



Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Program Guidance & Procedure

1. Purpose The purpose of this policy is to outline the guidelines and procedures for administering the LIHEAP program, which provides financial assistance to eligible low-income households for their home energy bills.

2. Eligibility Criteria

- Household gross annual income must be at or below 60% State Median Income (SMI).
- Applicants must be an enrolled Samish Indian Nation citizen.
- Must live in 10 county service area. (Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan, Snohomish, King, Kitsap, Clallam, Jefferson or Pierce)
- Priority may be given to households with vulnerable members (e.g., elderly, disabled, families with young children).
- Crisis assistance may be available for households facing heating or cooling emergencies.

3. Application Process

- Applicants must complete and submit an application form along with required documentation: Income, Birth Certificates, Disability Verification, Current Lease Agreement / Proof of Home Ownership.
 - **INCOME:**
 - Last 2 Months of Current Income
 - **Pay Stubs:** Last two months of paystubs. If an applicant or household member receives income from multiple sources, pay stubs from each source will be required.
 - **Wage Statements:** If an applicant or household member is self-employed or receives income from sources other than traditional employment, such as freelance work or rental income, they may need to provide wage statements, profit and loss statements, or tax returns.

- **Social Security Benefits Statement:** Documentation of current Social Security benefits, including retirement benefits, disability benefits, survivor benefits, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- **Unemployment Benefits Statement:** If applicable, documentation of unemployment benefits received, such as an unemployment benefits statement or notice of award.
- **Pension or Retirement Income:** Documentation of pension payments, retirement account distributions, or other retirement income sources.
- **Child Support or Alimony Payments:** Documentation of child support or alimony payments received.
- **Other Income Sources:** Any other sources of income, such as interest or dividends from investments, rental income, or veterans' benefits, may require documentation to verify income.

- **BIRTH CERTIFICATES:**
 - Birth Certificates will be required for children under the age of 5.
 - This documentation will be required to be eligible to receive the additional benefit.
- **DISABILITY VERIFICATION:**
 - Acceptable documentation includes doctor's note, medical records, or a disability determination letter from the Social Security Administration (SSA) if applicable.
 - This documentation will be required to be eligible to receive the additional disability benefit.
- **CURRENT LEASE AGREEMENT / PROOF OF HOMEOWNERSHIP:**
 - The lease agreement or proof of home ownership serves as a verification that the applicant resides at the address listed on the application. This is to ensure that the assistance goes to individuals who are responsible for paying their home energy costs.
 - Current Lease Agreement:

- The lease agreement must be signed by both the tenant and landlord. The person who is applying for assistance must be listed on the lease as a tenant or occupant.
- Proof of Homeownership:
 - Most recent mortgage statement or person listed on application is listed as property owner on county assessor's page.
- Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, contingent upon available funding.
- Emergency applications will be processed expediently.

4. Benefit Calculation

- Benefit amounts will be determined based on household size, income, and energy costs.
- Benefits will be applied to the household's energy bill or as a direct payment to the energy vendor. Benefits CANNOT be paid directly to the program participant.
- Benefit amounts can be re-calculated at any time contingent on available funding. Benefit maximums are determined each fiscal year and are subject to change.

5. Heating & Cooling Benefits

- Heating and Cooling maximum benefit amounts are determined each fiscal year per the eligibility matrix approved by Tribal Council.
 - Heating Benefit: October 1st – March 31st
 - Cooling Benefit: April 1st – September 30th
- Program participants are eligible to send in one current utility provider bill each month until the maximum benefit amount has been reached. Participants will be notified when they are within \$250.00 of reaching their maximum benefit amount and upon reaching their max benefit.
- If a participant has completed their LIHEAP application, they must send in their bill every month within a timely manner. Past due bills will not be processed and not eligible for crisis assistance.

6. Crisis Assistance

Funds are reserved every fiscal year for an energy crisis intervention program. This must be a reasonable amount, based on data from prior years, and is reserved until March 15th by the tribe for energy crisis intervention. Crisis assistance can also be provided for cooling emergencies during sizzling summer months.

***November 15th – March 15th:** Washington state law regarding past due bills and shut offs for public utility providers. **RCW 54.16.285** “**Limitations on termination of utility service for residential heating and of electric or water utility service during heat-related alerts.**” *

Definition of a Crisis: The statute at Section 2603(2) defines an “energy crisis” to mean”

“weather-related and supply shortage emergencies and other household energy-related emergencies.”

Crisis Benefits:

Must be able to be provided within 48 hours or 18 hours if determined the crisis is life-threatening.

- Delivery of Fuel
- Repair or Replacement of Furnace, Heater, Stovepipe, Chimney, or other equipment.
- Purchase of loan of space heaters, oil tanks, blankets, sleeping bags, or warm clothing.
- Emergency lodging relating to loss of household heat during night hours. (8:00PM to 8:00AM)
- Prevention of Shutoffs
- Payment of Reconnection Charges
- Purchase or loan of air conditioners or fans
- Assistance with vendors, budget counseling, and case management.

- In the case of multiple participants in crisis and limited funding, priority will be given to the most vulnerable populations (Elderly, Disabled, Families with Children Under 5 Years Old).
- If a household receives a shut-off notice and they are eligible for the LIHEAP program, they will not be eligible to use crisis assistance if they were to receive another shut-off notice.

7. Weatherization Benefits

- LIHEAP permits tribes to use up to 15% of the LIHEAP funds allotted to the tribe or 15% of the LIHEAP funds available to the tribe for each fiscal year, whichever is greater, for low-cost residential weatherization or other energy related home repairs for low-income households.

- “Funds Allotted” is interpreted to be the amount of the LIHEAP allocation given.
- “Funds Available” is interpreted to be the amount of the LIHEAP allocation plus funds carried over from the prior year.

Eligible Weatherization Services:

*Max benefit amount per household is determined each fiscal year per the eligibility matrix approved by Tribal Council.

- Caulking
- Weatherstripping
- Insulation
- Storm Windows
- Heating System Repairs or Replacement
- Conservation Education
- Easy Do-It-Yourself Weatherization Kits.

8. Outreach and Education

- Essential Services will conduct outreach activities to inform eligible households about the program and how to apply.
- Educational materials will be provided to help households understand energy conservation and weatherization options.

9. Reporting and Accountability

- Essential Services will maintain accurate records of program activities, including application processing, benefit distribution, and program outcomes.
- Regular reports will be submitted to Essential Services Senior Director and ACF quarterly or as required.

10. Program Evaluation

- Performance & Quality Improvement Specialist will conduct periodic evaluations to assess program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.
- Feedback from program participants will be considered.

11. Compliance and Oversight

- Samish Indian Nation Essential Services Department will adhere to all applicable federal and state regulations governing the administration of LIHEAP programs.
- Compliance with program guidelines will be monitored through regular audits and reviews.

12. Amendments and Revisions

- These guidelines may be amended or revised as needed to reflect changes in program requirements, funding, or best practices.
- Proposed amendments will be reviewed and approved by Performance and Quality Improvement Specialist and Essential Services Senior Director.