

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION	TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE MANUAL	
OFFICE OF HOME ENERGY PROGRAMS 1303	COMAR: 07.06.06	SUPPORTIVE SERVICES 1300

1303.1 OVERVIEW

A. The Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) provide heating and electric bill assistance grants respectively each year to fuel suppliers and utility companies on behalf of eligible customers who:

1. Provide proof of identity, residence, and income
2. File an application in person or by mail or proxy to the local OHEP agency indicating the primary fuel (i.e. oil, propane, kerosene, natural gas, electricity, or wood)

Note: All members of a household applying for MEAP or EUSP must provide proof of a Social Security number. All household members 18 or older must provide proof of income for the 30 days prior to the application.

B. Local OHEP agencies can mail customers an application upon request.

1303.2 REQUIREMENTS

A. Customers are eligible for MEAP if they are:

1. Maryland residents responsible for heating costs, except:
 - a. Subsidized housing residents directly responsible for paying their heating costs are only eligible for the minimum benefit for their fuel type
 - b. If heat is included in the rent and the landlord signs a "Landlord Agreement" stating the MEAP grant will be used to reduce the rent and the grant is sent directly to the landlord
2. At or below 150% of the federal poverty level

B. Customers are eligible for EUSP if they:

1. Maintain or wish to obtain an electric bill in their name
2. Agree to accept an even monthly payment plan for their electric bill with their electric company.

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1303.3 COORDINATION WITH OHEP

- A. If a customer needs assistance with an energy bill or is facing an energy crisis, the case manager:
 - 1. Refers the customer to the local OHEP office, if an application has not been filed
 - 2. Calls ahead to the OHEP office so the customer may be seen as soon as possible
 - 3. Provides the customer with proof of the TCA benefit amount
- B. Determine the application status as follows:
 - 1. Contact the local OHEP office to verify that a MEAP and/or EUSP grant has been processed and approved
 - 2. If the application has been approved but the grant(s) has not been issued, the OHEP office may be able to expedite issuance
 - 3. If the approved MEAP/EUSP grant is not sufficient to resolve the energy crisis, encourage the customer with minor children to apply for Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFC)
- C. Refer customers to other agencies when the MEAP grant and local EA grant are unavailable or insufficient to resolve an energy crisis
 - Contact the local OHEP office to determine which programs and non-profit agencies, such as local Fuel Funds, may have the necessary resources

1303.4 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS FOR ENERGY

- A. Customers ineligible for MEAP/EUSP or whose MEAP/EUSP grants are insufficient to meet bills may apply to the local department for an emergency energy assistance grant under Emergency Assistance for Families with Children (EAFC)
 - 1. Base EAFC eligibility determination on the procedures contained in the local department's annual plan
 - 2. The applicant verifies:
 - OHEP application
 - Available MEAP/EUSP grants were insufficient to resolve the energy crisis

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1303.5 UTILITY SERVICE PROTECTION PROGRAM (USPP)

- A. Customers may apply for the Utility Service Protection Program when applying for MEAP
- B. Mandated by the Public Service Commission (PSC), USPP allows low- income households have continuous utility service during the winter and provides:
 - 1. Access to budget billing service (even monthly payments)
 - 2. Permits arrearage payment plan for arrearages under \$400
- C. The main features are:
 - 1. This year-round, voluntary program is available to MEAP customers using Maryland area gas and/or electric utilities, even if their primary heat source is an unregulated fuel, if:
 - a. Their unpaid utility bill is less than \$400, and
 - b. First time participants may use their MEAP grant to reduce the unpaid balance \$400 or less.

Note: BGE and Conectiv customers may apply MEAP benefits toward their arrearages even if they are repeat USPP households.

- 2. The monthly USPP budget billing payment for the next 12 months, which may vary according to unexpected increases in usage and/or fuel costs, is calculated by the local utility
- 3. Participants must continue to pay their designated monthly amount to prevent an electric or gas service shutoff, unless their income falls below 50% of federal poverty guidelines
 - Such extremely low income persons need only pay at least the equivalent of \$40 per month to prevent utility shutoffs during November through March