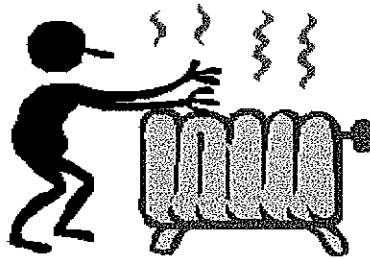


DRAFT

**REPORT OF THE
LOW-INCOME ENERGY ADVISORY BOARD
(LIEAB)**

**Recommendations to Improve the Implementation
of Heating Assistance Programs
in Connecticut**



Patricia Wrice, Chair

Low Income Energy Advisory Board

SUBMITTED TO THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

December 2015

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2015-2016**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
LIEAB BOARD MEMBERS	
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - CHARGE	
PROCESS	
SUMMARY OF EXISTING EA PROGRAMS	
SUMMARY OF EXISTING EE PROGRAM	
RECOMMENDATIONS	
RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS	
ENERGY BURDEN DATA COLLECTION	
OTHER POINTS OF VIEW	
SUMMARY	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Charge

The LIEAB was charged by the 2015 General Assembly, through a amendment to *C.G.S Section 16a-41b*, subsection (e) with . . . “devising recommendations to improve the implementation of heating assistance programs, particularly those created to benefit low-income households, through coordination and optimization of existing energy efficiency and energy assistance programs.”

The bill language states:

(NEW) (e) The Low-Income Energy Advisory Board shall convene and devise recommendations to improve the implementation of heating assistance programs, particularly those created to benefit low-income households, through coordination and optimization of existing energy efficiency and energy assistance programs. Such recommendations shall consider: (1) How the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), community action agencies, as defined by section 17b-885, electric distribution companies, as defined by section 16-1, as amended by this act, and municipal electric utilities, as defined by section 7-233b, can securely share heating assistance program applicant data, with respect to customer energy usage levels, past participation and eligibility for energy assistance and energy efficiency programs, and other data deemed relevant to improve coordination among such program and program administrators; (2) the costs and benefits of current energy assistance and energy efficiency programs, and how to maximize customer benefits through such customers’ anticipation in any combination of energy assistance and energy efficiency programs; (3) how to streamline the application process for energy assistance and energy efficiency program applicants and the possible development of joint electronic applications; (4) how to make energy assistance and energy efficiency programs more accessible and feasible for tenants in rental housing units, including, but not limited to, how to best secure landlord permission for such services; and (5) coordination efforts to best improve boiler and furnace replacement program. Not later than January 1, 2016, the Low-Income Energy Advisory Board shall report such recommendations, in accordance with section 11-4a, to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to energy, appropriations and human services.

SUMMARY OF EXISTING EA PROGRAMS

Energy Assistance (EA) Programs

1. **LIHEAP Block Grant – Administered by DSS**
2. **Utility Payment and Protection Programs**
3. **Operation Fuel**
4. **Local Charities**
5. **Others**

1. LIHEAP Block Grant.

DSS administers the State's primary energy assistance program, Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) through block grant funding from the (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This block grant is the primary source of energy affordability assistance in the State, but still only helps with about 11% of the total dollars that vulnerable households are unable to pay for their home energy annually.¹

The FY 2016 the Federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) grant is estimated to be \$73 million for Connecticut. The State maintains a carry-over amount of up to \$7 million each year (carry-over funds may not exceed 10% of the federal grant – budgeting for carry-over reduces the dollars available for use as energy assistance but is a hedge against potential lower grants). The current LIHEAP Plan for these monies contains a set aside of \$1.5 million for EE (furnace replacement and repair benefits) in addition to the energy assistance benefits and up to ten percent (\$7-8 million) is allocated for administrative costs. The furnace repair/replacement benefit through CEAP has been previously unavailable to CT residents since 2008. It is anticipated that the \$1.5 million in this year's set-aside will serve approximately 250 eligible households. When the furnace program funding gets low, \$500,000 will be reserved for vulnerable households².

FFY2015 Expenditures:

\$68,056,978.45 (Program Services)

2,201,000.00 (Standard Utility Allowance Payments) see *infra* "Heat & Eat"

8,502,518.00 (Administration)

¹ *Home Energy Affordability Gap: CT (2013) Report*, prepared by Rodger D. Colton of Fisher, Sheehan & Colton, Public Finance and General Economics, Belmont, MA (Prepared for *Operation Fuel*)

² The 2015/2016 LIHEAP Allocation Plan defines a vulnerable household as "any household in which one or more members is either elderly (defined as 60 years of age or older), disabled or under the age of six."

1,000,000.00 (Assurance 16)
\$79,760,496.45 (Total estimated expenditures) without carry-over funding for FFY 15 – FY16

Application Process: DSS contracts with CAP agencies to help administer the CEAP program. The CAPs also administer the federally funded Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) under a plan developed by DEEP. CAPs process virtually all applications for both the CEAP and WAP programs (written and electronic). Eversource and UI administer the Home Energy Solutions – Income Eligible (HES-IE) program, providing conservation assistance to low income households and funded by all electric customers. The CAPs utilize funding from the utility administered program to supplement WAP benefits; however, HES-IE cannot draw on WAP funds. The result is that individual household benefits may vary depending on whether the household applied for conservation assistance through a CAP or the utility. The WAP program has limited funding and the CAPs must exercise discretion in determining which households will receive WAP benefits; it is possible to apply for assistance year after year and never receive help. The utility program has significantly more funding than WAP and provides assistance to all eligible applicants until annual funding is exhausted. The EA application is also an application for WAP assistance (*C.G.S. Sec. 16a-41*), but the utility program requires a separate application. While many town social services also accept and process EA and WAP applications, those applications are forwarded to the CAPs for final processing. CAPs enter and process all applications electronically using either *Captain* or *Fuelware* software. The CAPs are required to retain the applications for three years, but most retain them for up to seven years.

As part of its effort to ensure that CEAP benefits are only provided to eligible households, CAPs have inquiry access to the DSS computer Eligibility Management System (EMS). The DSS EMS computer system cannot read the *Captain* and *Fuelware* software programs used by the CAPs, but can access CAP information through electronic file transfer points.

Some households are categorically eligible for CEAP energy assistance benefits based upon income³ alone but must meet other eligibility requirements through the application process. Some households are also categorically eligible for winter shut-off protection, special payment programs and free energy efficiency

³ At or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL): \$17,505 for a household of 1; \$29,685 for a household of 3.

(conservation) assistance but are currently not identified through the CEAP application process.

Energy assistance and WAP benefits are awarded to eligible low-income households at the conclusion of several application processes, including a personal interview. Eligibility/income criteria must be verified and documentation of any liquid assets may be required before a household is awarded energy assistance benefits. The household's energy burden is also used to determine eligibility. This is done by reviewing a current copy of the household's current electric utility bill (direct to vendor payment) regardless of the household's primary heating source. *(Is this correct? Can EA be denied if the household does not provide an electric bill? Under what authority?)*

Once the CAP has determined EA eligibility for the household, an award letter is issued to the household by the CAPs???

Some DSS obligations regarding energy assistance are found in *C.G.S. Sec. 16a-41 and 41a*. In addition to administering the LIHEAP Federal grant, DSS is also charge with "ensur[ing] coordination of the CEAP and other energy and conservation program offered by the State and other public or private entities." 2016/2016 Allocation Plan for the LIHEAP Block Grant, p. 2. DSS is also tasked with "initiating agreements with energy vendors" and "provid[ing] standard application forms/format for all energy programs administered by the Department. *Id.*

2. Utility Payment and Protection Programs. (ratepayer funded)

All electric utility customers, including low-income customers provide financial support to low-income households through the "Systems Benefits Charges", part of their monthly electric bills. Gas utility program costs are recovered in their rate cases. The supported utility administered programs include: the matching payment programs mandated by *C.G.S. Sec. 16-262c*, similar programs administered voluntarily by the electric utilities, winter shut-off protection and potentially year-round, life threatening shut-off protection. Applications for these programs are made either through the CAPs, town social services or directly through the utilities.

Applications: Individuals or households interested in these benefits can contact the CAPs or the utilities directly for assistance. Participants in the programs do not fill out written applications, but information is electronically captured and households may be required to produce supporting documentation.

FY 2014 Expenditures: (see below)

A. **Life-threatening loss of utility service.** Gas and electric companies may not refuse to provide service at any time during the year where a lack of service is life-threatening. The utility companies have a form which must be completed by a physician for this protection. *C.G. S. Sec. 16-262c.*

B. **Winter shut-off protection:**

1.) **Electric utility service:** Each fall electric utility customers can apply with their electric utility for “hardship”⁴ status. This protects them from use of an electric utility shut-off for collection purposes between November 1 and May 1, regardless of their debt to the utility or whether payments are made during this period. Households which are shut-off must be reinstated during this period.

2.) **Gas utility heating service:** Each fall only gas customers who rely on gas for heat can apply for “hardship”⁵ status. This protects them from use of a gas service shut-off for collection purposes between November 1 and May 1. If a gas customer had gas service provided the prior winter based on hardship status, they must have paid at least \$100 since the prior November 1 or make a payment agreement to avoid termination or to be reinstated. Non-heat gas customers do not have winter shut-off protection.

⁴ “Hardship” status is defined by *C.G.S. Sec. 16-262c* and *Regulations, Connecticut State Agencies Sec. 16-3-100(a)(1)(6)* (A) as a person receiving or seeking reinstatement of residential gas or electric utility service from November 1st to April 15th who lacks the financial resources to pay his or her entire bill for gas and electric utility service, including but not limited to (i) aid to the blind; (ii) aid to families with dependent children; (iii) old age assistance; (iv) aid to the disabled; (v) Medicaid; (vi) supplemental security income; (vii) general assistance; (B) A person whose sole source of financial support is derived from social security, veterans’ administration or unemployment compensation benefits; (C) A person who is head of the household and unemployed, and whose household income is less than three hundred percent of the poverty level determined by the federal government; (D) A person or any resident of the person’s home who is seriously ill, as certified by a registered physician in accordance with subsection (e)(2) of this section, or has a life threatening situation; (E) A person whose income falls below one hundred twenty five percent of the poverty level as determined by the federal government in accordance with the income poverty guidelines from the regional office of family assistance, Department of Health and Human Services or its successor agency; or (F) A person whose circumstances threaten a deprivation of the necessities of life for himself or herself or dependent children of his or her household if payment of a delinquent utility is required.

⁵ *Id.*

C. Affordable Utility Payment Programs:

These programs are used to resolve utility payment issues and the risk of shut-offs.

1). Debt forgiveness programs for energy assistance recipients: Each winter *Eversource, UI, CNG and SCG* operate programs where their customers who receive energy assistance for that utility's bills (meaning that utility is its heat source) are asked to make monthly budget payments toward their utility bill. If the customer can't afford the budget payment amount requested by the utility, the customer can ask to be referred to a social service agency for a review of the household's income and expenses to determine if a lower payment will be allowed – the monthly payment can go as low as \$50 if that is all the household can afford. If all payments are received on time, the utility matches all customer and energy assistance payments, including summer payments, down to a \$0 debt, and the customer is protected from a utility shut-off year round, regardless of the debt to the utility.

2). *Eversource* and *UI* each have additional debt forgiveness programs for low-income customers including non-heat customers, where the customer payments are matched by the utility.

-*Eversource* and *UI* Applications:

-*Eversource* Expenditures FY 2014: for Matching Payment Plan, NU Start and Low Income Special Needs Program (includes non-labor administrative charges, *i.e.*, brochures, bill inserts, advertising) - \$14,593,000 from Systems Benefit Charges. *See attached PURA Docket No. 15-03-01 Schedule SBC, Exhibit A, March 31, 2015* ***UI information needed***

-*Connecticut Natural Gas* Applications:

-*Connecticut Natural Gas* Expenditures FY 2014-2015: \$7,968,815.45, with ?\$19,117.87 administrative costs. *See attached CNG Hardship Forgiveness Program*

SCG Applications:

SCG Expenditures for FY 2014-2015 ***need this information***

3. Operation Fuel

Operation Fuel is a private, nonprofit emergency fuel bank with its own EA private and state funding. It has 100+ fuel banks operated through existing social service agencies, including towns, throughout the State which accept and process Operation Fuel's own EA applications.

Because funding is limited, Operation Fuel EA is generally available only after households have exhausted their government EA benefits and have sought to obtain assistance from other local charities. Depending on funding availability, assistance is not available at all times.

Application Process: Applications are made at local fuel banks electronically. Supporting documentation may be required.

FY 2014 Expenditures: As part of its funding, in Fiscal year 2014 Operation Fuel received a \$2.1 million grant from the State. Of that \$1.9 million was spent on direct benefits to eligible clients and \$.2 million was spent on program overhead, including case management costs.

4. Local Charities

There is no specific accounting available to LIEAB as to how local charities process requests for EA and how much is spent. Upon information and belief, Catholic Charities, the Salvation Army, churches and other organizations provide limited EA benefits to some households but funds are extremely limited.

5. Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund

Created by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1919, (*C.G.S. sec. 27-126 & 27-138 et seq.*) this fund was established to assist veterans and their families including provision of energy assistance benefits. Funding for all benefit programs was capped in 1962 at \$15 million dollars, and most of the assistance currently provided is derived from earnings on fund investments. Volunteers in towns across the state and the American Legion join to staff the program. Assistance is generally limited and is highly discretionary.

6. "Heat and Eat"

For years Connecticut, as a LIHEAP grantee, has coordinated the Federal LIHEAP energy assistance grant with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to help low-income households both heat their homes and feed their families. By use of a relatively low energy assistance grant to

households who are income eligible for energy assistance but who do not receive this assistance for other reasons, SNAP benefits can be significantly increased.

Application: All SNAP applicants are screened for utility allowances. SNAP applications may be made to DSS verbally or by written application.

FY 2014 Expenditures: \$1.4 Million of LIHEAP grant funding. This benefit will continue to be provided in the 2015-2016 LIHEAP Block Grant Allocation Plan (p. 9)

Initially this was accomplished by providing a nominal LIHEAP benefit of \$1 to help households maximize their Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) under SNAP.⁶

The practice was threatened by the passage of the 2014 Federal Farm Bill which required that the LIHEAP benefit be more than \$20. This new provision was a compromise to pass the Farm Bill. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the “greater than \$20” level would impact SNAP benefits for about 850,000 households nationwide, each year with an average loss of \$90 per month per household.⁷

In late February 2014 Governor Malloy announced the State’s LIHEAP program would use \$1.4 million of its Federal grant to preserve approximately \$66.6 million in SNAP benefits for about 50,000 low-income families. This was accomplished by increasing the Heat and Eat LIHEAP benefit from \$1 to \$20.01. *Id.*

The “twenty and a penny” Heat and Eat LIHEAP benefit was approved in the 2015-16 CT Allocation Plan for the LIHEAP Block Grant.

This limited benefit is paid directly to SNAP households. ***Is this actual money or just an increase in SNAP benefits??***

⁶ The SUA is a fixed dollar amount set by each state that serves as a reasonable substitute for the actual heating and cooling costs of a low-income household. The SUA is a number that states use in place of gathering all of the applicant’s utility cost and usage information.

⁷ LIHEAP Clearinghouse Issue Brief, #5, August 2014

7. Others

- a. On occasion, other private organizations come into the State to offer residents energy assistance benefits, but such benefits have been unpredictable and limited. This has included the Citizen's Energy Oil Heat Program (one-time delivery of 100 gallons of home heating oil)(Joe Kennedy).

SUMMARY OF EXISTING EE PROGRAMS

Energy Efficiency Programs (Weatherization and Conservation)

- 1. Home Energy Solutions-Income Eligible (HES-IE) program.**
- 2. Utility weatherization programs.**
- 3. Federal DOE Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**
- 4. Municipal utilities.**

1. HES-IE

Home Energy Solutions – Income Eligible is a program initiative of the CT Energy Efficiency Fund (EEF) under a plan approved by DEEP and administered by the electric utilities with funding from conservation charges on all electricity customer bills and via gas rates. It provides weatherization measures to help renters and homeowners, regardless of heat source, to reduce their energy bills by making their apartments or homes more energy efficient. HES-IE is a free service for income-eligible households. Income eligibility is capped at 60% of State Median Income.

Weatherization services may include installation of energy efficient light bulbs, caulking drafts, cracks and leaks in windows and doors and installing water-saving faucet aerators and shower heads. Some households may also qualify for insulation and energy-efficient appliances. When funding is available the services are coordinated with health and safety measures.

Application Process: Individuals can apply for HES-IE on line www.energizect.com, or through their electric company. Tenants/renters must have their landlord complete the *Owner's Permission Statement* which is included in the application. Services may be limited, even where landlord permission is provided, where providing such services could create a health hazard, in building with the presence of asbestos, knob and tube wiring, gas leaks, or CO.

FY 2014/2015 Expenditures: Total budget for FY 2014/2015 was \$28,699,693. The program management costs were \$3,244,249 or 10.7%.

2. Federal DOE Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

WAP is a weatherization program administered by the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) in partnership with CAPs. The CAPs qualify the households using a program specific application process and coordinate the weatherization services by hiring and training local contractors. DEEP provides overall program management and technical assistance.

WAP services may include heating system tune-ups and repairs, blower door guided air-sealing, attic and sidewall insulation, and health and safety inspections. Some services are funded by the CT Energy Efficiency Fund – *see* #1 above.

Application Process: WAP uses the same eligibility criteria as the CEAP program. Eligibility is capped at 60% of State Median Income. Priority is given to households that are particularly vulnerable, such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, families with children and high energy users. For multi-family dwellings, at least two-thirds of the tenants must be income-eligible.

FY 2014 Expenditures: Total budget is \$3,456,696. The program management costs were \$220,190 or 6.4%.

3. Municipal utilities

Municipal utilities have programs for their customers. These municipalities include: Bozrah, Groton, Jewett City, Norwich, S. Norwalk, Norwalk Third Taxing District and Wallingford.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) How the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), community action agencies, as defined by section 17b-885, electric distribution companies, as defined by section 16-1, as amended by this act, and municipal electric utilities, as defined by section 7-233b, can securely share heating assistance program applicant data, with respect to customer energy usage levels, past participation and eligibility for energy assistance and energy efficiency programs, and other data deemed relevant to improve coordination among such program and program administrators

Recommendations:

- **The information on past participation in EA and EE program, eligibility for those programs and a significant amount of other relevant data exists within the CAP agencies and is shared with DEEP and DSS. Electric distribution, gas and municipal utility information, as well as deliverable fuel heating provider information is not accessible and therefore it is difficult to track comprehensive data regarding customer energy usage levels. The CGA should consider legislation requiring electric distribution, gas, municipal and deliverable fuel companies to provide this information on request to DSS, DEEP and the CAP agencies for households receiving energy assistance. Legislation should protect the privacy of individual customers, but could be made available to target conservation services to households with the highest consumption. Authorization for sharing this information could be included in the energy assistance application.**
 - **A single application (see recommendation #3) will help with shared information and processing of applications.**
 - **See also “Energy Burden Data Collection” section with plan for DSS data collection of energy burden information.**
- 2) The costs and benefits of current energy assistance and energy efficiency programs and how to maximize customer benefits through such customers’ participation in any combination of energy assistance and energy efficiency programs;

Recommendations:

- **Create a single application (see recommendation #3) to help maximize subsistence benefits available to impoverished households, determining eligibility for the various programs simultaneously;**

- **Establish a permanent, emergency furnace/boiler repair and replacement program utilizing high efficiency heating equipment and coordinate provision of this assistance with conservation assistance to ensure heating systems are properly sized so they operate at high efficiency;**
 - **Remove the 2016 sunset provision of *C.G.S. Sec. 16a-40m*, the on-bill repayment program for energy efficiency and renewable loans;**
 - **Coordinate the HES-IE and DOE weatherization programs so that, regardless of whether an individual seeks assistance through a CAP or directly from the electric utility, the same benefits will be available and all eligible applicants will receive assistance as funding is available;**
 - **Encourage enhanced coordination between the parties; and,**
 - **Streamline costs of administering the programs wherever practicable.**
- 3) How to streamline the application process for energy assistance and energy efficiency program applicants and the possible development of joint electronic applications;

Recommendations:

- **Create a single application for all DOE and HES-IE energy assistance and energy efficiency programs.**
- 4) How to make energy assistance and energy efficiency programs more accessible and feasible for tenants in rental housing units, including, but not limited to, how to best secure landlord permission for such services; and,

Recommendations:

- **Encourage cooperation through outreach and educational programs;**
- **Adopt legislation:**

- a. **allowing tenants to authorize conservation measures, beyond the removable measures now allowed in *C.G.S. 47a-13a*, in their individual dwelling units where such measures are recommended by the utility administered EE programs or WAP are available without charge to the landlord, particularly in situations where the conservation measures mitigate dangerous situations such as malfunctioning heating systems, address code violations or address the landlord's failure to maintain rental property in accordance with the requirements of Title 47a in the General Statutes; and,**
- b. **requiring landlords to authorize conservation improvements to the building envelope and systems affecting more than one dwelling unit, as well as conservation measures affecting individual units where there is no cost to the landlord for such installation or conservation measures or where such improvements mitigate dangerous situations such as malfunctioning heating systems, address code violations, or address the landlord's failure to maintain rental property in accordance with the requirements of Title 47a in the General Statutes.**

5) Coordination efforts to best improve boiler and furnace replacement programs.

Recommendations:

- **Establish a permanent, emergency furnace/boiler replacement program that utilizes high efficiency furnaces and boilers;**
- **Coordinate any furnace or boiler replacement with conservation improvements so heating units can be properly sized for efficiency.**
- **Eliminate 2016 sunset provision of *C.G.S. Sec. 16a-41m* the on-bill repayment program of energy efficiency and renewable loans.**
- **Repeal *C.G.S. Sec. 16a-40m(b)(8)* which would allow utility service disconnections in situations where a conservation loan is repaid**

on the electricity bill and the customer's circumstances interfere with timely loan repayment.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

PROCESS

LIEAB learned indirectly through its members that it had been tasked with this assignment. On September 2, 2015 a LIEAB subcommittee was formed and began the process of breaking down the assignment and collecting information.

The LIEAB subcommittee then met every two weeks thereafter to discuss the questions raised by the legislation, review available data and draft recommendations.

In late October 2015 the subcommittee began drafting this report which includes information about existing EA and EE programs, costs of the programs and the processes of accessing them by low-income individuals.

The subcommittee came to a consensus regarding certain recommendations. It did not fully explore benefits and administrative costs for all programs as this information was not available.

ENERGY BURDEN DATA COLLECTION

HHS is requiring states (DSS) to incorporate performance measures to gauge the energy burden of each household receiving funding through LIHEAP. Energy burden is defined as the percentage of household income spent on home energy costs. These measures will eventually enable states to better identify those households with the highest energy burdens, with the intent to focus resources on those households most in need. Connecticut is additionally tracking information regarding whether households are in danger of losing their heat, are out of fuel when they apply for EA, or have had their services disconnected. DSS is in the process of harvesting this data from FFY 2015, and will be piloting ways to secure

energy consumption data electronically from utility and deliverable fuel vendors for participants enrolled in the CEAP.

OTHER POINTS OF VIEW

1. DSS Should Create A Single DSS General Benefits Application to Include Energy Assistance and Energy Efficiency/Conservation Subsistence Benefits.
2. Households receiving EA award notification should also be advised they are coded for winter shut-off protections.

1. DSS Should Create a Single DSS General Benefits Application to Include Energy Assistance and Energy Efficiency/Conservation Subsistence Benefits.

There should be a single application for subsistence benefits for impoverished households, including cash, food, medical, EA and EE assistance.

The single application should collect information regarding whether the households has members who do not receive benefits from DSS, and all energy source accounts and numbers identifying the heat source. DSS could prepare periodic computer runs regarding households granted benefits and provide the information to the CAPs and utilities. The application should include an authorization to permit DSS to provide such information to the CAPs or other entities for purpose of obtaining EA or EE related benefits, and to any utility or energy company serving the household to allow the utilities to identify households qualifying for "hardship" status for winter shut-off protection, and to qualify such households for access to special payment program and EE.

The federal LIHEAP plan could be modified to allow DSS to qualify a household for EA at the time DSS conducts its eligibility or redetermination for cash, food or medical assistance.

Redeterminations occur at least once per year, but currently may not coincide with the current timeframe EA is available. If redeterminations are done during the operation of the EA program, the household could immediately qualify for EA and EE if it had no members who did not receive DSS benefits. It could also allow

benefit qualification for the next heating season if there is no intervening DSS redetermination and the household continues to receive DSS benefits at the start of the EA season. This would permit DSS to transmit eligibility information to the CAPs without need for the time and expense of conducting an additional application and eligibility determination process.

Rationale: There is continuing concern that low-income individuals and households face substantial obstacles in accessing subsistence benefits by being required to first locate and then engage in lengthy applications processes and procedures. Energy assistance is a subsistence benefit. Many low-income household members are elderly, frail and/or mentally/physically disabled and/or have language, transportation and other barriers. It is a cumbersome, inhumane and unnecessary burden on these families to have to repeatedly provide duplicative information and be interviewed over and over again to solicit the same information on different applications in order to maintain or acquire these subsistence benefits.

In addition to the burden of being disabled or having to care for a disabled family member, in given year such a low-income household may not only be required to complete new applications for basic necessities such as food, cash, medical coverage, energy assistance and housing assistance but some program require semi-annual (2x per year) reviews of eligibility. In each instance there is usually a separate application, redetermination or other re-examination form to complete and information to provide. Each application, redetermination or renewal often involves having to obtain separate proof of disability or inability to work (from primary care physicians) or the Social Security Administration, updating bank statements, proof of income, rental or mortgage information, medical expense information and other information.

In the case of EA, every household must reapply every year even if the household's income and related factors have not changed. This application process also requires an in-person interview and that the applicant provide "updated" information, again, whether there have been changes or not.

At a minimum the general application and redetermination forms can be modified to include a section for applicants to authorize DSS to electronically transfer to the utilities information about households who automatically qualify for protection from dangerous winter utility shut-offs and who may be eligible for additional consumer protections and services.

With information provided to the utilities by DSS the utilities could:

- Ensure that these households are automatically coded to prevent dangerous winter utility shut-off and do not have to individually apply for this protection;
- Provide automatic priority access to free energy efficiency (conservation) programs in the Energy Efficiency Fund (*C.G.S. Sec. 26-245m*);
- Be targeted for energy assistance reminders; and,
- Be provided information on special payment reminders including utility matching payment program.

With this information CAPs could identify which benefits a household already has, and whether the household had previously been processed for EE (energy conservation) benefits, thus eliminating a potential application.

With this information provided to the CAPs the EA application process could be dramatically shortened since the CAPs would then only possibly need information to be provided by the household on energy usage (and perhaps assets) to complete the process.

With this information provided to DEEP it could identify HES-IE eligible households without the need for a separate application, prioritize the households for the benefit and begin providing the benefits earlier.

Authorization forms already exist for EA and EE applications to permit information sharing. Minor modification of this authorization would permit sharing of appropriate information with DSS, DEEP, the CAPs and the utilities to ensure the maximum EA and EE benefits to low-income households.

2. Households receiving EA award notification should also be advised they are coded for winter shut-off protections.

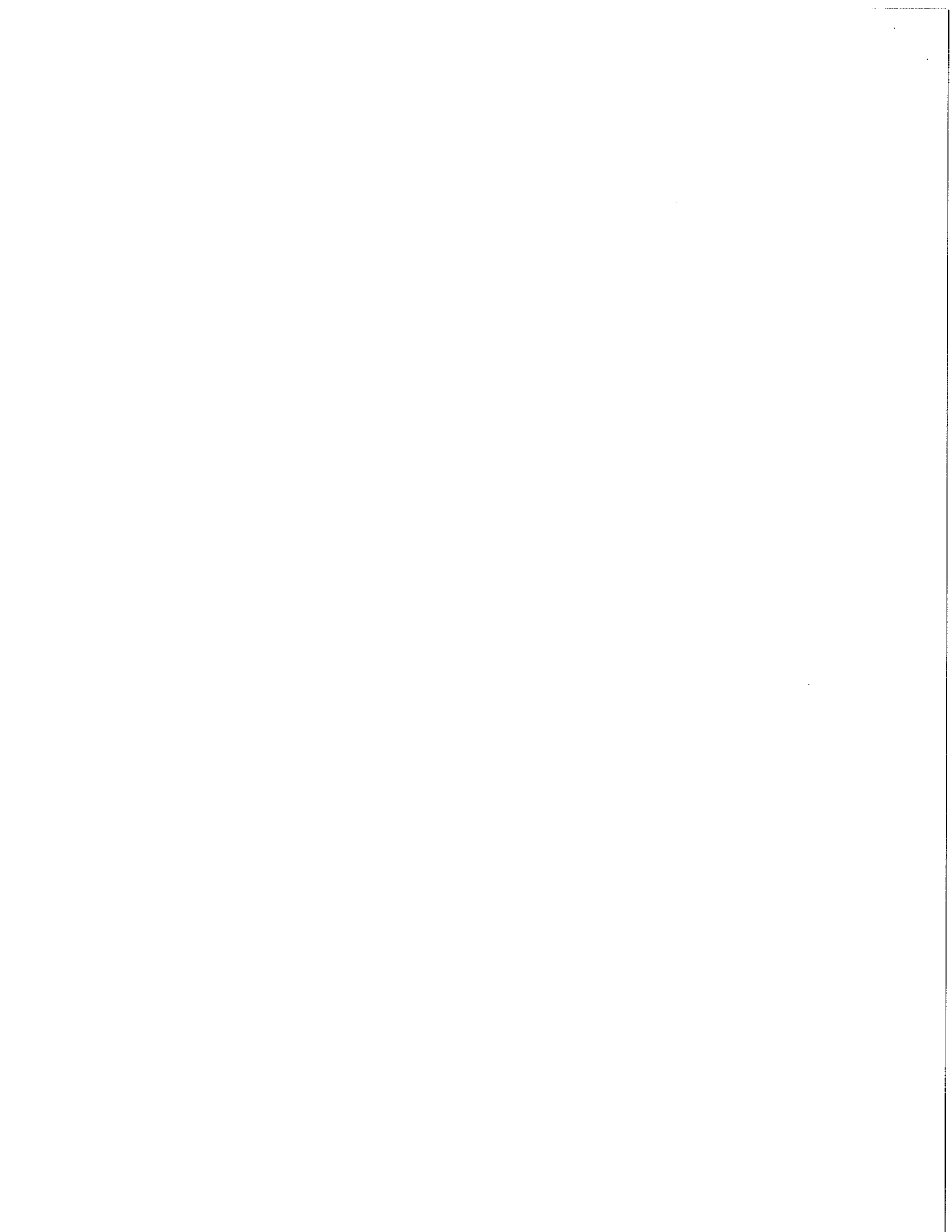
Each household's EA award letter should contain information advising the household that it is eligible for winter shut-off protections. Although this information is available, it is not communicated to the households in the EA award letters and each household has to independently acquire information about this benefit. Many remain unaware despite eligibility. (REALLY??? – No One tells them?)

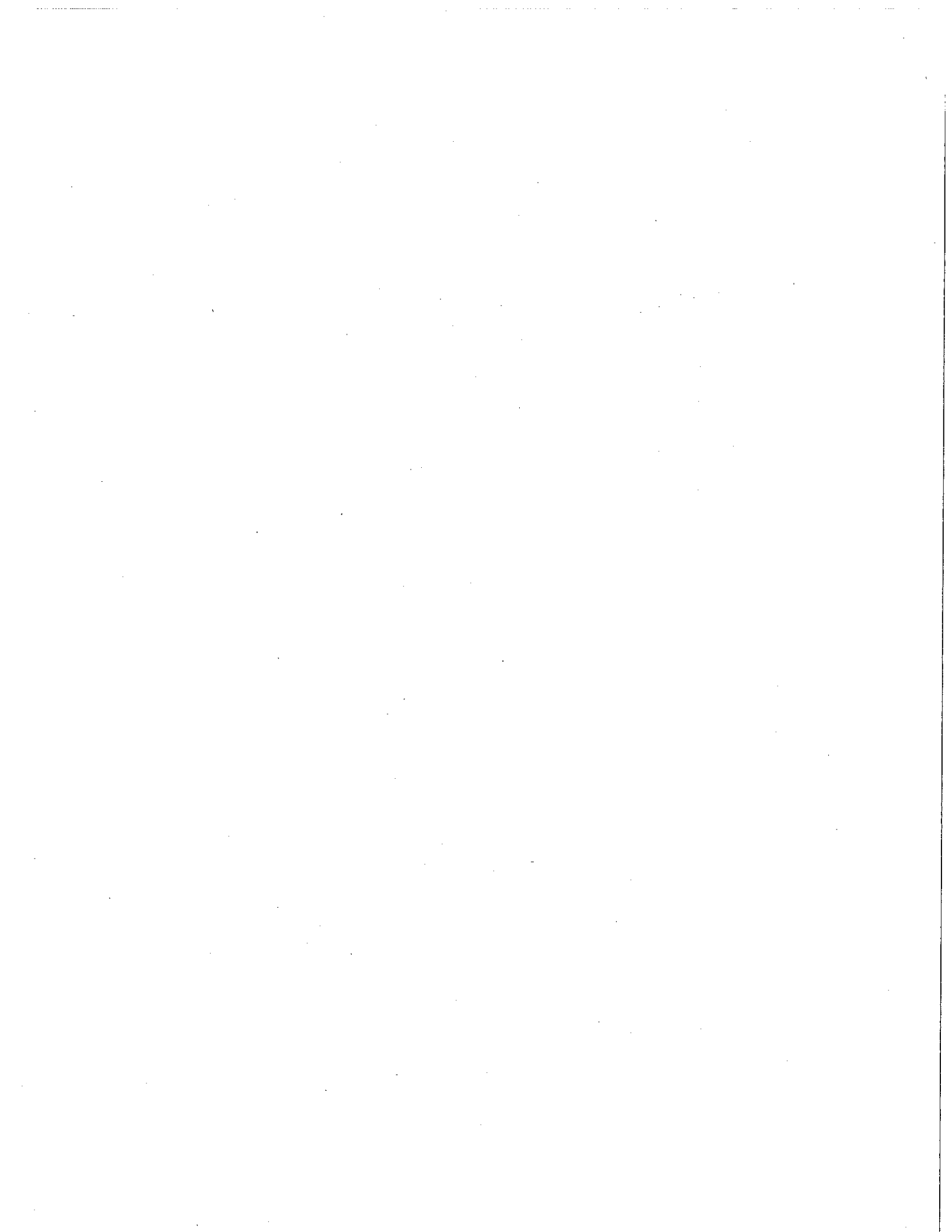
SUMMARY

Energy assistance and energy efficiency programs are necessary for low-income Connecticut residents. Accessing these resources is still difficult for many low-income households due to barriers such as age and infirmity, physical and mental disabilities, lack of transportation and language difficulties. The redundancy of the application processes, and the housing of these programs in both private and public agencies who do not share eligibility and other information create both confusion and barriers to low-income households trying to access these programs. In addition, the underfunding of the programs and the unsustained funding of programs further threaten households' access to these vital subsistence benefits.

The application process for the benefits needs to be simplified. This can be accomplished by the authorized sharing of household information with those entities providing the benefits and by consolidating applications.

The agencies administering EA and EE programs do need more information sharing and streamlining of procedures.



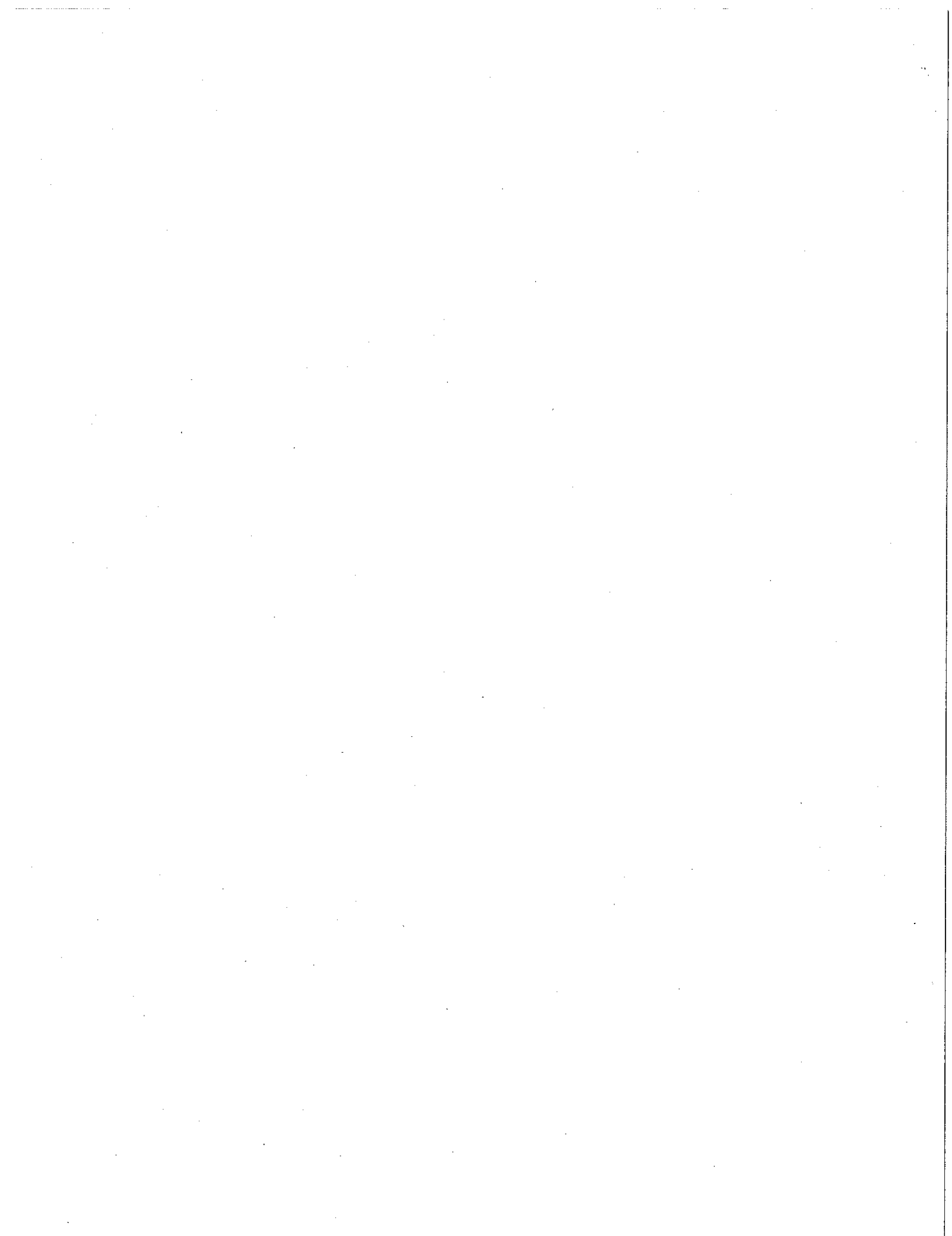


LIHEAP CASELOAD COMPARISON

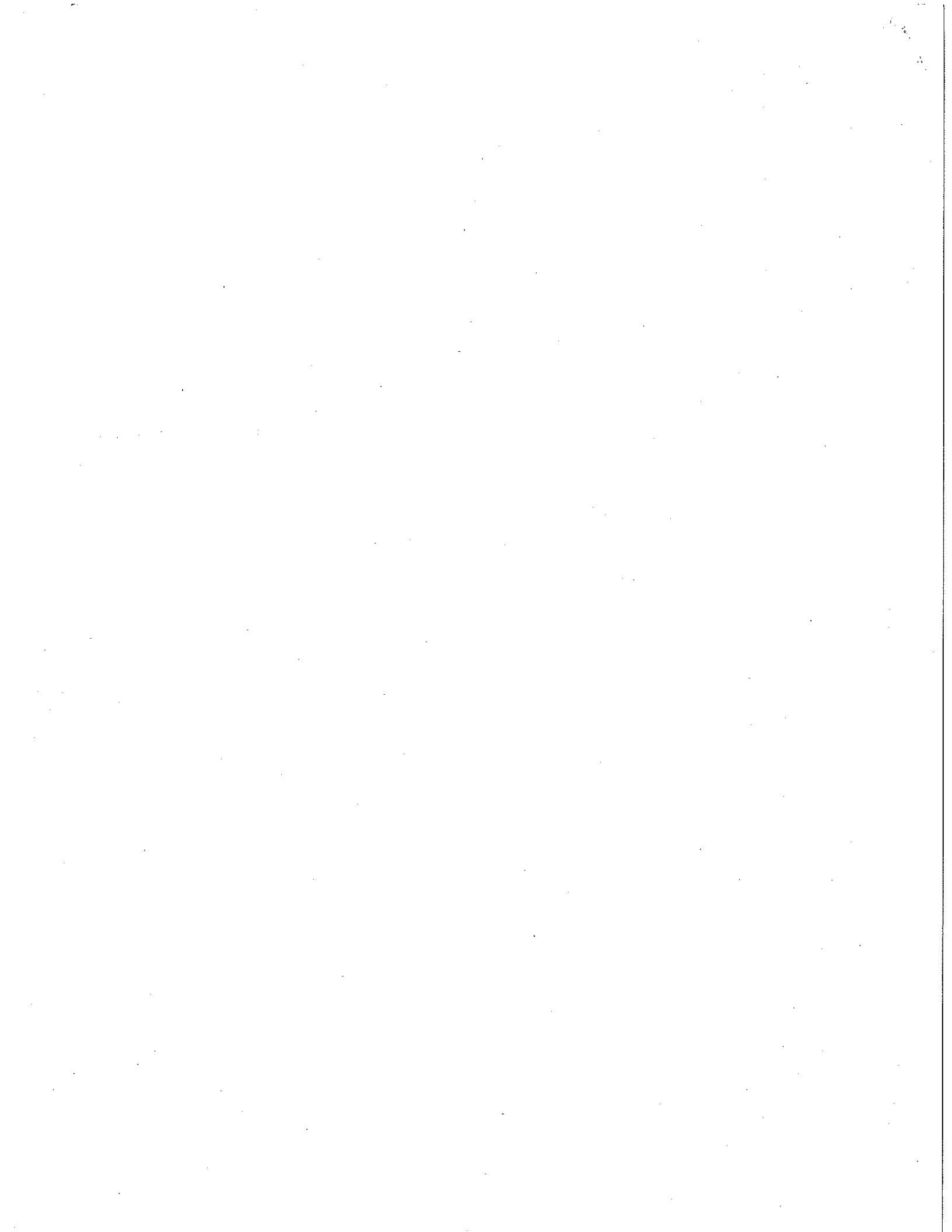
	<u>2015/2016</u> 11/4/2015	<u>2014/2015</u> 11/4/2014	<u>% Change</u> (FFY 2016 vs. FFY 2015)	<u>2014/2015</u> Final	<u>2013/2014</u> Final
ABCD (Bridgeport Area)	3,941	3,294	19.6%	10,850	11,465
ABCD (Norwalk/Stamford)	2,527	2,308	9.5%	5,312	5,014
BCO (Bristol)	1,229	1,114	10.3%	3,440	3,360
CAAWC (Danbury)	2,205	2,267	-2.7%	5,167	5,104
CRT (Hartford/Middletown)	8,733	9,624	-9.3%	28,301	29,584
TEAM (Derby)	1,869	1,773	5.4%	4,269	4,434
HRA (New Britain)	1,283	1,740	-26.3%	4,525	4,286
CAANH (New Haven)	4,608	3,809	21.0%	11,536	12,209
TVCCA (Norwich)	4,558	4,795	-4.9%	9,456	9,527
NO (Waterbury/Meriden)	8,254	9,122	-9.5%	22,899	23,370
ACCESS (Willimantic)	3,773	3,460	9.0%	7,809	8,217
Statewide	42,980	43,306	-0.8%	113,564	116,570

ELIGIBLE CASELOAD COMPARISON

	<u>2015/2016</u> 11/4/2015	<u>2014/2015</u> 11/4/2014	<u>% Change</u> (FFY 2016 vs. FFY 2015)	<u>2014/2015</u> Final	<u>2013/2014</u> Final
ABCD (Bridgeport Area)	2,721	2,031	34.0%	9,437	10,356
ABCD (Norwalk/Stamford)	2,020	1,783	13.3%	4,819	4,410
BCO (Bristol)	832	547	52.1%	2,837	2,846
CAAWC (Danbury)	1,523	1,511	0.8%	4,451	4,420
CRT (Hartford/Middletown)	6,214	6,121	1.5%	24,375	25,677
TEAM (Derby)	1,124	1,168	-3.8%	3,394	3,544
HRA (New Britain)	713	789	-9.6%	3,400	3,502
CAANH (New Haven)	2,088	2,083	0.2%	9,827	10,579
TVCCA (Norwich)	3,256	3,392	-4.0%	8,366	8,359
NO (Waterbury/Meriden)	6,754	6,692	0.9%	20,885	21,407
ACCESS (Willimantic)	3,311	2,812	17.7%	7,297	7,581
Statewide	30,556	28,929	5.6%	99,088	102,681







UTILITY MATCHING PAYMENT PROGRAM DATA - Monthly Enrollments

(to be completed and submitted monthly)

10/21

	Nov-15					Total	
	CL&P	UI	Electric	CNG	SCG		YGS
Totals							
# of customers "auto enrolled"	13,068		13,068			12,578	12578
# of customers "new"							0
TOTAL ENROLLED	13,068	0		0	0	12,578	12578
# of customers "below budget"							
New Enrollments							
Ture Account Balances							

UTILITY MATCHING PAYMENT PROGRAM DATA - Monthly Enrollments

(to be completed and submitted monthly)

Total
25,646