

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Program to help low-income North Dakotans with heating costs is accepting applications beginning October 1

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services is reminding low-income individuals and families concerned about winter heating costs that help is available, and they can apply beginning tomorrow, October 1.

The federally-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) pays for part of the heating costs of qualifying households, as well as furnace repairs and weatherization services.

To qualify, people must meet program income and asset limits. This ensures that help goes to those most in need. To qualify, a household can earn up to 60 percent of the state median income, which for a family of three equals about \$36,843 per year.

People can apply at their local county social service office through May 2011. The application is also available online at www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn00529.pdf and should be completed and returned to the county office.

The department works with county social service offices, the N.D. Department of Commerce's Division of Community Services, and community action agencies to assist low-income households with heating-related needs.

Last year, the state LIHEAP program paid an average of \$858 in heating energy costs per participating household. The program typically pays fuel vendors, such as utility and fuel oil companies, directly.

Because saving money on heating also involves conservation, Human Services contracts with the Commerce Department for weatherization and furnace repair and replacement services. The direct work is often carried out by community action agencies.

People applying for heating help are also encouraged to pick up a free *2011 Energy Savers Calendar* at their county social service office.

Last heating season, the state LIHEAP program helped just over 16,000 North Dakota households. Tribal LIHEAP programs also served state residents.

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