

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Bismarck ND 58505**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 2, 2018**

Media contacts: Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933

Cooling assistance applications now being accepted for low-income seniors and other individuals with medical needs

BISMARCK, N.D. – As summer temperatures rise, staying cool can become a necessity for seniors and people with certain medical conditions. The North Dakota Department of Human Services and the North Dakota Department of Commerce’s Division of Community Services would like to remind North Dakotans that cooling assistance is available for qualifying households through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

“Extreme heat and humidity can create health and safety issues for older adults and other individuals with certain medical conditions,” said Michele Gee, director of the Department of Human Services’ Economic Assistance Division. “This program provides extra help to vulnerable individuals who need to stay safe in their homes this summer.”

The program helps qualifying households purchase and install a window air conditioning unit, repair an air conditioning unit, or purchase oscillating or window fans.

To qualify, individuals under 60 years of age who received heating assistance this past heating season 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 their county social service office. LIHEAP clients age 60 and older are not required to get documentation of a medical need.

People who did not receive LIHEAP help this past heating season but who meet program income criteria may also qualify. For more information about the cooling assistance program and who qualifies, visit www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html.

To apply, individuals should contact their county social service office before Sept. 28, 2018. Contact information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/.

The state’s human services and commerce departments work together with county social service offices to address the heating and cooling needs of low-income individuals. They contract with Community Action agencies located in the state’s eight largest cities to purchase and install the cooling devices for qualifying households.

LIHEAP is a federally-funded program that primarily helps qualifying households with home heating costs. During the 2017 heating season, the program served about 12,300 households statewide. Last summer, the cooling assistance program helped 157 qualifying North Dakota households.

###