

LIEAB Minutes August 5, 2020

Member present: Wendy, Nora Benson, Eversource, Kate Quigley, 211 Chris Herb, CEMA, Deb Polun, Carlene Taylor, DSS, Mike Li, DEEP

Approval of the June minutes:

Carlene stated that 89,771 applications were taken 75,216 were approved. A decrease of 4.6 number of applications taken and 7.6 of approval. There was a small increase last year of 2 % and a big decrease this year likely due to the pandemic. Mail in applications began in March which she thinks resulted in the decrease of applications taken. She stated New Haven had a 1% increase and Team was the only CAA that continued to do face to face applications following proper guidance established by the CDC, had an increase of 8.5% in the number of applications taken and an increase in the number of households approved.

Heating system Repair Replacement Components

Carlene stated that the total expenditure is expected to be 1.7 million across the state. We had had allocated 1.5 million plus some funds from the previous year. You can see how that carries over with the recommendations for the FY21 program. 153 heating systems were approved 66 tank replacements and 9 repairs that were over \$ 750. We continue see instances where repairs were approved and then after there was a submittal to replace the system. We continue to emphasize that if the system is over a certain number of years old or obsolete, we recommend replacing them rather than repair it. Repairs that did not require DSS approval 215 for \$427,000 and the clean, tune and test we did less than 1500 statewide for \$345,000 and would like to see more of service provided.

Chris Herb, CEMA stated that CEMA could be of help with increasing service for the upcoming season.

Wendy asked if there is somewhere where it could be put in writing directly to the recipient of the SEP benefit? Either in the award letter or somewhere that they may be eligible for the clean too and test.

Carlene stated that Chris had mentioned that he would use his membership and in the past in his newsletter he has put information about the program. We communicate with agencies and it is her understanding that the agencies are inform people that use deliverable fuel that they can get a servicing of the heating system. If the person is a renter, they need to get landlord approval.

Wendy stated that she has had incidents where the client was sent to the CAA for the clean too and test and the agency stated that the service was not provided.

Chris Herb stated that if recipient contacts the vendor the vendor could play a role in getting the service done. Carlene followed up with situations like that the client should contact DSS.

CARES ACT

Carlene spoke about the CARES Act fund from HHS. She stated that a little over \$14,000,000 was received in funding and there is no 10% carry forward restriction. She stated that they could move all or most or some of those funds to the next program year but that they just need to be obligated by

September of 2021 and then spent by September 2022. Carlene stated that based on the discussion from the last LIEAB meeting the decision was made to provide a \$250 benefit to all households that were determined eligible for a basic benefit. \$10.5 million from the LIHEAP funds plus \$8 million from the CARES Act will be used to provide the \$250 benefit. She also discussed the allocation of admin funds. She distributed information regarding funding and expenditures for the year.

Mike Li DEEP asked if there were any funds going towards cooling for the summer as well if help was being offered for clean, tune and test for the cooling units. Carlene stated that the hope is that the \$250 benefit would assist with some cost and that clean, tune and test is mostly focused on the heating units. Chris Herb CEMA asked how the amount of \$250 was determined. Carlene stated that recommendations were solicited from LIEAB, Community Action Agencies and CAFCA. The total dollars allocated was looked at and the burdens that some recommendations would present to the administrations. Finally, the LIHEAP allocation plan has a section on that provided additional recommendations on how to use funds received.

LIHEAP ALLOCATION PLAN

Carlene updated that the basic benefits are being kept the same due to the possible increase in applications that could be received this year. No funds were allocated for the Low-Income weatherization program due to DEEP stating that they have sufficient funds to support the program. The start date for fuel delivery was changed to November 2nd because the 1st falls on a Sunday. The last day for delivery was extended to the end of March 2021.

Wendy stated that DEEP had asked for \$550,000 for the low-income weatherization program last year but then stated that they had sufficient funds and asked for clarification from anyone in DEEP.

Mike Li responded in agreement with Carlene's explanation and added that the DOE allowed DEEP to roll over the funds from the previous year to the current. This provided enough funds for the health and safety allocation program. Due to COVID19 CRT and NOI were not going to be able to spend all the money so DEEP did not need the extra funds from DSS this year.

Carlene continued with the update and stated that in the morning a meeting was held with the Energy Directors about the application process. Mail in applications are being sent out and customer can call their community action agency for assistance.

Wendy asked if customers who had no change in income due to their income coming from DSS could be fast tracked through the application process using the information from the application from the previous year.

Carlene replied that HHS requires income information for every year, but she could check if it would be possible.

Wendy highlighted that this year would be a difficult year and it would be helpful if the paperwork could be lightened.

Chris also displayed concern for the application process and asked if the federal government would allow participants that had a long-term history with the program to be "grandfathered" for the year.

Carlene stated that she would have to check on that.

Chris stated that he would take the applications and ask the deliverable vendors to distribute them to clients that they knew needed the assistance.

MPP

Wendy updated that in the last discussion it was discussed that they would give group providers information from Eversource and Avangrid that customers who are on the program have until October 31, 2020 to make up delinquent payments and asked if there are any updates from the utilities.

Nora added that in addition to making payments Eversource also has the 24-month COVID arrangement for customers not on the MPP or NUSTART program.

Wendy commented that the latest bill inserts described the COVID-19 payment program but that it did not mention the other arrearage programs.

Carlene added that a questions and concerns came up on how the \$250 benefit will be noted on energy bills?

Nora stated that those payments would show up as an energy payment and that in addition a note would be placed on the accounts that would tell customers what it is for.

Nora stated that the latest numbers sent out for Eversource reflect a decrease in participation which is being attributed to COVID-19.

PURA

Wendy updated on the ongoing PURA dockets. Docket 20-01-01 relates to the rate increase on the July Eversource bill. An investigation has been prompted by PURA and they would like input from the public. Docket 20-07-04 relates to arrearage forgiveness submitted to PURA by the electric distribution company. Docket 17-12-03RE01 relates to affordability. this docket has been going on for a long time and after four separate issues it is now looking at marketing perspective to low income clients.

Kim added that docket 20-07-04 the MPP docket the first round of written comments have been received and she encourages participation for the next round. For docket 17-12-03RE01 it is ongoing but a marketing firm has been secured to address the marketing concerns.

Wendy stated that clients are asking they are to pay the July bill with the rate increase or wait and see if the decrease appears in the August bill?

Kim replied that question should be asked in the docket but that clients are to pay their July bill.

Deb Polun added that the news reported that clients are to pay the July bill and an adjustment should be seen in the August bill.

Nora added that everyone is to pay their bill and that Eversource has agreed to work with PURA to temporarily suspend the rate increase by August 7. Clients should pay their bills but there has been no mandate for refunds for the July increase.

Wendy updated that residential termination moratorium is set to end on September 9 but PURA has issued an order that customers coded financial hardship they may get relief from termination between September 10 and October 31. This will cover them for the start of the winter moratorium for the new

heating season that starts on November 1st if they are still in financial hardship. Wendy asked the community action agency when they would be able to start helping code customers?

Carlene stated that part of the issue is when the utility companies will be able to start coding the households.

Wendy stated that is part of her second question. How can clients get coded and when do they get coded?

Nora stated that the new winter season moratorium starts November 1st. Customers that are currently coded hardship from the last heating season will continue hardship until the new winter season on November 1st. The PURA mandate refers to new clients that have not been coded hardship who need to apply for it if they are in financial hardship. Community action agencies can code hardship for new clients anytime in the agency portal and information has been sent to the agencies and clients on how they could be coded for hardship.

Wendy asked how the information was distributed.

Nora stated that an email was sent to the community action agencies and that customers were sent the information by mail.

Kate Quigley stated that she received the email and that staff has been educated to communicate the information with clients when they call since the concern is that some clients do not review the information being sent to them by mail.

Nora stated that the information had gone out on June 8th to the community action agencies for those that did not see it.

Wendy stated the next meeting is on October 7th and asked for a motion to adjourn. Deb Polun made the motion it was second by Kate Quigley.