DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Milwaukee County

Milwaukee County DHHS Energy Assistance Program 2016

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is Energy Assistance Available for the 2016 Year?
A: Yes. Energy Assistance is available. The County is contractually required to provide services to eligible residents through the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP).

Q: Why does the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) want Energy Assistance to move away from the Social Development Commission this year?
A: This decision was made through a bidding process that the Department of Health and Human Services is required to use. The final decision was made by two independent, diverse panels of experts, not DHHS. At the direction of the Milwaukee County Department of Audit, and as required by federal regulation, DHHS was directed to open the process up for proposals. This procurement process requires an independent panel of diverse experts to review proposals and recommend a provider. It is designed to remove politics and exclude elected officials from the decision. In 2007 and 2010, SDC was one of the providers awarded a contract through this process. Community Advocates has also been a long-time partner. In 2015, via this same process, two separate panels reviewed proposals from four agencies. Each time, the panel recommended the contract be awarded to UMOS and Community Advocates.

Q: Was there really a big difference between the proposals submitted by the Social Development Commission, Community Advocates and UMOS?
A: According to the independent panels, the answer is yes. The proposals from UMOS and Community Advocates emphasize a high degree of customer service, especially for the County's most vulnerable residents. Under the Social Development Commission proposal, eligible residents must go to one of three sites to register for energy assistance, even the elderly, frail and disabled. In the past, this has required them to wait in long lines, with no guarantee they would even get an appointment. The UMOS and Community Advocates proposals emphasize phone applications for our vulnerable elderly and disabled during the early application period and additional options to all households during regular application period including: several mobile application sites with community partners throughout the county during peak seasons; home visits for the elderly and disabled; flexible walk-in and appointment schedules; opportunities to make appointments online, walk-in or apply over-the-phone; four permanent sites and more than 100 seasonal and satellite sites to reach eligible residents in places convenient for them; recruiting staff who speak multiple languages; and data collection on customer service metrics including wait times that help the County improve its service.

Q: Why did Director Colon find it necessary to move to an emergency contract?
A: The Department of Health and Human Services is contractually required by the state to provide services for WHEAP without interruption. The state requires a 12-month plan. The board's amendment of the DHHS resolution, recommends extending the current contract for six months. This does not allow DHHS to be in compliance with the state's policy. Residents on the "fixed income list" begin their applications in August. The board will not meet again before we need to start services.

Q: When will this emergency be resolved?
A: Issuing the contracts with Community Advocates and UMOS resolves the emergency. We are accepting early applications on Aug. 24. Appointments for the 2015-16 season will begin Oct. 1. Our vulnerable county residents will be contacted by Milwaukee County with information on how and when to apply.

Facts about Milwaukee County DHHS Energy Assistance

What is Energy Assistance?
The Energy Assistance Program provides qualified Milwaukee County residents with a one-time annual payment to make energy (heating and electric) bills more affordable.

Who is eligible to apply?
Milwaukee County households with a utility burden and are under 60% of the State Median income may be eligible for the Energy Assistance Program.

When is the application period?
If eligible, you can apply between Oct. 1, 2015 – May 15, 2016.

Where and how can I apply?
We have great news this year. Now, you can set up an an appointment to met your schedule. You can do this a number of ways.

- By phone: 414-270-4-MKE (414-270-4653)
- Online: Schedule an appointment at www.ca-apps.org/MilwaukeeHeat
- In person: Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday 8 a.m. – noon
    - **North** - 4906 W Fond du Lac Avenue (Fond du lac and Capitol)
    - **Downtown** - 728 N James Lovell Street (7th and Wisconsin)
    - **South** – 2701 S Chase Ave (between Lincoln and Oklahoma)

What information do I need to present when I apply?

- Photo ID (recommended; mandatory for 1st time applicants)
- Social Security numbers and dates of birth for each household occupant
- Current gas, electric or oil energy bill (or lease/letter from your landlord if heat is included in your rent)
- Proof of all income sources for the entire household's gross income for the 3 months prior to application (child support, wages, pension, unemployment, etc.) Seasonal employees will require the prior year's entire tax package.

ABOUT OUR NEW PROVIDERS

DHHS is excited to announce Community Advocates and UMOS as our 2015-16 service providers! We know you'll appreciate our shared goal of providing you the best in customer service so you can get the assistance you need.

**Please note, sites operated by SDC are only accepting crisis applications for 2014-15 through Sept.30. Then all services will be provided through our new vendors – Community Advocates and UMOS beginning for our early application period on Aug. 24. Be assured, there will be no lapse in service during this transition.*

WHAT ELSE IS NEW THIS YEAR?

More application options – DHHS has added options for you to avoid the lines and apply by giving us a **call** or going **online** to schedule an appointment to apply over the phone. We've also added new sites for those who want to apply in person (see above for where to apply). *We also offer home visits for elderly or disabled participants. More info: 414-270-4-MKE (414-270-4653)*

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 150,000 households may be eligible for Energy Assistance – we want YOU to get the service that you deserve. Apply today!

APPLYING IS EASY!

1) Contact us to schedule an appointment or visit one of our locations
2) We will process your application
3) Enjoy the energy assistance program

Thank you to our Energy Assistant Partners!

UMOS
Building Better Futures

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES
Where Meeting Basic Needs Inspires Hope

homeenergy+

IMPACT
Changing Lives. For Good.