

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**North Dakota prepared if summer heats up**

BISMARCK, ND – Usually summers are punctuated by periods of extreme high temperatures somewhere in North Dakota, which can be life threatening to people with certain medical conditions. If this summer reaches seasonal temperatures, the North Dakota Department of Human Services and the North Dakota Department of Commerce's Division of Community Services are prepared. They have developed an emergency cooling assistance program.

It is intended to serve individuals with medical conditions that make them vulnerable to heat-related illnesses who also meet the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program's (LIHEAP) financial guidelines.

The Department of Human Services has set aside \$200,000 in federal LIHEAP funds for the program and has contracted with the commerce department. Funds can be used to pay community action agencies to install a window air conditioner or to repair air conditioning units in qualifying households.

To qualify, current energy assistance clients need a signed statement from a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, or public health nurse documenting their medical condition and the need for a cooled living space. They must provide that information to one of the eight community action agencies located in the state's largest cities. Contact information is online at [www.capnd.org/contact.htm](http://www.capnd.org/contact.htm).

People who are not currently energy assistance program clients may also qualify if they have a documented medical need and meet financial criteria. A three-person household earning up to \$34,050 per year may qualify if their assets meet program limits.

To apply, these individuals should first contact their county social service office to see if they meet financial guidelines. If they do, they will be referred to a community action agency.

The emergency cooling assistance program is available through September 30, 2009.

The two agencies have historically worked together in partnership with county social service offices and community action agencies to address the heating and cooling needs of low-income individuals. The Department of Human Services last operated a cooling assistance program in 2007.

LIHEAP is a federally funded program that primarily helps qualifying households pay for heating needs. This past heating season, the program served just over 16,000 households in the state.

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