

Energy Assistance Program Overview

September 2021

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COVID Emergency Rental Assistance

www.Michigan.gov/cera

Kelly Rose, Chief Housing Solutions Officer



Tenant Eligibility

- CERA tenants can be up to 80% AMI
- Households must have experienced a hardship during COVID
 - Unemployment
 - Decreased Income
 - Increased Expenses
 - Other Financial Hardship
- Be at risk of homelessness or housing instability
 - Past-due rent or utility notice/statement

Rental Assistance Benefit

- Up to 50% AMI—up to 12 months of rental assistance
 - Included within the 12 months, 3-months can be future rent assistance
- 50-80% AMI—up to 10 months of rental assistance
 - Included within the 10 months, 3-months can be future rent assistance
- Tenants may apply for an additional 3-months of rental assistance if necessary for housing stability
 - Income must be reassessed
- Rent is limited to 150% of FMR
- Up to \$400 of late fees and \$150 of court costs

Internet Assistance Benefit

- Tenants may receive an Internet stipend if they request it and provide a recent internet statement/bill
- Internet Stipend will be \$300 (\$50/month for six months)
- Payment will be made directly to the tenant

Utility Assistance Benefit

- CERA can pay for electricity, any type of home heating, water, sewer and trash
 - Trash will only be paid if it is paid along with water or sewer
 - An additional \$500 may be paid for households under 50% AMI if needed to fully pay all utility arrearages.

Household Size	Maximum Total One Time Utility Payment (Includes Future Payment)	Maximum Future Utility Payment as a Credit
1-2 persons	\$1,500	\$300
3-4 persons	\$2,000	\$500
5+ persons	\$2,500	\$500

Assistance for non-lease holders

- CERA can assist those that are not current lease holders
 - Hotel stay when needed to safely house family
 - Application Fees
 - Security Deposit
 - 3-months of Rental Assistance
 - \$300 or \$500 towards future utility assistance

CERA Partnerships to Avoid Evictions

- CERA has funding provided to Legal Aid organizations so that tenants can get free legal services during an eviction case
 - Go to www.michiganlegalhelp.org to get connected to an office near you
- The State Court Administrative Office has issued admin order 2020-17 that provides for:
 - Automatic 30-day stay in court proceedings when the tenant has applied for CERA
 - Another 15-day period for payment to be made

Application Process

- Online application portal
 - www.michigan.gov/cera
 - Either tenant or landlord can initiate the application
 - Paper application process will still be available
- Imminent eviction cases will be prioritized for processing
- Public dashboard will launch later this month
- As of 9/13, over \$209 million in financial assistance has been approved for about 32,100 households



LIHEAP Update

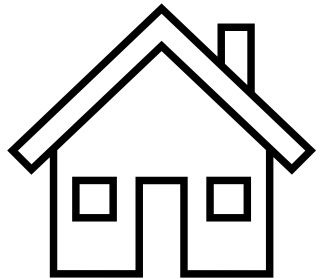
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Topics

- Supplemental LIHEAP Funding
- Home Heating Credit
- State Emergency Relief Application Process





Supplemental LIHEAP

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

- MI FY2020 allocation - \$35,130,421.00
- Funding has been fully utilized

American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act

- MI FY2021 allocation - \$238,219,248
- Funding has not been appropriated by the legislature yet
- Expected to be used to expand existing LIHEAP programs



Home Heating Credit (HHC)

HHC is Michigan's preventative LIHEAP benefit and is administered by the Department of Treasury. Applications are accepted from the time tax forms become available through September 30 each year.

Eligibility Criteria:

- ✓ Income
- ✓ Number of Exemptions
- ✓ Household Heating Costs

Income Eligibility = 110% FPL

Application form is the MI-1040CR-7

[2020 MICHIGAN Home Heating Credit Claim MI-1040CR-7](#)

Treasury issued supplemental payments to 178,666 HHC claimants who applied this year. 116,559 vulnerable households received a \$200 supplement and 62,107 received an additional \$100 payment.

A vulnerable household is defined as having at least one member who is:

- Age 60 and above;
- Disabled; or
- A child, age 5 or younger



State Emergency Relief (SER) Application Process

Fiscal Year 2019 - changes were made to better coordinate the SER and MEAP programs and to more efficiently serve households. Effective 10/1/2018, households facing energy emergencies must apply for SER in order to receive additional assistance and services through MEAP.

Applicants can apply by completing one of the following:

- MDHHS-1171 (and MDHHS-1171-SER supplement)
- DHS 1514 **or**
- MDHHS online application found at [MI Bridges \(michigan.gov\)](http://MI Bridges (michigan.gov))

Currently there are over 4,500 Community Partners registered to assist Michigan residence with the MDHHS online portal, including representatives from each MEAP grantee. MEAP grantees are registered as MI Bridges Navigators and are able to assist residents with the application process, verification/document upload and provide referral assistance, in addition to working with the household to develop a self-sufficiency plan for assistance through MEAP.

MEAP 101

Customer Assistance Division
Michigan Public Service Commission

September 2021



Agenda

- MEAP foundation and history
- Program details
 - How MEAP is distributed
 - Energy assistance services provided
- Questions

Appendix:

- Funding chart
- MEAP Goals



MEAP Foundation

Public Act 615 of 2012 (March 28, 2013)

- Created the Michigan Energy Assistance Act that requires the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to establish and administer the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP).
- The purpose of the MEAP is to establish and administer programs statewide that provide energy assistance and self-sufficiency services to eligible low-income households.
 - Michigan Public Service Commission(MPSC)-MEAP Section performs administrative duties through an Inter-Agency Agreement with MDHHS.

Senate Bill 451(August 20, 2019)

- Extends the Michigan Energy Assistance Act that established the MEAP until Sept. 30, 2023.

*Low-income is defined as a household at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines which for FY19 was roughly \$25,000 of annual income for a household of four



Continued: MEAP Foundation

Public Act 95 of 2013 (July 1, 2013)

- Created the Low-Income Energy Assistance Fund (LIEAF), charging MDHHS with expending money from the fund as provided by the Michigan Energy Assistance Act.
- The Act allows the MPSC to annually approve a low-income energy assistance funding factor, not to exceed \$50,000,000, to support the LIEAF.
 - On July 27, 2021, in Case No. U-17377, the MPSC adopted a funding factor of 87 cents per meter per month for all Michigan electric utilities that have opted to participate in the funding of the LIEAF, effective for the September 2021 billing month.
 - Electric cooperatives, municipal electric utilities, & investor-owned electric utilities are able to participate in funding LIEAF.
 - Electric utilities that opt-out of collecting the funding factor may not shut off service to any residential customer from November 1 to April 15 for nonpayment of a delinquent account.



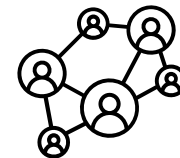
How MEAP is Distributed

- Two-year grant cycle
- FY 2020-21 and FY2022-23 grants awarded to:
 - Barry County United Way, MDHHS Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity, St. Vincent de Paul, Superior Watershed Partnership, The Heat & Warmth Fund (THAW), The Salvation Army, TrueNorth, United Way of Jackson County, United Way for SE Michigan
- Customers must have received State Emergency Relief (SER)
 - Be 150% of FPL or below, past-due on utility bill or 25% remaining in propane tank
- Customers can select to be referred to MEAP through their MDHHS SER application
 - Other ways to get connected to a MEAP grantee is through their utility, by contacting 2-1-1, or by directly contacting a MEAP agency



Energy Assistance Services

- Direct assistance payments – focused on household need
 - “One-time” assistance
 - Affordable payment plan (APP) enrollment; ongoing assistance in a 24-month program that incorporates arrearage reduction and provides a subsidy for the customer’s monthly utility bill
 - Currently offered by Consumers Energy, DTE, SEMCO, UPPCO, Great Lakes Energy
- Assurance 16
 - Covers expenses directly related to the delivery of energy assistance self-sufficiency activities
 - Allowable activities include:
 - Needs assessment and referral
 - Vendor advocacy
 - Energy education and financial counseling
 - Short or long-term case management



MEAP Goals

- Steward tax and rate payer dollars
- Provide compassionate service
- Increase ease of access
- Coordinate various energy assistance programs and prioritize to most vulnerable populations
- Develop creative methods for targeting underserved or special population households (e.g. low/fixed income, higher than average energy usage, non-metered fuel use)
- Achieve targeted, population-specific metrics of energy security