

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | July 2, 2019

Cooling assistance is available for low-income seniors and other individuals with medical needs

BISMARCK, N.D. – As the temperature and humidity 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).

“We want to ensure that older adults and other individuals with certain medical conditions are prepared to safely cope with extreme heat and humidity, which can create health and safety issues,” said Michele Gee, director of the Department of Human Services’ Economic Assistance Division.

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.

Individuals who need help completing and submitting an application can contact Community Options at 800-823-2417 ext. 158 or their county social service office before Sept. 30, 2019 to apply. Program information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html.

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 2019 heating season, the program served about 13,000 households statewide. Last summer, the cooling assistance program helped 287 qualifying North Dakota households.

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