

ENERGY PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded block grant program that is comprised of three different programs - Crisis Intervention Program (CIP), Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Weatherization. There are also non-Federal Crisis Intervention Programs – Duke Energy Progress Share the Light, Piedmont Natural Gas Share the Warmth, Duke Energy Progress NC Settlement Rate, and Wake Electric Round Up.

To maximize the success of this program, outreach to county residents through key community partner stakeholders, each county department of social services is required to develop and implement an Energy Program Outreach Plan (EPOP). This plan is a framework to assure that eligible households are made aware of the assistance available through these programs.

The county director and/or his/her designee is required to develop the EPOP, which addresses outreach and application activities related to the Energy Programs. The Outreach Plan is due to North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) by July 31, 2026.

Each county must form an outreach planning committee that creates the opportunity for county level collaboration to discuss and plan how to effectively reach county residents to inform them of the services provided by the energy programs. The committee should meet at least twice yearly; September for outreach planning related to LIEAP and April to review the outcomes related to LIEAP and to plan for outreach activities for summer weather. Energy Assistance Outreach Plan

Answer all questions below. Address CIP, non-Federal CIP, and LIEAP where appropriate:

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Director of Social Services should engage a number of various community partners such as Vendors, Housing Authority, Public Libraries, Public School System/Local Colleges/Head Start, Legal Services, Meals on Wheels, Media, Public Health/Health Centers, Churches, Food Banks, Councils on Aging/Senior Centers, Community based Indian organizations, Volunteer Programs, Vocational Rehabilitation Offices, and Transportation, services, etc.

1. Provide a list of committee members and their agencies.

Actual committee members may vary on the interagency committee; the following agencies are represented:

Appalachian District Health Department

New Beginnings

Ashe County Board of Education

Partnership of Ashe

Ashe County Department of Social Services

Vaya Health

CDSA

Communities in Schools

Daymark

Generations Ashe

The Motherboard

NC Works

2. Provide potential meeting dates, times, locations as well as agenda topics.

The interagency committee generally meets monthly from September through May.

Meetings are held virtually on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 1p to 2p.

Agency topics vary monthly.

Define how DSS/DHS will work with the committee as well as any other agencies to collaborate regarding the Energy Program and how outreach will be provided to the citizens in your area.

A DSS representative presents information at the interagency committee meetings. In addition, a DSS representative contacts agencies serving clients with the highest relative need, including elder housing communities, Generations Ashe and Partnership of Ashe.

1. What is the process for referring customers? What marketing tools or items will be used (please provide a copy of your previous marketing materials & how you plan to enhance those in the future)?

Community partner agencies refer customers, advising them to contact a DSS services intake worker by phone or in person, Monday-Friday between 8a and 5p. Special outreach referrals are also accepted. Marketing materials include flyers & brochures which are distributed to community agencies and posted in community locations.

2. What strategy does the county have to continue collaborative efforts with community partners to complete outreach activities to target potential eligible households including individuals and families?

Ashe DSS staff maintain close working relationships with community partner agencies such as BROCC, Generations Ashe, Ashe Really Cares and Ashe Food Pantry. Regular contact also occurs with the County's largest energy provider, Blue Ridge Energy.

3. What additional activities will be conducted to target households with members with children under 5, age 60 and over and disabled?

Outreach materials are distributed to community partner agencies such as Partnership of Ashe as well as provided in-house to SCCA coordinators. Flyers are distributed to Generations Ashe & housing communities which target elderly and disabled populations. Staff coordinate with APS and CPS workers to ensure that vulnerable clients are served.

Media involvement is vital to the success of outreach activities. How will your county utilize media such as newspapers, social media, radio and television stations to publicize the Energy Programs?

Ashe County places a public service announcement in the county's newspaper and promotes the energy assistance programs via local radio shows. Ashe County DSS posts flyers announcing the availability of energy assistance on the County's official Facebook page and website as well as the Agency's Facebook page and website.

1. Provide a list of media outlets that will be used as well as timeframes in which they will be contacted (provide examples of how the county can enhance these efforts):

Local radio station – WSKS – DSS staff schedule appearances on local shows during the month of October. PSAs are placed in the Ashe Post Times during late October / early November and again in late November prior to the start of LIEAP. Flyers and announcements are also posted on the County Facebook page and website as well as the Agency's own Facebook page and website.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

Counties are required to provide application processes for CIP, non-Federal CIP programs, and/or LIEAP. This information must be reported to the NCDHHS annually.

1. Provide hours of operation, location and whether the programs are in house or contracted out. If your agency contracts out to other agencies attach the contract(s). The Ashe County Department of Social Services operates Monday through Friday from 8a to 5p with the exception of State holidays. The agency is located at 150 Government Circle, Suite 1400, Jefferson NC 28640. Energy assistance applications are taken and processed in-house at Ashe DSS.

BEST PRACTICES:

Best practices are a method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results. Best practices are essential to the program.

1. If your county has gone above and beyond what is listed on this form, please provide this information below:
Ashe County DSS generally operates for extended hours (e.g. 8a to 8p) during the busiest CIP and LIEAP application periods. Ashe County DSS has also scheduled home visits with clients who may struggle to apply for energy programs utilizing other means available.
2. Any additional comments or activities for CIP, non-Federal CIP, and/or LIEAP:
DSS staff members are available to make informational presentations to community groups in relation to energy assistance programs, program processes / eligibility requirements and program availability.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Your contact information is essential to the success of the Energy Programs. Please complete the following information.

Name: Angie Ritter

Address: 150 Government Circle, Suite 1400, Jefferson NC 28640

Telephone: (336) 846-5769

Email: angieritter@ashecountygov.com

Please indicate which program:

☒ LIEAP

☒ CIP

This plan must be approved by the local Board of Social Services/Human Services Board or local agency governing body prior to submission. Refer to the latest Dear County Director Letter for instructions on how to submit this document to the North Carolina State office.

Board of Social Services/Human Services or governing body Signature

Date

Director's Signature

Date