

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | June 10, 2021

Cooling assistance available for low-income North Dakotans with medical needs

BISMARCK, N.D. – In the wake of recent record-setting high temperatures in the state, the North Dakota Department of Human Services announced it is operating a cooling assistance program through September 2021 for qualifying lower-income households.

Cooling assistance aid is focused on adults age 60 and older and other individuals with qualifying medical conditions that put their health more at-risk from extreme heat. To participate, individuals must also qualify financially for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which serves households with incomes up to 60 percent of the state median income. A household of two can earn up to \$41,118 a year and qualify for LIHEAP.

Operated in partnership with the North Dakota Department of Commerce's Division of Community Services and local Community Action Programs (CAP), the cooling assistance program can help eligible households purchase and install a window air conditioning unit, repair an air conditioning unit, or purchase oscillating or window fans.

Individuals age 60 and older do not need to provide documentation of medical need. Younger individuals must provide 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.

Current LIHEAP households can contact their local CAP agency directly if interested in the program. However, they must provide a copy of their LIHEAP approval letter for verification of eligibility. If individuals need a copy of their approval letter or are not currently receiving LIHEAP, they should contact a human service zone office to obtain a copy of the approval letter or to apply. Individuals can also contact Community Options at 800-823-2417 for help completing and submitting a LIHEAP application. LIHEAP program information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/energyassist.html.

The state's human services and commerce agencies work together with local human service zone offices to address the heating and cooling needs of low-income North Dakotans. They contract with community action agencies 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 2021 heating season, which ran from Oct. 1, 2020, through May 31, 2021, the program served about 12,650 households statewide. Last year, the cooling assistance program helped 193 qualifying North Dakota households.

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