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Energy assistance available to low-income Michiganders who apply online or using paper applications

LANSING, Mich. – As colder weather arrives, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is reminding low-income residents they can apply for emergency energy assistance either online or using paper applications.

Misinformation has been circulating that has the potential to create confusion that could cause residents to not realize that both online and paper applications for energy assistance remain options.

“MDHHS is making sure that residents who may need assistance to keep their homes heated and the lights on have access to energy assistance applications – whether they want to apply online or using paper forms” said Terrence Beurer, the department’s deputy director for Field Operations Administration. “People who need help paying their energy bills can apply online at www.michigan.gov/mibridges or pick up paper applications at their local MDHHS office. Lobby navigators at MDHHS offices and some private agencies that assist with energy assistance can help people apply online. We want residents to have multiple ways to apply so they can keep their families warm.”

Assistance to low-income households is available through State Emergency Relief and the Michigan Energy Assistance Program.

State Emergency Relief is for immediate assistance to someone facing conditions of extreme hardship or emergencies threatening health and safety. This emergency support is designed to help low-income households that are normally able to make ends meet, but occasionally need help when an unexpected situation arises – and is available to pay for utilities only when a shutoff has occurred or there is a threat of a shutoff.

The Michigan Energy Assistance Program is a preventive program designed to provide energy assistance to low-income households so that they can reach energy self-sufficiency.

A household that qualifies for State Emergency Relief for heat or non-heat electricity services also qualifies for additional energy services from the Michigan Energy Assistance Program through private agencies that have received MDHHS grant funding.

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More information can be found [on the Michigan Energy Assistance Program website https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/0,4639,7-159-52493---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mpsc/0,4639,7-159-52493---,00.html). Grantees for 2018-19 have not yet been announced, but the website will be updated in October.

If they do not want to or cannot apply online, people can apply for energy assistance at local MDHHS offices or through MEAP grantees. The application form MDHHS-1171 [can be found and printed on the Assistance Application page of the MDHHS website https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71551_7338-69226--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71551_7338-69226--,00.html).

Michigan Energy Assistance Program grantees will use the MI Bridges online system to assist applicants and provide them with energy self-sufficiency services such as weatherizing their homes so they are more energy efficient.

There are some changes in the application process beginning Oct. 1.

All households applying for energy assistance are now using MDHHS applications. Previously, there were different applications for the Michigan Energy Assistance Program. MDHHS will now process all applications, which will streamline the process and allow grantees to devote more of their resources to helping people become energy self-sufficient.

Beginning Oct. 1, people can apply for energy assistance year-round. That's different than in recent years, when people were required to apply only during the designated energy crisis season, which was from Nov. 1 to May 31.

Anyone with questions about energy assistance can visit www.michigan.gov/mdhhs and click on "Assistance Programs" and then "Emergency Relief: Home, Utilities & Burial." Or contact the [local MDHHS office https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73970_5461---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73970_5461---,00.html) for information.

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