

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Cooling assistance is available to low-income individuals with medical needs

BISMARCK, N.D. – With hot temperatures and high humidity arriving in the state, the North Dakota Department of Human Services and the North Dakota Department of Commerce’s Division of Community Service reminds North Dakotans that cooling assistance is available for seniors or people with certain medical conditions who qualify for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

“The summer heat can create challenges for people with health issues,” said Carol Cartledge, North Dakota Department of Human Services Economic Assistance Division director. “The cooling assistance program makes funds available to eligible low-income households and our most vulnerable citizens to help prevent heat-related illnesses.”

Program funds can be used to assist qualifying households to purchase and install an air conditioning unit, repair an air conditioning unit, or to purchase oscillating or window fans. Work is completed by a Community Action agency located in the state’s eight largest cities.

To qualify, current energy assistance clients under 60 years of age need a signed statement from a physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or public health nurse verifying their medical condition and the need for a cooled living space. They must provide that information to the county social service office. Clients age 60 and over are not required to get documentation of a medical need.

People who are not currently energy assistance program clients may also qualify. A three-person household earning up to \$44,717 per year may qualify if their assets meet program limits. For information on qualifying incomes, visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html.

Individuals should contact their county social service office to apply for the program before September 30, 2016. Contact information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/.

The Department of Human Services and the North Dakota Department of Commerce have historically worked together in partnership with county social service offices to address the heating and cooling needs of low-income individuals.

LIHEAP is a federally-funded program that primarily helps qualifying households pay for heating needs. This past heating season, the program served around 12,000 households in the state. Last summer, 200 households participated in the cooling assistance program.

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