

**NEWS RELEASE** | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | October 6, 2020

## **New Pandemic LIHEAP program will help pay electric utility bills**

BISMARCK, N.D. – About half of the Americans living in households that experienced a job loss or reduced income due to the COVID-19 pandemic report falling behind on their household bills. A third say they have had problems paying utility bills, according to a tracking poll by Kaiser Family Foundation.

To reduce financial stress among low-income state residents, the North Dakota Department of Human Services today announced a temporary Pandemic Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (P-LIHEAP) that will provide one-time help with the cost of electric utility bills for qualifying households.

To qualify for the one-time \$460 payment, a household must have participated in the state's regular heating assistance program through the 2019-2020 heating season, which ended Sept. 30, 2020. Renters whose electricity utility costs were included in their rent do not qualify.

"The one-time payment will be paid directly to program participants' electric utility providers," explained Michele Gee, the director of the department's Economic Assistance Division. "The payment can be used for past-due electric utility bills or applied toward electric utility costs during this pandemic."

An estimated 12,400 North Dakota households could benefit from the program, which is funded by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

### **Registering for One-Time Electric Utility Help**

The department is mailing a notice to households that may qualify, which informs them how to register. **The registration deadline for households who receive the notice is Oct. 31, 2020, so households must act quickly.** Individuals who need assistance with the registration should contact the department's Economic Assistance Program at 701-328-3513, 711 (TTY) or [dhseap@nd.gov](mailto:dhseap@nd.gov).

### **Help Available for Upcoming Heating Season**

Households concerned about upcoming winter heating costs can apply for the state's regular heating assistance program beginning October 2020 at their local human service zone office (formerly known as county social service office). Contact information is online at [www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv).

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