

# **NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Oct. 1, 2014**

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### **Program to Help Low-Income North Dakotans with Heating Costs is Now Accepting Applications**

BISMARCK, N.D. – Cold North Dakota winters can have a dramatic effect on home heating costs. The N.D. Department of Human Services is reminding low-income individuals and families that help is available through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Applications are now being accepted at county social service offices in North Dakota.

The federally-funded program helps qualifying households in need of assistance pay a portion of their home heating costs, which includes natural gas, electricity, propane, coal, fuel oil, wood, or kerosene. The program also covers furnace repair and weatherization services.

Households must meet program income and asset limits to qualify for the program. 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 \$43,430 per year before taxes.

Individuals can apply at their local county social service office Oct. 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015. An application is available online at [www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn00529.pdf](http://www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn00529.pdf) and should be completed and returned to county social services along with documentation that verifies household income and assets.

Last year, the program paid an average of \$1,320 in heating energy costs for just over 13,000 North Dakota households. The program directly pays fuel vendors, such as utility and fuel oil companies, on behalf of qualifying households. Nearly two-thirds of the participating households include people who are elderly, have disabilities, or include children age five and younger.

Because saving money on heating also involves conservation, the N.D. Department of Human Services contracts with the N.D. Department of Commerce for weatherization services including home insulation, furnace repair, and other energy-saving improvements to help lower heating costs. The direct work is often carried out by community action agencies.

Visit [www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html) for more information on LIHEAP.

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