



Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

# **2016-17**

# Vendor Guidelines

Updated October 2016

LIHEAP Vendor Guidelines provide information about the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), operated by Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS). For more information go to <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>.

**Key points for the 2016/17 LIHEAP program year:**

- LIHEAP Cash and Crisis components will begin on Tuesday, November 1, 2016, and are expected to end on Friday, March 31, 2017.
- The minimum Cash benefit for 2016/17 is \$200 and the maximum is \$1,000.
- A Supplemental Cash grant ranging from \$50 to \$175 will be issued this season to vulnerable households that include someone who is disabled, 5 or younger, or 60 or older. The size of the grant will depend on which vulnerable criteria the household meets. The supplemental grant will be issued as one separate payment but generally will be on the same voucher (remittance advice) as the household's Cash grant.
- Cash and Supplemental grants are considered to be available for resolving an emergency situation if those grants are processed before the date of a Crisis request. Any credit balance, as well as the LIHEAP Cash and Supplemental grants that have been authorized and not yet received, must be considered to be available to the vendor to resolve the emergency before a Crisis grant is used.

**Important Vendor Information:**

- LIHEAP Vendor Agreements are typically updated every two years and will be requested from all current LIHEAP vendors during the summer of 2017.
- A LIHEAP vendor must participate in both the Cash and Crisis components.
- For LIHEAP purposes, "Blended Fuel" is defined as a 50/50 mix of oil and kerosene. An additive mixed with heating oil does not meet the LIHEAP definition of "blended." Nor does a 70/30 mix of oil/kerosene.
- A vendor must agree to charge the lowest price for LIHEAP deliveries when it has a variable-pricing structure determined by factors such as when payment is received.
- Vendors must retain LIHEAP payment and delivery documents for at least four years.
- LIHEAP funds should NEVER be returned directly to a customer.
- Vendors must submit Crisis claims in PROMISE™ within 30 days of authorization to allow another Crisis to be authorized if necessary and to streamline payment
- **New in 2016/17** – vouchers will be posted in a PDF format to each vendor's log on page in PROMISE, the secure website vendors use to submit Crisis claims at <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us>. Vendor representatives will be able to access their RA a week before the Treasury pay date and can print the RA documents or save them to their computer or a flash drive.

### **The LIHEAP Cash Grant:**

Eligibility for a Cash grant is determined by a DHS county assistance office (CAO) representative based on type of heat, household size, heating region and annual income. Cash grants are sent to vendors on a weekly basis. Additionally,

- A household is eligible for only **one** Cash grant during the heating season.
- Current-year Cash and Supplemental grants cannot be used to pay for oil, blended fuel, propane, coal, kerosene or wood delivered before Oct. 1, 2016, which is the first day of the federal fiscal year and also the start of the 2016/17 heating season.
- Cash grants remaining from the 2015/16 LIHEAP season can be used until June 30, 2017. Cash grants from the current season (2016/17) can be used until June 30, 2018. See condition #12 of the LIHEAP Vendor Agreement for additional information about this time frame and about returning unused LIHEAP credits to DHS.

### **The LIHEAP Crisis grant**

Eligibility for a Crisis grant is based on the existence of an emergency in which the household is without heat or in danger of being without heat.

Households must meet one of the following criteria to be considered in Crisis:

- A household's main or secondary heating source (that's electricity if it's needed to operate the main heating source) has been shut off or faces termination.
- Fuel that is deliverable or picked up is completely depleted.
- Fuel that is deliverable or picked up is expected to be depleted WITHIN 15 DAYS.

Basic information about the Crisis grant:

- Households that are without heat or are in danger of losing heat may be eligible to receive a Crisis benefit from Nov. 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017.
- Every authorization is good for a **one-time-only** delivery or pickup of fuel.
- A vendor should **NOT** provide Crisis fuel to any customer until being contacted by a DHS representative. Fuel delivery or pickup must take place **after** the DHS representative contacts the vendor to authorize the fuel.
- A Crisis grant cannot be authorized to pay for fuel that already was provided to a customer.
- When a DHS representative contacts a vendor to authorize a Crisis delivery of fuel and refers to the customer's Cash or Supplemental grant, vendor representatives should make sure they haven't already used that money for a previous delivery.
- A Crisis authorization is not paid until data-enter is completed by the vendor on PROMISE at <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us> and documentation of the delivery or the termination/reconnection notice is submitted by online upload, fax or mail.

### **Crisis issuances:**

- The minimum Crisis benefit is typically \$25. The maximum Crisis grant will be \$500.
- A household could qualify for more than one Crisis authorization if the first Crisis situation is resolved for less than the \$500 season limit.
- The combined total of the household's Crisis grants cannot exceed \$500 during the LIHEAP season, which runs from Nov. 1, 2016, through March 31, 2017.

### **Crisis policy and procedures:**

Customers must make a request for Crisis consideration to their local CAO if they face a heating emergency caused by being without fuel or being in imminent danger of being without fuel (within 15 days of running out), or because of utility termination or threat of termination.

NOTE: Customers who are signed up for automatic delivery must make a request for a delivery to the CAO and the CAO must contact the vendor with a Crisis Authorization number before the automatic delivery is made.

When a Crisis request is received, the DHS/CAO representative will review the customer's case record and contact the vendor to determine the status of the Cash and Supplemental grants and see if sufficient credit already is available to resolve the customer's emergency.

**NOTE:** Condition 7 e) of the LIHEAP Vendor Agreement states that if a Cash grant was authorized before the day of the Crisis request, the Cash grant is considered to be available to resolve the emergency. If the LIHEAP Cash grant has not been approved at the time of the request for Crisis, the vendor may ask for a Crisis authorization to be initiated by the CAO to resolve the emergency, allowing the Cash grant to be placed as a credit on the customer's account.

The vendor must use the Cash and Supplemental grants first to resolve the customer's heating issue if they have not already been delivered or credited in full to the customer's account.

The DHS representative will talk with the vendor to determine if:

- The Cash and Supplemental grants (whether authorized or received) are enough to make a delivery or otherwise resolve the emergency.
  - If they are sufficient, vendors may advise the CAO that a Crisis grant is not needed.
  - If they are not enough to resolve the emergency, the credit balance must be used first and a Crisis grant can be authorized to cover the remaining amount needed to resolve the emergency (up to the season maximum of \$500).

NOTE: Only the portion of the delivery that was authorized with Crisis funds must be submitted and documented through PROMISE™.

- If the Cash/Supplemental grants have already been delivered or credited to a customer's account and no credit remains, the DHS representative will evaluate eligibility for Crisis.

### **Authorizing a Crisis delivery**

When considering a Crisis grant, the DHS representative will ask:

- a deliverable-fuel vendor whether the Cash and Supplemental grants have been used and will determine whether a previous Crisis delivery was authorized. If the customer is deemed eligible for Crisis, the DHS representative will ask a deliverable-fuel dealer to provide up to the season maximum. If a customer with automatic delivery will run out of fuel before the next scheduled delivery, they may be eligible for Crisis.

- a natural gas or electricity provider how much it would require to reconnect the utility service or suspend termination proceedings. The DHS representative may authorize no more than the season maximum of \$500.

**REMEMBER:** Every Crisis authorization is good for a ***one-time-only*** delivery or pickup of fuel. If a customer wants another Crisis delivery or pickup because the household has not reached the season limit, the customer must first contact the CAO. A DHS/CAO representative will then contact the vendor if a new Crisis delivery is approved.

**Timeframes and other compliance with DHS:**

1. When a DHS representative determines that a household is without heat, the representative will contact the vendor to request a delivery or have service reconnected within 48 hours. If the representative determines that someone's life is at risk, the deadline is 18 hours.
2. A household may contact DHS/CAO to request help with a Crisis delivery when they are within 15 days of being without heat. The DHS/CAO representative will contact the vendor and the vendor must be able to accommodate the request for a delivery/service restoration within the time frame requested by the DHS representative.
3. If the vendor is not able to make a delivery or restore service to the household without heat or before the household runs out of heat, the vendor must advise the DHS representative so that alternative measures can be taken. This could include authorizing the delivery to another vendor.
4. After contact from a DHS representative, the vendor must contact the customer to discuss and make arrangements for delivery/reconnection. This conversation could include making the customer aware of the vendor's emergency-delivery fees.
5. Fuel delivery must be in the amount agreed upon with the DHS representative unless the customer agrees to pay for the overage. The delivery may be for a lesser amount if the energy product doesn't fit into the customer's tank or storage space.
6. Vendors must save fuel-delivery documentation for four years regardless of whether it is a Crisis, Cash or Supplemental grant delivery.

**Submitting Crisis claims for payment using PROMISE™ :**

- Data entry is available in PROMISE™ at <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us> beginning November 2, 2016, and is accessible to LIHEAP vendors 24 hours a day.
- Only deliveries made with a Crisis authorization are data-entered in PROMISE™.
- LIHEAP vendors may view all Crisis authorizations, submit Crisis claims and review all of the Crisis claims submitted during the heating season.
- The LIHEAP PROMISE™ system was designed to use an MS Windows operating system with Internet Explorer. You will not be able to use PROMISE™ with an Apple product or with Google Chrome.

**IMPORTANT:** In addition to data entry in PROMISE™, vendors must submit proof of the Crisis delivery (shutoff notice, metered trip ticket, etc.) within 30 days using one of these methods:

- The preferred way to submit documentation is by scanning/uploading to PROMISE™.
- Fax to **717-207-7997 or 717-207-7994.**
- Mail to DHS – LIHEAP Crisis Documentation, PO Box 69028, Harrisburg, PA 17106.

**NOTE:** A Cover Sheet must be printed from PROMISE™ when submitting by mail or fax.

**Helpful hints for successful PROMISE™ submissions:**

- If a DHS representative says the customer is eligible for up to \$500 in Crisis but the vendor finds the customer can only use \$200 worth of fuel, the vendor should submit a claim in PROMISE™ for \$200, not for \$500. The vendor is prohibited from filing a \$500 claim and then keeping the extra Crisis dollars for a future delivery.
- Vendors should use just one trip ticket for a delivery rather than splitting it into multiple tickets to reflect multiple funding sources. The best way to handle that is to write the Cash and Supplemental grant amounts, for instance, on the trip ticket and then subtract those sums from the delivery amount. The difference is what is entered in PROMISE™.
- Never enter a Crisis claim for more than the maximum season Crisis grant of \$500. Entering a higher amount – even by just a penny (\$500.01) -- will delay payment.
- The customer's account number is displayed on the *Active Authorization* page and will automatically appear when the vendor uses the Express Option button when submitting claims. The vendor has the ability to change the account number if PROMISE™ shows one that is incorrect.
- The LIHEAP Vendor Unit Helpline, **1-877-537-9517**, can retract *Active* Crisis authorizations when notified by the vendor that no delivery will be made or, in the case of a utility, no shutoff notice issued. This function removes the authorization from the vendor's *Active* authorization page(s) in PROMISE™.
- Crisis authorizations should be available to view in PROMISE™ the day after a DHS representative calls the vendor to request delivery. An overnight batch process prevents vendors from submitting a claim in PROMISE™ on the same day it is authorized.
- Vendors should call the Vendor Helpline (877-537-9517) for assistance when they are unable to print the *LIHEAP Cover Sheet* with the specific numbers pertaining to the authorization. Vendors should NOT hand-write the numbers on the cover sheet, as PROMISE™ will not accept those submissions.
- Vendors must click on the "Submit" button on the *Claim Submission Page* where the fuel type and delivery date are entered in PROMISE™. Failure to click on "Submit" means the claim has not been made even if the vendor faxes or mails in the documentation.
- See the PowerPoint on the vendor website that explains Crisis data entry in more detail.

### **LIHEAP Payments:**

- All payment activity for the LIHEAP Crisis program is centralized in Harrisburg.
- LIHEAP vendors are **NOT** paid with an individual check for each customer.
- Weekly payments include all of the Cash and Supplemental grants that were approved during a designated week and also the Crisis grants that were finalized by vendor data entry and submission of documentation.
- LIHEAP payments typically are received on Wednesdays and are sent by mail or direct-deposit each week by the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury.
- **Direct Deposit/Electronic Funds Transfer** is an option for vendors, who are encouraged to sign up for direct deposit into a bank or financial institution of their choice. EFT eliminates mail time and prevents loss.
  - The EFT form can be downloaded at <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>.
  - Complete and send with a copy of a voided check by email to [RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov](mailto:RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov) or fax to (717) 231-5516.

### **Remittance Advice/Vouchers:**

- Remittance Advice documents also are referred to as RA's or vouchers.
- Vouchers are sent on a weekly basis to LIHEAP vendors who will receive a LIHEAP payment in the following few days. The RA lists the names, account numbers and addresses of customers associated with the LIHEAP Cash, Supplemental and Crisis grant payments.
- **New in 2016/17** – vouchers will be posted in a PDF format to each vendor's log on page in PROMISE, the secure website vendors use to submit Crisis claims at <http://LIHEAP.dpw.state.pa.us>. Vendor representatives will be able to access their RA a week before the Treasury pay date and can print the RA documents or save them to their computer or a flash drive.
- In addition to receiving vouchers on PROMISE, vendors continue to have the option to receive weekly RA's by U.S. mail or via the SeGOV (MOVEit) secure website. Vendors must have a static IP address to use SeGov. If interested, call the LIHEAP Vendor Unit at (877) 537-9517 and be prepared to share your IP Address and the name of a designated staff person who will be given a password to access SeGOV.
- Vendors are expected to apply the LIHEAP payment to the individual customer accounts and ensure that credit and/or deliveries are made.
- **Important:** Record the voucher number and individual number associated with each customer listed on the RA, as these numbers are needed if/when LIHEAP funds are returned to DHS. The Individual Number or "INDIV" is found on the right side of the RA.

### **Returning funds to DHS:**

**LIHEAP funds never should be sent to a customer.** On occasion, a LIHEAP vendor may receive funds that will need to be returned to DHS. Some examples are:

- Customer moves to a location the vendor does not serve.
- Customer dies.
- Customer requests a vendor change.
- DHS representative sends LIHEAP funds to the wrong vendor.
- Vendor terminates participation in LIHEAP and customers have LIHEAP credit.
- Extended time frame for delivery of fuel/utility ends (see Condition 12 of the LIHEAP Vendor Agreement). **A LIHEAP Cash grant must be used by June 30 of the year following the LIHEAP season for which the payment was made.**

Vendors who need to return LIHEAP funds for any of these reasons must return the money to DHS accompanied by a *LIHEAP Refund Form*. Dunning letters may also be sent by DHS to advise vendors to return funds. These letters identify the customer and the dollar amount that needs to be returned. The *LIHEAP Refund Form* and a check made payable to *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* should be submitted to the address printed on the form, which may be found at <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>.

**NOTE:** Vendors have the option to request **Expedited Recoupment** for all refund payments or only for specific circumstances. Expedited Recoupment allows the refund to be subtracted from the vendor's next payment and eliminates the need to submit a paper check. A form to request Expedited Recoupment is found on the LIHEAP Vendor Website.

### **LIHEAP Vendor Helpline Contact Information:**

The LIHEAP Vendor Unit answers questions and provides assistance with PROMISe™.

- Toll-free LIHEAP Vendor Helpline: **(877) 537-9517 Mon-Fri from 8:00 to 4:00**
- Address: **LIHEAP Vendor Unit, PO Box 2675 (WOB-224), Harrisburg, PA 17105**
- E-mail address: [RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov](mailto:RA-LIHEAPVendors@pa.gov)
- Fax: **717-231-5516**
- Vendor website:

<http://www.dhs.pa.gov/provider/informationforliheapvendors/index.htm>

### **Assistance provided by LIHEAP Vendor Helpline representatives:**

- Verify Crisis authorizations.
- Provide information and assistance on PROMISe™.
- Help vendors resolve LIHEAP Cash and Crisis payment issues.
- Answer all vendor policy and procedure questions.
- Help vendors with electronic remittance advice (vouchers).
- Enroll vendors in direct deposit for their LIHEAP payments.
- Provide information regarding refunds and reissuance of payments.
- Enroll and disenroll companies as vendors.
- Update vendor information, including LIHEAP vendor agreements.