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Energy Assistance Available for Low-Income New Mexicans to Help Beat the Heat on Cooling Costs

LIHEAP Benefits Available for Eligible Households Yet to Receive Benefit This Season

Santa Fe, New Mexico – The New Mexico Human Services Department is encouraging eligible families who have not received a Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefit this federal budget year to apply and use their benefit for cooling costs.

“Many families in the southern part of the state find the benefit more useful during the summer months when the cost to cool their house is high,” said Pamela Hyde, Human Services Department (HSD) Secretary. “This year’s average one-time benefit is \$300, which is some real relief for struggling families.”

The LIHEAP program begins each year in October and goes through September the following year. So far this season 64,727 households have been approved for an average LIHEAP benefit of \$300, which is nearly five percent above the same time last year, when nearly 66,000 families received an average \$134 LIHEAP benefit.

The department has issued \$19 million in benefits and has enough funding to serve nearly 8,000 more households.

The combined state and federal funding for energy assistance totaled nearly 30 million, which was distributed for both State and Tribal LIHEAP programs, as well as a portion of the weatherization program through the Mortgage Finance Authority.

Households qualifying for LIHEAP earn at or below 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. For example, a family of three with a monthly income of \$2,200 could qualify for home heating help (see guide below). The benefit can be used to help pay for gas or electric bills, or for bulk fuels, such as propane, firewood or wood pellet bills. Eligible families who did not apply during the winter months can get a jump start for next winter by purchasing bulk fuels now and apply for a LIHEAP benefit.

HSD has simplified the eligibility process for LIHEAP applicants who currently use other income support programs such as food stamps, cash assistance or Medicaid. Those clients may not have to provide new proof of their circumstances.

Households applying for but who are not currently clients of the Income Support Division should bring the following to one of the department's 36 Income Support offices:

- Proof of household income for the past 30 days
- Identification
- Social Security Numbers (SSN) for all household members
- Proof of New Mexico residency
- If not a U.S. Citizen, proof of qualified immigrant status
- Proof of a heating or cooling expense

<i>Family Size</i>	<i>LIHEAP Maximum Monthly Income</i>
1	\$1,300
2	\$1,750
3	\$2,200
4	\$2,650
5	\$3,100
6	\$3,550
7	\$4,000
8	\$4,450

For more information on LIHEAP call 1-800-283-4465 or visit the department's LIHEAP website at <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/isd/liheap.html>. To apply for LIHEAP please visit your local Income Support Division office.

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