of KPMG Peat Marwick to audit expenditures of amounts received under this title as an integrated audit with other state programs in a single audit authorized under OMB Circular A-133.

→How do you monitor program activities? (Please be sure to include a description of how you monitor eligibility and benefit determination.)

The Seasonal Fuel Assistance component is administered by the Office of Home Heating Assistance in the Economic Services Division of the Department for Children and Families. Supervisory review of fuel cases, similar to reviews of all programs administered by the Department, occurs regularly, with more intensive review of complicated or problematic cases.

The five Community Action Agencies (CAPs) who administer the Crisis Fuel Assistance component under grant agreements are monitored on a regular basis throughout the Crisis component period. This includes: site visits, inspection of files, attendance at intakes, coordination of information regarding program requirements and common problems, regular meetings with CAP representatives, and annual training. All denied crisis cases are advised of the reason for denial and the right to appeal the decision.

Contractors providing outreach and assistance in the application process are audited as part of the single state audit and are required to submit an annual report which includes numbers contacted and specifics about how the contract money is spent. The outreach staff also attend the annual advocate trainings provided by the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance.

Specific monitoring and coordination is accomplished by a review after each seasonal benefit issuance for the status of applications, grants, denials, pending cases and dollars granted by the program administrator, with follow-up as necessary. Throughout the program year, periodic reviews of the program are conducted by joint meetings of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Fuel Program Chief, and fiscal staff.

➔How is your LIHEAP program audited?

Under the Single Audit Act? Yes No

If not, please describe:

For States and Territories:

➔Is there an annual audit of local administering agencies? Yes No

If not, please explain.

statutory
references

2605(b)(12)

(timely and
meaningful
public
partici-
pation)

→How did you get timely and meaningful public participation in the development of the plan? (Please describe.)

A public hearing is held by the Vermont Agency of Human Services subject, date, time and location is advertised in Vermont daily newspapers at least two weeks prior to the hearing. The hearing for this plan will be held in September 2013. The specific date has not yet been established – notification to HHS/ACF will be under separate cover.

2605(a)(2)

(public
hearings)

→Did you conduct public hearings on the proposed use and distribution of your LIHEAP funds? When and where?

Yes No

(Not required for Tribes and tribal organizations)

When changes are made to program policy, Vermont follows the State Administrative Procedures Act, or follows expeditious rule-making procedures as authorized by the State Legislature. This involves statewide advertising of the proposed policy, a public hearing conducted by the Economic Services Division of the Department for Children and Families, consideration of written and oral comments, submission of proposed final policy to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules, and following review and approval by this committee, the final policy is filed with the Secretary of State

statutory
references

2605(b)(13)

→ Describe your fair hearing procedures for households whose applications are denied or not acted on in a timely manner. When are applicants informed of these rights?

(fair
hearings)

→ Denials and Grants

→ Applications Not Acted On In a Timely Manner

All applications for fuel assistance are entitled to a fair hearing before the Human Service Board under the same rules currently in use for administrative hearings for all programs administered by the Economic Services Division of the Department for Children and Families (TANF, SNAP, Healthcare, General Assistance/Emergency Assistance, Essential Person). In addition, for the Crisis Fuel Assistance component, procedures have been established to provide a faster hearing at the local level with an appeal to the Director when the crisis nature of the application calls for faster action. A request for an expedited hearing does not preclude a regular hearing and decisions from such hearings may be appealed to the Human Service Board via a request for a fair hearing. (See Fuel Rules 2971 – Seasonal Fuel; 2988 – Crisis Fuel)

Applicants are informed in writing of these rights both on applications for assistance and at the time an eligibility decision is made.

statutory
references

2605(b)(15)

For States and Puerto Rico only (not applicable to Tribes and tribal organizations, or to territories whose annual regular LIHEAP allotments are \$200,000 or less):

→ Does the State agency that administers the following LIHEAP component also administer the State's welfare program?

(alternate
outreach
and intake)

HEATING ASSISTANCE

Yes No

If Yes, describe alternate process for outreach and intake:

The Fuel Assistance Office in the Economic Services Division completes grant agreements to have the state's five Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's) and five Community Action Agencies (CAP's) perform outreach. The AAA's provide intensive outreach to households with elderly and disabled people, provide referral activities and assist in preparing applications for fuel assistance.

The grant agreements with the five CAP's include the following activities: provide public information about the Home Heating Fuel Assistance Program within each service area; provide transportation and referral activities to assure access to program benefits; and to analyze problems and seek resolutions for home heating crises which will result in improved living standards and avoidance of future heating crisis situations for the households.

COOLING ASSISTANCE

Yes No

If Yes, describe alternate process for outreach and intake:

CRISIS ASSISTANCE

Yes No

If Yes, describe alternate process for outreach and intake:

statutory
references

2605(b)(16)

→ Do you use LIHEAP funds to provide services that encourage and enable households to reduce their home energy needs and thereby the need for energy assistance? (This assurance refers to activities such as needs assessments, counseling, and assistance with energy vendors.)

Yes No

If Yes, please describe these activities.

Residential furnace "Clean and Tune" program for homeowners who are LIHEAP recipients, heat with oil or kerosene, and have the highest fuel consumption.

Vermont Sustainable Heating Initiative to install pellet stoves in the homes of LIHEAP seasonal fuel assistance recipients.

If Yes, how do you ensure that you don't use more than 5% (statutory ceiling) of your LIHEAP funds for these activities?

Budget review, coordination and oversight by the Department for Children and Families business office.

statutory
references

2607A

(leveraging)

→ Please describe leveraging activities planned for the fiscal year. **(This entry is optional.)*** Complete this entry if you plan to apply for LIHEAP leveraging incentive funds and to include in your leveraging report resources/benefits provided to low income households this fiscal year under criterion (iii) in 45 CFR 96.87(d)(2). Provide the following information for each:

- (1) Identify and described each resource/benefit;
- (2) Identify the source(s) of each resource; and
- (3) Describe the integration/coordination of each resource/benefit with the LIHEAP program, consistent with 1 or more of conditions A-H in 45 CFR 96.87(d)(2)(iii).

1) **WARMTH** Criteria (iii)

Based on contacts made and issues raised at Vermont's Fuel Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, a partnership was formed between participating energy suppliers and Vermont Community Action Agencies to deal with crisis situations that did not specifically fit the Department guidelines. Community Action Agencies administer a full spectrum of services to households with an energy crisis including financial assistance, advocacy, negotiations with fuel providers, budget counseling and conservation advice. The financial assistance is funded through customer donations to participating utilities. The utilities turn the money over to the Community Action Agencies who distribute the benefits to income eligible households. Program administration receives financial support from corporate sponsors and the Department for Children and Families.

2) **SHAREHEAT** Criteria (iii)

Based on contacts made and issues raised at Vermont's Fuel Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, a partnership was formed between Central Vermont Public Service Corporation and Vermont Community Action Agencies to deal with that suppliers' income eligible customers, when they do not fit the Department guidelines. Community Action makes payments for energy and minor repairs for eligible households experiencing a crisis. The financial assistance is funded through customer and employee donations with a corporate match. A prescribed amount of the total donation is allowed for administration.

3) **GENERAL ASSISTANCE** Criteria (iii)

Benefits are provided from State funds to pay for some heating energy costs for households not eligible under any other Department program. The income eligibility guidelines are more stringent than those for LIHEAP. For metered delivery, payment for a current billing period may be authorized provided that certain conditions are met, and payment for bulk delivery may be authorized when there is less than 72 hours supply on hand or less than a one week supply when in the worker's judgment conditions mandate such a decision.

4) HEATING SYSTEM REPLACEMENTS Criteria (iii)

Through a Department agreement with the State Office of Economic Opportunity (SOEO), payments for emergency heating system replacements for LIHEAP income eligible households is paid by State Funds administered through the Weatherization Trust Fund of SOEO. These funds are raised through a 1/2 percent fuel gross sales receipts tax on utilities and fuel vendors. The Department refers clients directly to the local Weatherization operator during business hours and contacts SOEO approved contractors at all other times.

5) FIREWOOD PROJECT Criteria (i) and (ii)

In the Northeast area of Vermont served by the St. Johnsbury District Office, households whose primary source of heat is wood have the option to receive their benefit in the form of a delivered wood supply. Households that select the option of a wood supply will receive the amount of wood that can be purchased with their annual benefit, but purchased at a negotiated rate lower than the going market price. This means a larger wood supply is leveraged under the agreement than could be purchased at market prices with the same fuel assistance benefit. The purchase and delivery of the wood is administered by Vermont's Department of Corrections under an agreement with the Department for Children and Families, as provided for in Section 2605(b)(6) of LIHEAP Act.

6) DONATED OIL AND PROPANE Criteria (ii)

Petroleum heating fuel vendors who have membership in the state trade association VFDA (Vermont Fuel Dealers Association) have donated amounts of heating oil or propane to be delivered at no cost to crisis eligible households, as determined by the Department's Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance or the Community Action Agencies that administer the crisis fuel assistance component. The delivery may also includes any start-up or special trip charges.

7) PRIVATE DONATIONS Criteria (ii)

The Department, through its Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance or the Community Action Agencies that administer the crisis fuel assistance component has agreements with several private philanthropic organizations to earmark some of their charitable fund money for use for the Department's crisis program. The money is requested and distributed at the discretion of the Department's Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance or the Community Action Agencies that administer the crisis fuel assistance component.

8) BULK FUEL DISCOUNT Criteria (ii)

Through the Department's fuel supplier certification agreement, a discount is required on #2 heating oil, propane, kerosene and ULSD fuels purchased with LIHEAP funds through benefit payments for eligible fuel program recipients. The discount is applied to the LIHEAP benefit payment leveraging a greater quantity of bulk fuel for the recipient.

9) ARREARAGE FORGIVENESS Criteria (ii)

The Department will cooperate with any energy provider who chooses to operate an arrearage forgiveness program by receiving the application, determining eligibility and providing those eligible with a voucher to present to the energy provider for arrearage forgiveness up to the energy provider's specified limit.

10) **POWER PARTNERS PROGRAM and/or GMP-EAP Arrears Forgiveness Criteria (iii)**
Green Mountain Power (GMP) Corporation's Power Partners Program is designed to assist low-income customers in paying the past due amount of their electric bill during the period of the year when there are no other emergency funds available. GMP customers with an electric service disconnection notice are assisted through one of the state's five Community Action Agencies. GMP is under a public services board order to implement an Energy Assistance Program (EAP) that will contain a one-time arrears forgiveness component

11) **VENEZUELAN OIL DISCOUNT PROGRAM**

The Venezuelan Oil Discount Program is a partnership between Citgo, Citizens Energy Corporation of Massachusetts, and Vermont's Community Action Programs. This program allows low-income Vermonters to purchase up to 200 gallons of fuel oil at a 40 percent discount. Recipients of seasonal LIHEAP benefits are automatically eligible for the program. Others apply through the local community action agencies.

* Leveraged resources/benefits that are counted under criterion (iii) in 45 CFR 96.87(d)(2) must be identified and described in the grantee's LIHEAP plan and distributed as indicated in the plan. In addition, leveraging resources/benefits that are counted under criterion (ii) must be carried out under one or more components of the grantee's regular LIHEAP program.

statutory
references

2605(b)

(performance)
goals and
measures)

→ Please describe performance goals and measures planned for the fiscal year. **(This entry is optional.)**

ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Attached are additional certifications required as follows:

- * **Lobbying certification**, which must be filed by all States and territories. If applicable, Form LLL, which discloses lobbying payments, must be submitted. **(Tribes and tribal organizations are EXEMPT.)**
- * **Debarment and suspension certification**, which must be filed by all grantees.
- * **Drug-free workplace requirement certification**, which must be filed by all grantees, unless the grantee has filed a statewide certification with the Department of Health and Human Services. **STATES ONLY:** If you have filed a statewide certification for the drug-free workplace requirement, please check here: _____
- * One of the requirements included in the 1994 reauthorization of the statute is that state grantees must include in their annual application for funds a report on the number and income levels of households applying for and receiving LIHEAP assistance, and on the number of recipient households that have members who are elderly, disabled, or young children.

All Tribes and those territories with allotments of less than \$200,000 need only submit data on the number of households served by each component (heating, cooling, weatherization and crisis). The approval for the collection of information contained in the **LIHEAP Household Report** is covered by OMB approval number 0970-0060.
- * Though not a part of this application, the report on funds to be carried over or available for reallocation as required by section 2607(a) for the preceding year must be submitted by August 1 of each year. A grant award for the current fiscal year may not be made until the carryover/reallocation report is received. The approval for the collection of information contained in the **LIHEAP Carryover and Reallocation Report** is covered by OMB approval number 0970-0106.

ATTACHMENT 1
PROGRAM INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT SUPPLEMENT TEMPLATE
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

ABSTRACT:

HHS is requiring further detail from States on their FY2011 plans for preventing and detecting fraud, abuse, and improper payments. HHS is also requiring that States highlight and describe all elements of this FY2011 plan which represent improvements or changes to the State's FY2010 plan for preventing and detecting fraud, abuse and improper payment prevention.

State, Tribe or Territory (and grant official): Vermont
Richard Moffi, Fuel Assistance Program Chief

Date/Fiscal Year: July 21, 2012 FFY2013

VERMONT Program Notes:

Seasonal Fuel Assistance (SFA) – Vermont's Seasonal Fuel Assistance Program is administered state-wide by Department for Children and Families' Economic Services Division (ESD) which includes the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance.

Crisis Fuel Assistance (CFA) – Vermont's Crisis Fuel Assistance Program is operated by the state's five community action agencies under grant agreements with the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance.

ACCESS Database – The Economic Services Division maintains a state-wide benefits database called ACCESS (not Microsoft Access). This database includes applicants and recipients for TANF, SNAP, LIHEAP, Medicare, Medicaid, all Vermont health benefit programs, and Child Support.

RECENT AUDIT FINDINGS

Describe any audit findings of material weaknesses and reportable conditions, questioned costs and other findings cited in FY2010 or the prior three years, in annual audits, State monitoring assessments, Inspector General reviews, or other Government Agency reviews of LIHEAP agency finances.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

None at this time. State audit is currently in process.

Crisis Fuel Assistance

None at this time. State audit is currently in process.

Please describe whether the cited audit findings or relevant operations have been resolved or corrected. If not, please describe the plan and timeline for doing so in FY2011.

If there is no plan in place, please explain why not.

For example: The timely and thorough resolution of weaknesses or reportable conditions as revealed by the audit.

COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Describe the State's FY2012 strategies that will continue in FY2013 for monitoring compliance with State and Federal LIHEAP policies and procedures by the State and local administering agencies.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

The Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance (the Fuel Office) functions in the Economic Services Division as a part of eligibility operations. In that capacity the three members of the Fuel Office provide staff training, monitor processing of applications and reviews, and undertake eligibility quality assurance. Compliance monitoring includes regular frequent (at least monthly, and often weekly) statistical reviews of applications, eligibility, denials, and benefits levels to observe any significant variations that may be the result of errors or misunderstanding of state or federal regulations.

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Vermont's Crisis Fuel Assistance Program is operated by the state's five community action agencies under grant agreements with the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance. The Fuel Assistance Program Chief conducts program reviews mid-season with two or three of the five agencies annually. Each agency is reviewed no less frequently than once every two years. Sample cases are selected for a detailed review of eligibility determination. Crisis Fuel Coordinators and the agency Executive Director are informed of the findings and any corrective action needed. Depending on the finding the Fuel Chief will issue a clarifying memo that can be circulated to all staff with the particular agency and to the Crisis Fuel Coordinators at the other agencies.

Crisis Fuel training is provided to all agencies prior to the start of the Crisis Fuel season (last Monday in November). Throughout the season monthly conference calls are conducted between the Fuel Office and Crisis Fuel Coordinators from each agency to identify, discuss and clarify any problems or issues that are being experienced.

Please highlight any strategies for compliance monitoring from your plan which will be newly implemented as of FY2013.

None to be newly implemented for FFY2013.

Internal discussions anticipate that the ESD Fraud and Quality Control Unit may assume some aspects of compliance monitoring in the future but not during FFY2013.

If you don't have a firm compliance monitoring system in place for FFY2013, please describe how the State is verifying that LIHEAP policy and procedures are being followed.

N/A

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies.

For example: A sound methodology, with a schedule for regular monitoring and a more effective monitoring tool to gather information.

A regular and predictable methodology utilizing program-knowledgeable staff to provide effective monitoring, information gathering, analysis and remediation.

FRAUD REPORTING MECHANISMS

For FY2012 activities continuing in FY2013, please describe all (a) mechanisms available to the public for reporting cases of suspected LIHEAP fraud, waste or abuse? [These may include telephone hotlines, websites, email addresses, etc.] (b) strategies for advertising these resources.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Crisis Fuel Assistance

The Economic Services Division in the Department for Children and Families has a Fraud and Quality Control Unit. SFA senior management accepts fraud concerns, complaints and referrals from clients, ESD/DCF staff, fuel suppliers and the general public. SFA documents and refers credible cases to the Fraud / QC Unit for investigation. CFA workers refer fraud concerns, complaints and referrals that they receive or observe to SFA for the same referral to the Fraud / QC Unit.

Fraud is defined by statute (33 VSA § 141) as:

- A. Use of a willfully false statement, representation, impersonation, or other fraudulent device to obtain, attempt to obtain or aid and abet any person to obtain assistance or benefits to which he is not lawfully entitled or a larger amount than that to which he is lawfully entitled; or
- B. Disposition of or knowingly aiding or abetting in disposition of property to obtain assistance to which a person is not entitled or a larger amount than that to which he is entitled.

Suspected Fraud is defined in policy 2015.1 at:

<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/on-linerules/esd/Group%202000%20Rules.pdf/view>

The Department for Children and Families website contains a "Complaints and Concerns" section where the public in general or clients in particular can go to find out how to register a complaint or express their concern, include issues related to fraud or abuse.

Please highlight any tools or mechanisms from your plan which will be newly implemented in FY2013, and the timeline for that implementation.

None to be newly implemented.

If you don't have any tools or mechanisms available to the public to prevent fraud or improper payments, please describe your plan for involving all citizens and stakeholders involved with your program in detecting fraud.

The Fraud and QC unit is available to the public through department representatives.

Necessary outcomes of these strategies and systems

For example: Clear lines of communication for citizens, grantees, clients, and employees to use in pointing out potential cases of fraud or improper payments to State administrators.

Open and direct communication between the public (including clients) and the Department is critical. As stated on the DCF website: "The work we do requires us to make difficult decisions on a daily basis—ones that affect people's lives and that not everyone will agree with. To make sure the decisions we make are in the best interest of the individuals, families, and children involved, we need to:

- Hear from you if you have concerns;
- Listen with an open mind; and
- Learn from what you have to say.

If you have a concern/complaint about a decision we've taken, the lack of action on our part, or the way you've been treated, we want to hear about it."

VERIFYING APPLICANT IDENTITIES

Describe all FY2012 State policies continuing in FY2013 for how identities of applicants and household members are verified.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Social security numbers for all members of a household are required on Seasonal Fuel Assistance applications. A sample application is available as a pdf document.

SFA Benefit Program Specialists (BPS) employed by ESD use the ESD ACCESS in enter client application data and determine eligibility and program benefits. The ACCESS database match the head-of-household's social security number to active and inactive benefit records and confirms identity of other members of the households listed or not listed on the Seasonal Fuel Application using their social security numbers.

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Social security numbers for all members of a household are required on Crisis Fuel Assistance applications. Sample applications are available as pdf documents.

CFA workers use the ESD ACCESS database system to match the head-of-household's social security number to active and inactive benefit records for the confirmation of income, benefit program eligibility and household composition. ACCESS is also used to confirm identity and other members of the households listed or not listed on the Crisis Fuel Application using their social security numbers.

Please highlight any policy or strategy from your plan which will be newly implemented in FY2013.

None to be newly implemented.

If you don't have a system in place for verifying applicant's identities, please explain why and how the State is ensuring that only authentic and eligible applicants are receiving benefits.

N/A. A system is in place using social security numbers.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: Income and energy supplier data that allow program benefits to be provided to eligible individuals.

Access to consistent, accurate and up-to-date client information including but not limited to identity, income, and household composition.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER REQUESTS

Describe the State's FY2013 policy in regards to requiring Social Security Numbers from applicants and/or household members applying for LIHEAP benefits.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Social security numbers for all members of a household are required on Seasonal Fuel Assistance and Crisis Fuel Assistance applications.

Please describe whether the State's policy for requiring or not requiring Social Security numbers is new as of FY2013, or remaining the same.

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Social security numbers for all household members has been an ongoing requirement for both SFA and CFA for at least the last 16 years.

If the State is not requiring Social Security Numbers of LIHEAP applicants and/or household members, please explain what supplementary measures are being employed to prevent fraud.

Not applicable.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: All valid household members are reported for correct benefit determination.

All valid household members are reported for correct benefit determination.

CROSS-CHECKING SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS AGAINST GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS/DATABASES

Describe if and how the State used existing government systems and databases to verify applicant or household member identities in FY2012 and continuing in FY2013. (Social Security Administration Enumeration Verification System, prisoner databases, Government death records, etc.)

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Crisis Fuel Assistance

ESD will use "Numident" on a nightly basis to confirm that social security numbers for clients in ACCESS are attributed to the correct individuals by name and date of birth. ESD Benefit Program Specialists (BPSs) or Supervisors enter a function in ACCESS to request the match for someone who has an unverified social security number. Once a month, regardless of individual requests by ESD workers ACCESS runs a tape match with Numident for all cases in our system.

The ACCESS database runs monthly tape matches with Vermont Unemployment Compensation.

The Vermont Office of Child Support (OCS) automatically crosses-over child support, alimony and tax intercept payments received by clients. OCS provides limited/restricted information for incarcerated individuals linked to client households. OCS uses the federal parent locator service (FPLS) nationwide for physical addresses and matches are updated in the OCS and ESD sides of ACCESS. (OCS occupies a separate section of the ACCESS database.)

Medicare and Medicaid benefits and Vermont's healthcare and pharmacy programs reside in ACCESS. Client deaths are entered into ACCESS and are readily accessible.

Please highlight which, if any, policies or strategies for using existing government databases will be newly implemented in FY2013.

None to be newly implemented.

If the State won't be cross checking Social Security Numbers and ID information with existing government databases, please describe how the State will supplement this fraud prevention strategy.

Not applicable.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: Use of all available database systems to make sound eligibility determination.

Use all available database systems to make sound eligibility determinations.

VERIFYING APPLICANT INCOME

Describe how the State or designee used State Directories of new hires or similar systems to confirm income eligibility in FY2012 and continuing in FY2013.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Crisis Fuel Assistance

ACCESS contains verified income from all sources (earned and unearned) for benefit programs including SNAP, TANF, Medicare, Medicaid, Vermont healthcare and pharmacy programs, State General and Emergency Assistance.

Monthly tape matches run by ACCESS with Vermont Unemployment Compensation and employment earnings reported through Reach Up (Vermont's TANF program) provide the bulk of income information related to new hires.

Both Seasonal and Crisis Fuel Assistance policies allow workers to require documentation of income or any other factor related to eligibility that may be questionable, incomplete or not available through ACCESS.

Please highlight any policies or strategies for using new hire directories which will be newly implemented in FY2013.

None to be newly implemented.

If the State won't be using new hire directories to verify applicant and household member incomes how will the State be verifying that information?

N/A. Information available in ACCESS from Reach Up (TANF) and State Unemployment Compensation provide the necessary information.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: Effective income determination achieved through coordination across program lines.

Effective income determination achieved through coordination across program lines with complete, timely and accurate income data.

PRIVACY-PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Describe the financial and operating controls in place in FY2012 that will continue in FY2013 to protect client information against improper use or disclosure.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

All employees of the Economic Services Division sign a confidentiality agreement at the start of employment. The ACCESS database requires a user to be authorized by the IT division and entry is protected by two separate passwords that are required to be changed at monthly and quarterly intervals.

All applicants of benefits from the Economic Services Division, including Seasonal Fuel Assistance, are advised of the "Rights and Responsibilities," including confidentiality on the application and benefit notices.

All fuel suppliers certified by the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance agree to a "Confidentiality" clause as part of the certification agreement.

The operation of the Department for Children and Families operate under formal business practices that are subject to general financial audits and program specific audits on an annual basis.

Crisis Fuel Assistance

The Crisis Fuel Assistance grant agreements with the community action agencies contain specific requirements for: privacy and security standards, security and data transfers, computing and communication, safeguarding and reporting responsibilities for personal identifiable information, and security guidance for contractors and grantees of the Agency of Human Services.

To access the ACCESS database crisis fuel workers must have systems approval for a "Citrix" account to connect to the database and be issued a "key fob" assigned for their use that provides a constantly changing entry authorization number. The ACCESS database requires a user to be authorized by the IT division and entry is protected by two separate passwords that are required to be changed at monthly and quarterly intervals.

Please highlight any controls or strategies from your plan which will be newly implemented as of FY2013.

None to be newly implemented.

If you don't have relevant physical or operational controls in place to ensure the security and confidentiality of private information disclosed by applicants, please explain why.

Not applicable.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: Clear and secure methods that maintain confidentiality and safeguard the private information of applicants.

Clear and secure methods maintain confidentiality and safeguard the private information of applicants.

LIHEAP BENEFITS POLICY

Describe FY2012 State policies continuing in FY2013 for protecting against fraud when making payments, or providing benefits to energy vendors on behalf of clients.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Fuel suppliers certified by the Fuel Office agree to the terms and conditions of certification found at:

http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/esd/fuel/Cert_Agr_Terms_Cond.pdf

Clause #7, 8, 9 and 10: Direct Bank Deposit, Benefit Data, Line of Credit and Use of Line of Credit (respectively) all ensure that proper individual benefit payments for individual eligible clients are being made to fuel suppliers.

Benefit Payments are issued only by the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance through the Department and State business offices directly into verified bank accounts of certified fuel suppliers. At least annually the Fuel Office runs a "pre-note" test to confirm supplier bank accounts. Pre-notes are also run when a supplier changes a bank account or becomes newly certified.

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Each community action agency has a separate purchase order, invoice tracking and payment monitoring system for the issuance of crisis fuel benefit to fuel and energy suppliers. Although the system details are different the basics are the same: authorization to fuel suppliers is made by the community action representative, invoices are received after fuel is delivered or after client accounts for regulated utilities are credited, and those invoices are matched against a crisis fuel grant made by an authorized agency representative.

Please highlight any fraud prevention efforts relating to making payments or providing benefits which will be newly implemented in FY2013.

None to be newly implemented.

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

The Fuel Program Statute (Title 33 Chapter 26) was amended by Act 88 on 4/29/10 to require: "No later than September 1, 2011, the secretary of human services or designee shall implement a payment system to pay fuel benefits to certified fuel suppliers after the fuel is delivered or, for metered fuel and regulated utilities, after the beneficiary's account has been billed." Although this requirement will be complete in FFY2011, it will be first used in FFY2012.

If the State doesn't have policy in place to protect against improper payments when making payments or providing benefits on behalf of clients, what supplementary steps is the State taking to ensure program integrity.

Not applicable.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: Authorized energy vendors are receiving payments on behalf of LIHEAP eligible clients

Fuel suppliers receive only benefits approved either by the Fuel Assistance Office for Seasonal Fuel Assistance or by the community action agency for Crisis Fuel Assistance.

PROCEDURES FOR UNREGULATED ENERGY VENDORS

Describe the State's FY2012 procedures continuing in FY2013 for averting fraud and improper payments when dealing with bulk fuel dealers of heating oil, propane, wood and other unregulated energy utilities.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Fuel suppliers certified by the Fuel Office agree to the terms and conditions of certification found at:

http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/esd/fuel/Cert_Agr_Terms_Cond.pdf

Applicants for Seasonal Fuel Assistance identify their fuel supplier on their application for assistance. Suppliers, including regulated utilities, are certified by the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance after original, signed and dated acceptable documentation is submitted to the Office. A bank account "pre-note" test is run to verify the supplier's bank account. When the existence or authenticity of a dealer is questioned additional information is sought either from the dealer or the Secretary of State's Office and public records.

Clause #15 "Outstanding Credit Balances" requires certified suppliers to submit a "Refund Report" to the Fuel Office a full accounting of the use of benefits in the prior heating season. For the past thirteen heating seasons the Fuel Office provides the base data forms (client name, ID#, address, fuel type, total benefits issued) to the suppliers to ensure consistency of data submission. Refund reports are reviewed by Fuel Office staff and discrepancies or questionable patterns are reported to the Fuel Chief for further investigation and referral to the Fraud Unit if necessary. In addition, benefit recipients provide a self-interest level of monitoring of the use of their benefit by fuel supplies thus ensuring they receive the full benefit of their fuel assistance.

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Each community action agency has a separate purchase order, invoice tracking and payment monitoring system for the issuance of crisis fuel benefit to fuel and energy suppliers. Although the system details are different the basics are the same: authorization to fuel suppliers is made by the community action representative, invoices are received after fuel is delivered or after client accounts for regulated utilities are credited, and those invoices are matched against a crisis fuel grant made by an authorized agency representative.

Please highlight any strategies policy in this area which will be newly implemented in FY2013.

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

The Fuel Assistance Office no longer certifies suppliers of firewood or wood pellets. Benefits payments are made directly to the eligible head of household who can negotiate the purchase of firewood or pellets with any supplier they choose. Issues related to fraud, high prices, and/or quality of product by the supplier led to this benefit payment change.

The Fuel Program Statute (Title 33 Chapter 26) was amended by Act 88 on 4/29/10 to require: "No later than September 1, 2011, the secretary of human services or designee shall implement a payment system to pay fuel benefits to certified fuel suppliers after the fuel is delivered or, for metered fuel and regulated utilities, after the beneficiary's account has been billed." Although this requirement is not expected to be complete for FFY2013, development and implementation are a Department priority for IT assignment.

If you don't have a firm plan for averting fraud when dealing with unregulated energy vendors, please describe how the State is ensuring program integrity.

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

N/A. The current "Fuel Supplier Certification" of fuel and energy suppliers (including regulated utilities) helps to avert fraud by non-existing entities. The current dual monitoring system of "Refund Reports" and client self-interest monitoring provides an acceptable system to identify fraud committed by suppliers who have been certified by the Fuel Office.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: Participating vendors are thoroughly researched and inspected before benefits are issued.

Certified fuel suppliers are reviewed and approved for certification prior to the issuance of seasonal fuel benefits. Fuel and energy suppliers of crisis fuel assistance receive benefit payments only after product is delivered or a client account has been credited.

VERIFYING THE AUTHENTICITY OF ENERGY VENDORS

Describe State FY2012 policies continuing in FY2013 for verifying the authenticity of energy vendors being paid under LIHEAP, as part of the State's procedure for averting fraud.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Applicants for Seasonal Fuel Assistance identify their fuel supplier on their application for assistance. Suppliers, including regulated utilities, are certified by the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance after original, signed and dated acceptable documentation is submitted to the Office. A bank account "pre-note" test is run to verify the supplier's bank account. When the existence or authenticity of a dealer is questioned additional information is sought either from the dealer or the Secretary of State's Office and public records.

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Community action agencies work directly with fuel and energy suppliers. Only those suppliers who receive a purchase order for a crisis fuel delivery or account credit (on a client's regulated utility bill) will receive a LIHEAP payment from the community action agencies' business office when proper documentation is submitted.

Please highlight any policies for verifying vendor authenticity which will be newly implemented in FY2013.

None being implemented in FFY2013.

If you don't have a system in place for verifying vendor authenticity, please describe how the State can ensure that funds are being distributed through valid intermediaries?

N/A

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: An effective process that effectively confirms the existence of entities receiving federal funds.

A process that effectively confirms the existence of fuel and/or energy suppliers receiving LIHEAP benefits on behalf of seasonal fuel or crisis fuel clients.

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

In regards to fraud prevention, please describe elements of your FY2010 detailed plan continuing in FY2013 for training and providing technical assistance to (a) employees, (b) non-governmental staff involved in the eligibility process, (c) clients, and (d) energy vendors

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Economic Services Division Benefit Program Specialists (BPSs) are responsible for eligibility determination for Seasonal Fuel Assistance. Through their work with SNAP, TANF, Medicare and Medicaid these BPSs are trained on the fraud referral process through their supervisors to the ESD Fraud and Quality Control Unit.

Clients are advised when they sign their application or review for ESD benefits that they are subject to the "Rights and Responsibilities" identified in the application packet including: fraud penalties, quality control review, benefits from another state, true and complete information, and reporting changes.

Fuel suppliers certified by the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance agree to report "Multiple Benefits" received for a single fuel storage system.

The Fuel Assistance Office annually reminds and advises fuel suppliers and other interested persons that they are encouraged to refer to the Fuel Assistance Program Chief matters related to fraud or program abuse by any parties directly

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Crisis Fuel workers at the five community action agencies receive annual training in Crisis Fuel eligibility determination including fraud prevention. If issues related to fraud or quality control are identified in one agency, all agencies are advised pro-actively of the situation and appropriate remedies to be taken.

Clients are advised of their rights and responsibilities for obtaining Crisis Fuel Assistance by each of the five community action agencies of the

Please highlight specific elements of your training regiment and technical assistance resources from your plan which will represent newly implemented in FY2013.

None to be newly implemented in FFY2013

If you don't have a system in place for anti-fraud training or technical assistance for employees, clients or energy vendors, please describe your strategy for ensuring all employees understand what is expected of them and what tactics they are permitted to employ.

Not applicable.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: The timely and thorough resolution of weaknesses or reportable conditions as revealed by the audit.

The timely and thorough resolution of weaknesses or reportable conditions as revealed by an audit, technical assistance review or identified by individual workers.

AUDITS OF LOCAL ADMINISTERING AGENCIES

Please describe the annual audit requirements in place for local administering agencies in FY2012 that will continue into FY 2013.

Please provide full descriptions of the State's plans and strategy in this area, and attach/reference excerpts from relevant policy documents

Crisis Fuel Assistance

Vermont's Crisis Fuel Assistance Program is operated by the state's five community action agencies under grant agreements with the Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance. The Fuel Assistance Program Chief conducts program reviews mid-season with two or three of the five agencies annually. Each agency is reviewed no less frequently than once every two years. Sample cases are selected for a detailed review of eligibility determination. Crisis Fuel Coordinators and the agency Executive Director are informed of the findings and any corrective action needed. Depending on the finding the Fuel Chief will issue a clarifying memo that can be circulated to all staff with the particular agency and to the Crisis Fuel Coordinators at the other agencies.

Crisis Fuel training is provided to all agencies prior to the start of the Crisis Fuel season (last Monday in November). Throughout the season monthly conference calls are conducted between the Fuel Office and Crisis Fuel Coordinators from each agency to identify, discuss and clarify any problems or issues that are being experienced.

The five Community Action Agencies receive block grant funding from the State Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) which is also in the Vermont Department for Children and Families. OEO conducts annual financial and business practice audits of the agencies and those audits include the administration of LIHEAP funds for Crisis Fuel Assistance.

Please describe new policies or strategies to be implemented in FY2013.

None to be newly implemented.

If you don't have specific audit requirements for local administering agencies, please explain how the Grantee will ensure that LIHEAP funds are properly audited under the Single Audit Act requirements.

Not applicable.

Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

For example: Reduce improper payments, maintain local agency integrity, and benefits awarded to eligible households.

Reduce improper payments, maintain local agency integrity, and ensure that benefits are awarded only to eligible households.

VERMONT LIHEAP Block Grant	FFY2011 <u>Actual</u>	FFY2012 <u>Estimated</u>	FFY2013 <u>Proposed</u>
<u>Goal #1</u>			
Home heating energy cost supplement to needy low income households, including the use of program funds for services to inform and assist persons to apply.	\$19,857,999	\$22,635,000	\$15,285,000
<u>Goal #2</u>			
Home heating crisis assistance for Low income needy households, Including the use of program funds for services to inform and assist persons to apply and resolve crisis situations.	\$5,114,767	\$4,630,000	\$3,125,000
<u>Goal # 3</u>			
Administrative expense containment Within the 10% maximum allowed.	\$2,338,410	\$1,900,00	\$1,900,000
Transfer to Weatherization	\$ - 0 -	\$ - 0 -	\$ - 0 -
Source of Funds			
LIHEAP Block Grant Award	\$25,575,382	\$19,529,156	\$19,529,000
Supplemental LIHEAP Award	\$1,283,670	\$ - 0 -	\$ - 0 -
LIHEAP Leverage Award	\$ - 0 -	\$ - 0 -	\$ - 0 -
Total LIHEAP Spending:	\$27,311,176	\$29,165,000	\$20,310,000

NOTES:

- 1 + 2 + 3 + Wx = Total Spending. Total Spending may not equal the listed "Source of Funds" as the Source list does not include prior year's carryover and other LIHEAP funds not listed.
- The source of funds are Federal LIHEAP dollars only – State funds are not included.

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