

Public Utility Assistance and Benefit Programs

Advocate's Guide



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Introduction

This Advocate’s Guide provides information about public utility and public benefit programs that may assist survivors cope with the high cost of winter heating and other utility bills.

Important Resources for Advocates and Survivors:

[Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission](#)

800-692-7380

[Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Advocate](#)

1-800-684-6560 (in PA), 717-783-5048

Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP)

800-322-7572

Advocates should encourage survivors to visit the [local Community Action Center](#) for help with information and applications

Pennsylvania utility programs include providers and suppliers of electricity, natural gas, water and telephone services. These programs are regulated and overseen by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. Additionally, the Pennsylvania Office of Consumer Advocate and the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project provide information and advocacy to consumers on utility programs and benefits.

Many of the utilities offer special programs that are only available to consumers in their service territories that are beyond the scope of this guide, including:

- ✓ Energy assessment tools
- ✓ Weatherization discounts and rebates
- ✓ Rebates and discounts for energy efficient appliances

Advocates are encouraged to contact or review their local utility company’s website to learn more about the specific programs available in their local community.

See list on page 14.

Protections for Victims of Domestic Violence with PFA Orders

- ✓ Service cannot be turned off during the winter without approval from the PUC.
- ✓ Depending on income, a special payment arrangement may be available.
- ✓ Service cannot be terminated the day before a weekend or holiday.
- ✓ Victim may not be held responsible for a bill in someone else's name.
- ✓ Victim may not be required to pay a security deposit or may qualify to spread the amount due over three payments.
- ✓ Victim may call the utility company to inform it about the Protection From Abuse order so these special procedures and protections can be provided. The utility company may require a copy of the PFA order.

Relevant Statutes

Responsible Utility Customer Protection – 66 Pa. C.S. § 1417

- ✓ Permits utilities to establish collection policies for those with PFA orders that are more lenient than those set forth in the chapter.

Residential Utility Service Standards & Billing - 52 Pa. Code §§ 56.251-56.451

- ✓ Permits utilities to offer credit, termination and restoration of service policies that are more lenient for those with PFA orders than for other customers. Be aware that **victims of domestic violence *may* be required by the utility to prove their victimization by producing a PFA.**

For more information, review the following:

[*Responsible Utility Customer Protection Act Fact Sheet*](#), Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (2012)

[*Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Utility Consumer*](#), Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, p. 9 (2012)

Energy Assistance Programs

Utility-Run Plans

These programs are managed by each utility to help customers pay their utility bills. **See pages 14 - 15** for a complete list of electric and natural gas utilities' contact information.

Types of Assistance

Budget Billing

All residential customers can benefit from budget billing, regardless of income. This program allows customers to have consistent monthly payments rather than monthly costs that vary from season to season. Budget billing permits customers to spread their payments evenly over the course of a year.

Customer Assistance Program (CAP)

CAPs can reduce low-income customers' monthly utility bills or remove the amount owed. Each utility names its CAP program differently. The company works with customers to determine what customers can pay versus the cost of energy used.

Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation Program (CARES)

The CARES program helps customers with special needs, e.g., customers who are experiencing family emergencies, divorce, unemployment or medical emergencies. Each energy company has a [CARES specialist](#).

Low-Income Usage Reduction Program (LIURP)

LIURP helps low-income residential customers lower the amount of electricity or natural gas used each month, such as by installing energy saving features to reduce bills.

Hardship Funds

Hardship funds provide cash assistance grants to customers who "fall through the cracks" of other financial assistance programs, or to those who still have a critical need for assistance after the other resources have been exhausted. The funds make payments directly to companies on behalf of eligible customers.

[Dollar Energy](#) list of participating companies

[Utility Emergency Services Fund](#) (UESF) in Philadelphia (215) 972-5170

Who May Be Eligible

- ✓ Customers must meet certain income limits and be payment-troubled to qualify for CAP, CARES, LIURP and Hardship Funds. Payment-troubled usually means customers have made a payment agreement with the company.

CAP 2014 Household Size Monthly Income*

- 1 person \$ 1,459
- 2 persons \$ 1,966
- 3 persons \$ 2,474
- 4 persons \$ 2,981

Add \$508 for each additional person in household.

*Income levels are slightly higher for LIURP, CARES and Hardship funds.

Advocates should encourage individuals to visit the [nearest Community Action Center](#) for help with information and applications. They serve low-income families and individuals in every Pennsylvania county.

Application Process

- ✓ Clients can call their **local electric or natural gas company** to see if they qualify. The **local Community Action Center** can also help with forms and applications.

LIHEAP - Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Resource: local county assistance office or
LIHEAP hotline at
1-866-857-7095, Monday through Friday

[Heating Assistance/LIHEAP website](#)

[2014-15 LIHEAP Advocates Manual](#)

- ✓ Helps low-income families pay their heating bills.
- ✓ Assistance in the form of a cash grant sent directly to the utility, or a crisis grant for households in immediate danger of being without heat
- ✓ Administered through [local county assistance offices](#).

Types of Assistance:

Cash Component:

- ✓ A single grant, available once a year, to assist a household in **meeting heating costs**
- ✓ Paid directly to either a heating fuel vendor/utility company or to an individual.
- ✓ Grant amounts range from \$100 to \$1,000. The [2014-2015 cash grant benefit tables](#) indicate the amount of the cash grant to which each household is entitled.

Crisis Component:

- ✓ Up to \$500 is available
- ✓ To resolve a **home heating crisis** caused by an actual or imminent lack of fuel or utility termination, a problem with a heating system (i.e., furnace), or a weather-related event.

Crisis Interface/Weatherization Assistance Component

- ✓ To repair or replace the heating system or furnace for those with a **heating system breakdown**. Traditional weatherization and conservation services may supplement the repairs. **See page 8.**

A household may be entitled to receive one or more forms of assistance using only one application. An individual may be able to designate a different vendor to receive different types of grant payments -- for example, a cash grant may be designated to an oil vendor and a crisis grant to the electricity provider.

Who May Be Eligible**Both renters and homeowners**

- ✓ Renters who pay to heat their residence indirectly (i.e., not directly to a fuel vendor or utility) as a part of rent will receive only 50% of the cash benefit
- ✓ Eligible households may reapply for and receive cash and crisis assistance each program year.

Lawfully admitted non-citizens

- ✓ Eligible to receive LIHEAP no matter when they arrived in the United States so long as they meet LIHEAP eligibility requirements
- ✓ Do not need a Social Security number to be eligible for LIHEAP. However, if a Social Security number is not provided, an Energy Assistance Affidavit must be completed for each member of the household who is 1 year of age or older
- ✓ Energy Assistance Affidavit is printed on the LIHEAP application, certification section.

Application Process

- ✓ Apply Nov. 3, 2014 through April 3, 2015
- ✓ Apply online by using the [state's COMPASS website](#).

Clients should apply early, as federal funds are limited. The Department of Human Services may extend or shorten program dates depending on availability of funds.

Clients can also download and complete an application for LIHEAP benefits and return it to the local county assistance office, or file an application in person at their local county assistance office.

Clients are strongly urged to apply using COMPASS rather than paper forms.

LIHEAP Brochure – English

http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/communication/s_001813.pdf

English- Energy Assistance Application

http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/form/s_002634.pdf

LIHEAP Brochure- Español

http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/communication/s_001814.pdf

Spanish-Energy Assistance Application

http://www.dhs.state.pa.us/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/form/p_011870.pdf

Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits -- make sure clients indicate on their LIHEAP applications that they receive SNAP. They may be eligible for a SNAP benefit increase.

Timeline

- ✓ County Assistance Office must issue written determination **within 30 days** of receiving a complete application for a cash grant. If the cash grant application is deemed incomplete, the office must send the applicant a notice indicating what information is missing within 10 working days of receipt. The applicant will then have 15 days from the date of that notice to return the missing information to avoid rejection of the application.

Advocates should encourage individuals to apply for cash grants early, to reduce any negative effect on applicants in case of processing delays.

Appeal process

- ✓ A Fair Hearing can be requested through the local LIHEAP office. Individuals have 30 days to file an appeal with their local welfare office.

Weatherization Assistance Program

Resources:

Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development
866-466-3972 / 717-425-7643
Fax: 717-214-5399
Email: ra-wxmail@pa.gov
Monday through Friday
[WAP website](#)

- ✓ Helps low-income families reduce energy costs by increasing home energy efficiency
- ✓ Reduces the impact of higher fuel costs on low-income families

Types of Assistance:

WAP offers two services to eligible low-income families.

1. Standard Weatherization Service

- ✓ Home weatherization
- ✓ Home energy audits, which assess conditions and identify the most cost-effective energy saving measures to be installed, such as weather sealing, installation of insulation, heating system modification or replacement

2. Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Crisis Interface

- ✓ Assistance to families that have lost their primary heating source

Who May Be Eligible

- ✓ Low-income individuals (at or below 200% of the federal poverty level)
- ✓ Priority given to higher-risk residents such as the elderly, disabled individuals, families with children and high-energy users

Application Process

- ✓ Apply through the local weatherization service provider agency:

County	Agency Name	City	Phone Number
Adams	South Central Community Action Program, Inc	Gettysburg	(717) 334-7634
Allegheny	Action-Housing, Inc	Pittsburgh	(412) 281-2102
Armstrong	Armstrong County Community Action Agency	Kittanning	(724) 548-3405 Ext 422
Beaver	Housing Authority of the County of Beaver	Beaver	(724) 775-1220
Bedford	Center for Community Action	Everett	(814) 623-9129

Berks	Berks Community Action Program	Reading	(610) 375-9770
Blair	Blair County Community Action Program	Altoona	(814) 946-3651
Bradford	TREHAB	Montrose	(570) 278-3338
Bucks	Bucks County Opportunity Council, Inc	Doylestown	(215) 345-8175
Butler	Community Action Partnership of Mercer County	Sharon	(724) 342-6222
Cambria	Community Action Partnership of Cambria County	Johnstown	(814) 536-9031
Cameron	Northern Tier Community Action Corporation	Emporium	(814) 486-1161
Carbon	Carbon County Action Committee for Human Svcs	Lehighton	(610) 377-6400
Centre	Central Pennsylvania Community Action, Inc	Clearfield	(814) 765-1551
Chester	Community Action Agency of Delaware County	Essington	(610) 891-5101
Clarion	Community Action, Inc	Punxsutawney	(814) 938-3302
Clearfield	Central Pennsylvania Community Action, Inc	Clearfield	(814) 765-1551
Clinton	Lycoming/Clinton Counties Commission for Community Action, Inc (STEP)	Williamsport	(570) 326-0587
Columbia	SEDA-Council of Governments	Lewisburg	(570) 524-4491 Ext 7247
Crawford	Northwest Pennsylvania Weatherization, Inc	Meadville	(814) 425-1872
Cumberland	South Central Community Action Program, Inc	Gettysburg	(717) 334-7634
Dauphin	South Central Community Action Program, Inc	Gettysburg	(717) 334-7634
Delaware	Community Action Agency of Delaware County	Essington	(610) 891-5101
Elk	Northern Tier Community Action Corporation	Emporium	(814) 486-1161
Erie	Erie County Housing Authority	Corry	(814) 665-5161
Erie	Greater Erie Community Action Committee	Erie	(814) 459-4581 Ext 221
Fayette	Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette	Uniontown	(724) 437-1547 Ext 12
Forest	Warren/Forest Economic Opportunity Council	Warren	(814) 726-2400
Franklin	South Central Community Action Program, Inc	Gettysburg	(717) 334-7634
Fulton	Center for Community Action	Everett	(814) 623-9129
Greene	Action-Housing Weatherization	Charleroi	(724) 483-2399

	Program		
Huntingdon	Weatherization, Inc	Huntingdon	(814) 643-2343
Indiana	Community Action, Inc	Punxsutawney	(814) 938-3302
Jefferson	Community Action, Inc	Punxsutawney	(814) 938-3302
Juniata	SEDA-Council Of Governments	Lewisburg	(570) 524-4491 Ext 7247
Lackawanna	Scranton/Lackawanna Human Development Agency	Scranton	(570) 963-6836
Lancaster	Community Action Agency of Delaware County	Essington	(610) 891-5101
Lawrence	Lawrence County Community Action Partnership	New Castle	(724) 658-7258
Lebanon	Community Action Agency of Delaware County	Essington	(610) 891-5101
Lehigh	Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley	Bethlehem	(610) 691-5620
Luzerne	Commission on Economic Opportunity of Luzerne	Wilkes-Barre	(570) 826-0510
Lehigh	Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley	Bethlehem	(610) 691-5620
Lycoming	Lycoming/Clinton Counties Commission for Community Action, Inc (STEP)	Williamsport	(570) 326-0587
McKean	Northern Tier Community Action Corporation	Emporium	(814) 486-1161
Mifflin	SEDA-Council Of Governments	Lewisburg	(570) 524-4491 Ext 7247
Monroe	Monroe County Weatherization Program	Tannersville	(570) 421-4436
Montgomery	Montgomery County Community Action Development Commission (CADCOM)	Norristown	(610) 277-6363
Montour	SEDA-Council Of Governments	Lewisburg	(570) 524-4491 Ext 7247
Northampton	Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley	Bethlehem	(610) 691-5620
Northumberland	Northumberland County Weatherization	Coal Township	(570) 644-4471
Perry	SEDA-Council Of Governments	Lewisburg	(570) 524-4491 Ext 7247
Philadelphia	Energy Coordinating Agency	Philadelphia	(215) 609-1000
Philadelphia	Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation	Philadelphia	(215) 448-2160
Pike	Wayne County Redevelopment Authority	Honesdale	(570) 253-4882
Potter	Northern Tier Community Action Corporation	Emporium	(814) 486-1161
Schuylkill	Schuylkill Community Action	Pottsville	(570) 622-1995
Snyder	SEDA-Council Of Governments	Lewisburg	(570) 524-4491 Ext

			7247
Somerset	Tableland Services, Inc	Somerset	(814) 445-9628
Sullivan	TREHAB	Montrose	(570) 278-3338
Susquehanna	TREHAB	Montrose	(570) 278-3338
Tioga	TREHAB	Montrose	(570) 278-3338
Union	SEDA-Council Of Governments	Lewisburg	(570) 524-4491 Ext 7247
Venango	Warren/Forest Economic Opportunity Council	Warren	(814) 726-2400
Warren	Warren/Forest Economic Opportunity Council	Warren	(814) 726-2400
Washington	Action-Housing Weatherization Program	Charleroi	(724) 483-2399
Wayne	Wayne County Redevelopment Authority	Honesdale	(570) 253-4882
Westmoreland	Westmoreland Housing Authority	Greensburg	(724) 832-9460
Wyoming	TREHAB	Montrose	(570) 278-3338
York	York County Planning	York	(717) 771-9870

Additional Weatherization Assistance Programs

Resource:

[Community Action Association of Pennsylvania](#)

41 programs across Pennsylvania, services in all counties

Individual county Community Action Programs may offer specific home winter relief and weatherization programs to help low-income survivors reduce the cost of utilities or make repairs that will lower heating costs.

Programs may include:

- ✓ Energy conservation measures such as:
 - Energy education
 - Air leakage reduction
 - Water heater conservation
 - Insulation & ventilation
 - Gas & oil heating retrofits
- ✓ Homeownership services & assistance programs
- ✓ Home rehabilitation & repair programs
- ✓ Utility assistance programs

Lifeline Phone Bill Assistance

Type of Assistance

- ✓ Available for consumers with limited incomes
- ✓ Lifeline provides **discounts on monthly telephone service** (landline or wireless) for eligible consumers.
- ✓ Discount on either a landline or wireless service, but NOT both

Who May Be Eligible

- ✓ Must either have an income at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines or participate in one of the following assistance programs:
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Cash assistance
 - Medical assistance
 - National School Free Lunch Program
 - Federal Public Housing Assistance
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
 - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Each telephone company and/or program has different eligibility requirements, benefits and restrictions. Some programs have restrictions on the optional services available to participants.

[Lifeline Eligibility Brochure](#)

Application Process

- ✓ Clients may call the [local phone company or wireless provider](#) directly to enroll

Other Utility Links

[Department of Community & Economic Development](#) (energy conservation & weatherization) select **Community**, then select **Individual and Households**

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission Fact Sheets

- ✓ [Do You Know? Your Electric Company Offers Energy Efficiency Programs and Rebates](#)
- ✓ [Easy Ways to Save Energy and Money this Winter](#)
- ✓ [Saving Water: Room by Room](#)

Electricity, Natural Gas and Water Companies

ELECTRICITY COMPANIES		
Company Name	Phone	Web
Citizens Electric Of Lewisburg	570-524-2231	http://www.citizenselectric.com
Duquesne Light Company (DQE)	412-393-7100	https://www.duquesnelight.com
Pennsylvania Power Company (Penn Power) FirstEnergy Company	800-720-3600 PA Relay Service 800-654-5984	https://www.firstenergycorp.com/penn_power.html
Metropolitan Edison Company (Met-Ed) FirstEnergy Company	800-545-7741 TTY 800-522-2376	https://www.firstenergycorp.com/met_edison.html
Pennsylvania Electric Company (Penelec) FirstEnergy Company	800-545-7741 TTY 800-522-2376	http://www.firstenergycorp.com/penelec.html
PPL Electric Utilites	800-342-5775	https://www.pplelectric.com
PECO Energy Company - Exelon Company	800-494-4000	http://www.peco.com/Pages/Home.aspx
Pike County Light & Power Company - Orange and Rockland Company	877-434-4100	http://www.oru.com/index.html
UGI Utilities Inc.	800-276-2722	http://www.ugi.com/portal/page/portal/UGI/Home
Wellsboro Electric Company	570-724-3516	http://wellsboroelectric.com
West Penn Power - FirstEnergy Company	800-686-0021 TTY 800-955-9445	https://www.firstenergycorp.com/content/customer/west_penn_power.html
NATURAL GAS COMPANIES		
Company Name	Phone	Web
Chartiers Natural Gas Company, Inc.		
Columbia Gas Of Pennsylvania, Inc.	888-460-4332	https://www.columbiagaspa.com/billing-payment-options/assistance-programs
Equitable Gas now Peoples	800-654-6335	http://www.equitablegas.com
Leatherstocking Gas Company	877-451-9276	http://www.leatherstockinggas.com
North East Heat & Light Company		

National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation	800-444-3130 TTY 800-855-2880	http://www.nationalfuelgas.com
PECO Energy Company - Exelon Company	800-494-4000	https://www.peco.com/Pages/Home.aspx
Peoples Natural Gas Company LLC	800-764-0111	http://www.peoples-gas.com
Peoples TWP LLC (Formerly TW Phillips)	800-222-5101	http://www.peoplestwp.com
Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW)	215-235-1000	http://www.pgworks.com
Pike County Light & Power Company (Gas)	877-434-4100	http://www.oru.com/index.html
UGI Central Penn Gas	800-652-0550	http://www.ugi.com/portal/page/portal/UGI/Home
UGI Penn Natural Gas & UGI Utilities Inc. (Gas)	800-276-2722	http://www.ugi.com/portal/page/portal/UGI/Home
Valley Energy	570-888-9664	http://www.valley-energy.com
WATER UTILITIES		
Complete listing of Water Utility Companies are available at the following website: http://www.puc.state.pa.us/water/pdf/Wastewater_Ann_Rpt_Contacts.pdf		