

Developing, Utilizing & Maintaining Your Benefit Matrix

Division of Energy Assistance (DEA)

Office of Community Services (OCS)

Administration for Children & Families (ACF)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Agenda

Part 1 - Introduction:

- Legal Authority - Overview of LIHEAP Assurances 5 & 2
- Required Factors
- Benefit Matrix as a Tool
- Benefit Matrix Policy and Procedure

Part 2 - Methodology:

Samples from Field

- Miami Tribe of Oklahoma
- Redding Rancheria

Part 3 - Group Exercise Activity:

- Develop a benefit matrix per table scenario
- Table group report out
- Questions and Answers

Resources & Wrap Up

Objectives

- Optional and required Benefit Matrix Factors will be explained.
- Typical areas for changing conditions and circumstances requiring a minimum annual analysis will be discussed.
- Usefulness of a grantee benefit matrix as a tool in program implementation will be covered.



LIHEAP Assurance 5

*By agreeing to LIHEAP Assurance 5, the grantee will provide, in a timely manner, the highest level of assistance will be furnished to those households which have **the lowest incomes** and **the highest energy costs or needs in relation to income**, taking into account **family size**, except that the State may not differentiate in implementing this section between the households described in clauses 2(A) and 2(B) of this subsection.*

42 U.S.C. 8623; Section 2605



LIHEAP Assurance 2



2(A) make payments under this title only with respect to-(A) households in which one or more individuals are receiving--

(i) assistance under the State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act;

(ii) supplemental security income payments under title XVI of the Social Security Act;

(iii) food stamps under the Food Stamp Act of 1977; or

(iv) payments under section 415, 521, 541, or 542 of title 38, United States Code, or under section 306 of the Veterans' and Survivors' Pension Improvement Act of 1978; or

2(B) households with incomes which do not exceed the greater of-

(i) an amount equal to 150 percent of the poverty level for such State; or

(ii) an amount equal to 60 percent of the State median income;

except that a State may not exclude a household from eligibility in a fiscal year solely on the basis of household income if such income is less than 110 percent of the poverty level for such State, but the State may give priority to those households with the highest home energy costs or needs in relation to household income.

Part I: Considerations for Developing Your Benefit Matrix

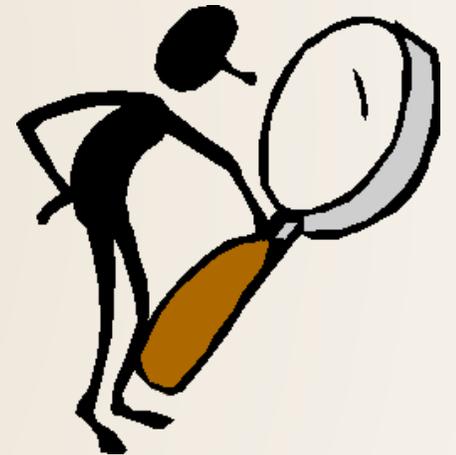
- ❖ LIHEAP Allocation
- ❖ Community Need - Current conditions & trends
- ❖ Three minimum required factors – Income, Household Size, & Energy Need or Energy Burden
- ❖ Other Sources of Information



LIHEAP Allocation

The First step is to Consider your Allocation Amount

- ✓ Number of households
- ✓ Which types of fuel are used in your service area?
- ✓ Special energy needs households may have, i.e. vulnerable populations
- ✓ Ensure enough funding is allocated to last throughout a LIHEAP program year.



What is your community need?

Current Conditions & Trends

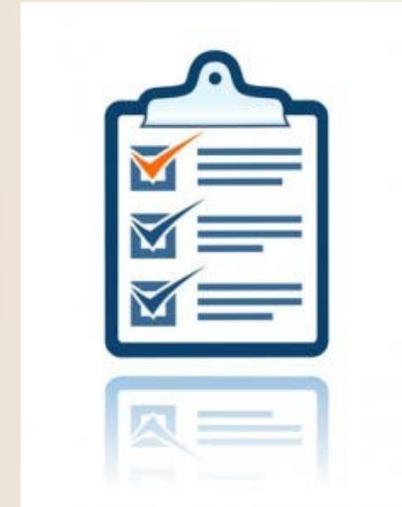
Benefits may and should be varied based on the needs of your community.



How do you assess current community need?

Three minimum required factors for LIHEAP

1. **Income**
2. **Family Size**
3. **Energy Need or Energy Burden**



1. Income

There is no federal definition of income; as a result, states and tribes may develop their own definitions of income, as well as develop their own timeframes for counting income. In defining and counting income, the following four factors are taken into account:

1. Countable (base) income, including but not limited to, wages, salaries and tips; or means-tested benefits such as SSI, Social Security and veteran's benefits
2. Non-countable or excluded income, including but not limited to, the value of SNAP benefits or benefits from certain other federal programs, or cash income over which the household has no control.
3. Income deductions (what will be subtracted from income), such as medical expenses
4. Time period to be used for counting income



2. Family Size

Defining Household - Section 2603(5) of the LIHEAP Act (42 U.S.C. §8622(5)) defines “household” as: “any individual or group of individuals who are living together as one economic unit for whom residential energy is customarily purchased in common or who make undesignated payments for energy in the form of rent.”

The number of members living in a household is a required factor for LIHEAP.



3. Energy Need

- Fuel types generally differ in type and relative cost.
- Vulnerable populations. i.e. elderly, disabled, children under six years of age.
- Location of homes
- Weather considerations
- Type of housing
- Size of the home



3. Energy Burden

Energy burden is the relative cost of income spent on energy needs. High burden households are those households with the lowest incomes and highest home energy costs.



Example:

Household A spends 30% of their \$1000/month income on fuel costs or \$300

Household B spends 10% of their \$1000/month income on fuel costs or \$100.

Which household has a higher energy burden? This should be taken into consideration when determine households most in need of LIHEAP assistance.

Other Sources of Information

- Vulnerable populations
- Fuel types used in the home
- Cost of fuels

Benefit Matrix Tool

Your benefit matrix may be used as tool when:

- ✓ You get a call from a Tribal Council member asking why his Uncle Harry's house is not receiving a benefit similar to his Aunt Betty's household; or
- ✓ When a client comes in asking why they are receiving less than last year; or
- ✓ A client wants to understand how the benefit amount they receive was calculated; and
- ✓ OCS asks how you have determined benefit levels taking Assurance 5 into consideration.



Benefit Matrix Tool

The benefit matrix may be used as a training tool with staff to demonstrate:

➤ How the program is run and will identify the different types of information found in the community and considered;



➤ Next steps from the intake process and how the information is used; and

➤ How all factors work together to arrive at a benefit amount to serve those most in need.

Benefit Matrix Policy & Procedure

Consider Creating a Benefit Matrix Policy which clearly states how the benefit matrix is used, when it is used and why it is used.



Document the steps toward arriving at your benefit levels for clients under each program, i.e. Heating, Cooling, Crisis and Weatherization.

Benefit Matrix Maintenance

Remember to revisit your matrix at least annually!

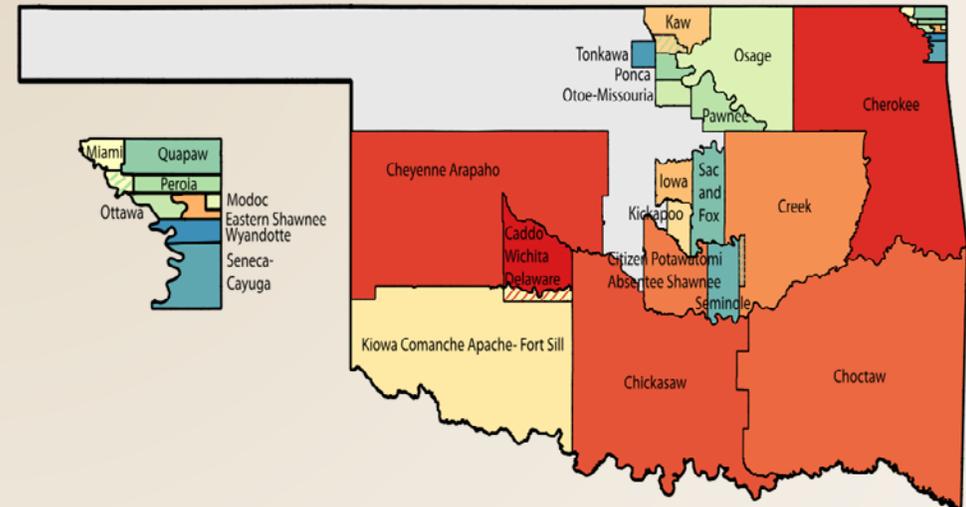


Part II: Tribal Grantee Share

Radley Davis, Redding Rancheria LIHEAP Program in Northern California.



Flora Elmore, Miami Tribe of Oklahoma



Part III: Scenarios – Adjusting a benefit matrix on the fly.

Questions to Consider

- Are factors like energy cost, income, household size, energy needs and poverty level evident in the scenario?
- How are vulnerable populations described?
- Is the allocation available throughout the program year?
- Is the program open for all the months of the program year?

Group Share

We will take 15 minutes to share your benefit matrix outcomes from your table scenario.



Benefit Matrix Wrap Up



Resources Available

Office of Community Services, Division Of Energy Assistance Staff Contacts:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/division-of-energy-assistance-federal-staff>

Section D of the Grantee Resource Guide:

<https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/tribal-manual>

The LIHEAP Clearinghouse Webinar:

https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/docs/benefit_matrix/

OCS Peer to Peer Mentoring Program:

<https://liheapch.acf.hhs.gov/nw/PeerMentoringProg.htm>

LIHEAP Tribal Frequently Asked Questions

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/tribal-faqs>



Benefit Matrix

