

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Policy

The Energy Assistance Program (formerly known as LIHEAP) operates on a fiscal year (October through September) and serves low-income Native American households within the Osage Reservation (Osage County) by providing heating and cooling energy assistance. The program also provides Crisis Assistance during an energy crisis, and preventative maintenance for elders.

The amount of assistance is based upon the number of people living in the household and the combined income of each adult in the household. The program does not assist with disconnect, reconnect, or late fees. The Program will not pay for utility deposits nor assist a utility account that has been disconnected. Utility bills must be submitted five (5) before the disconnect date.

Heating assistance is available from November 1st through March 31st, and may be awarded once each fiscal year per applicant. The benefit includes payment for a utility that provides heat to the home. The utility can be propane, natural gas, or electric. In-Kind benefits are available during the heating season and may include a space heater, an electric blanket and/or weatherization materials, as funding permits.

Cooling assistance is available from April 1st through August 31st and may be awarded once each fiscal year per applicant. The benefit includes payment for an electric bill. In-Kind benefits are available during the cooling season and may include an oscillating box fan and/or weatherization materials, as funding permits.

Crisis assistance is available from October 1st through September 30th, and may be awarded once each fiscal year per crisis eligible applicant. This benefit provides either utility assistance or Heating Ventilation & Air Conditioning (HVAC) repair / replacement for eligible homeowners, or HVAC system preventative maintenance. Crisis eligible households contain one of the following: an elder (55 or older), child nine (9) years or younger, or an enrolled member of the Osage Nation. The program will provide an intervention that will resolve the energy crisis within 18 to 48 hours. The applicant must have used a regular heating or cooling benefit before applying for the crisis utility benefit.

For the purposes of this policy, energy assistance from the Department of Human Services (DHS) is inclusive and is counted as eligible benefits with Osage Nation Energy Assistance Program. The Financial Assistance Department will cross check, confirm and document any benefits received. This program defines a crisis based on the following:

- Possible health threat
- Non-functional heating or cooling equipment
- KI .HY .KAhas declared a state of emergency by Executive Order during extreme temperatures
- President has declared the service area a natural disaster
- Life-threatening crisis (an energy burden that may result in or create a medical or health emergency)

Completed applications contain the following attachments:

- Copy of membership card or CDIB for all household members
- Copy of photo identification (driver's license, state ID, tribal ID, passport) for each adult household member

- Proof of residence (current utility bill in the name of the applicant)
- Copy of Social Security cards for all household members
- Verification of income for last thirty (30) days, from the application date, for each adult household member
- Current energy bill
- Proof of homeownership (copy of recorded general warranty deed, contract for deed, Title (for mobile homes), lease to purchase, BIA permit, or letter from Bureau of Indian Affairs) if applying for HVAC repair and/or maintenance

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for Energy Assistance with the Osage Nation Financial Assistance Department must:

- Reside within the boundaries of the Osage Reservation (Osage County)
- Be Native American (evidenced by a membership card from a federally recognized tribe or CDIB)
- Have an income below 60% of the Oklahoma State Median Income level (Each adult residing in the household must provide income verification)
- Be 18 or older
- Submit utility bills in the name of the applicant

Priority in eligibility is given to households that include one of the following:

- Elder (55 years or older)
- Children aged nine (9) or younger
- Enrolled member of the Osage Nation

Income verification for the past thirty (30) days is required from each adult household member. The benefit amount will be determined based on net income derived from the following:

- Wages
- Self-Employment Income
- Contract Income
- Unemployment insurance
- Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits; excluding Medicare deductions
- Supplemental Security Income
- Retirement/pension benefits
- Rental Income
- Alimony
- Child Support

Enrolled members of Osage Nation will receive a standard deduction of \$250.00 per enrolled household member.

Example for a household of five (5) enrolled Osages

Net income	\$3,800 per month (ineligible)
Deduction	\$1,250
Adjusted Net Income	\$2,550 (eligible)

Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning Systems (HVAC)

As a component of an Energy Crisis, assistance to repair parts of an existing Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) System is available for eligible homeowners. If repair work is insufficient or the existing system is older than 7 years or inadequate in size, replacement of an existing Heating, Ventilation Air Conditioning system is available for eligible homeowners. The total cost to repair or replace the existing system must be affordable under the Crisis limit, as stated in the Annual Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Plan.

HVAC Eligibility Requirements

Crisis eligible households must contain one of the following:

- An elder (55 or older),
- Child of nine (9) years or younger, or
- An enrolled member of the Osage Nation.

The installation of a new system in a dwelling where an existing system does not already exist is prohibited by our funding agency. Clients in need of new systems will be referred to alternative resources. HVAC repair and replacement is limited to once every 7 years.

Outreach Activities

Outreach activities will include but not be limited to the following:

- Informational material mailed to current applicants
- Bi-yearly training sessions and events
- Information material shared to our website and Osage News
- Information material posted in local community buildings
- Referrals to other resources, departments, and agencies in the area
- Receive referrals from other departments and/or agencies

Privacy and Confidentiality

The following measures are taken to ensure client confidentiality and privacy:

- Privacy policy is written on the application under Rights and Responsibilities
- Only Financial Assistance Staff are allowed access to the Energy Assistance Database
- All employees are trained on confidentiality and sign confidentiality agreements
- All hard copy files and information are stored in locked cabinets in the Financial Assistance file room until sent to the Achieves department per policy

Vendor Payment

After eligibility has been determined, vouchers (agreements between the Osage Nation and a utility vendor) will be sent to the utility vendor for signature. Payables are due to the Accounting Department each Friday by noon. Checks will be delivered to the Financial Assistance Department the following Friday and will be mailed to the utility vendor the same day.

HVAC vendors will receive payment directly from the Osage Nation Procurement Office.

Policy Effective Date: 10/1/2018

Upon approval, applicants are notified of amount of payment to be made by Osage Nation Financial Assistance Department/Energy Assistance Program.

Application Procedure

- Applicants must submit a complete application to the Osage Nation Financial Assistance Department. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. .
- Each applicant will receive an approval or denial letter within (10) business days after the application completion date
- Applicant will have (10) business days from date of denial to appeal decisions

HVAC Service Procedure

- Schedule HVAC inspection for the homeowner with an Osage Nation Inspector
- HVAC inspection will take place no more than ten (10) days after notification unless there is a scheduling conflict with the home owner
- Inspector will complete and submit an assessment, cost estimate and scope of work to Financial Assistance Department
- Submit a Purchase Requisition for HVAC services for an approved licensed technician, to the Osage Nation Procurement Office
- Schedule a Final Inspection for homeowner with an Osage Nation Inspector after completion of the project
- The inspector will provide all manufacturer warranties and maintenance education to the homeowner after final inspection and approval
- Financial Assistance staff will submit all inspection reports to the Procurement Office, attaching a copy of the purchase order so that payment may be made directly to the vendor
- All communication with the Procurement Office and/or the Housing Department, including copies of purchase orders, are to be included in the client's file

Vendor Pay Procedure

- After approval of application and payable delivered to the Accounting Department, checks will be delivered to the Financial Assistance Department
- Checks will be copied and placed in client files
- Copied checks must be attached to the payable and filed in client file
- Check numbers and check date will be recorded on an Osage Nation tracking system the same day that the check is mailed to the vendor. Checks will be mailed directly to the vendor