

LIHEAP can help with your heating costs

Fuel Assistance, also known as Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), is a free resource offered by Berkshire Community Action Council in partnership with the Department of Housing and Community Development. The goal of this program is to help low-income families pay their heating bills. All heating types may be eligible for assistance: oil, propane, electric, kerosene, coal, cord wood, wood pellets, and natural gas included. You may be eligible even if your utilities are included in your rent.

The program begins November 1st and ends April 30th each year. Fuel Assistance only pays for the cost of heat actually used during the length of the program. For example: If you are eligible for \$600 assistance, and the bills submitted by your heating company total \$550, the remaining \$50 is automatically returned to BCAC's funding source.

All Massachusetts residents are encouraged to explore eligibility for this free program and apply for assistance.

How to Apply

Applying is free! Visit the BCAC online customer portal and submit the online application: [Portal - Customer Portal \(toapply.org\)](https://toapply.org) or call us at **413-445-4503** for our South County office or **413-663-3104** for our North County office.

As part of the application process, please be prepared to share necessary information, including but not limited to photo identification, a list of all household members, proof of income, information on your heating bills, and your housing situation.

Documents Needed for the Application (*where it applies*)

- Photo ID for Head of Household
- Documentation needed for U.S. Citizen/Qualified Alien Status
- U.S. Birth Certificate
- Social Security Administration issued Social Security Card
- Recent Social Security Administration benefit letter with all 9 digits of the Social Security Number on letter
- Certificate of U.S. Citizenship (N-560 or N-561)
- Certificate of Naturalization (N-550 or N-570)
- Certificate of birth abroad of a U.S. citizen (Form FS-240 or FS-545)
- Alien Registration Card (INS Form 551, commonly known as "green card")
- Proof of income for every household member over the age of 18 for the 30 days prior to your appointment date.
- Wages (4 consecutive weeks)
- Social Security (verification of gross amount from the source)

- Pension (verification of gross amount from the source)
 - EAEDC-TANF (Award letter)
 - Self-Employment (Most current *Certified tax return)
 - Rental Income (Most current *Certified tax return)
 - Child Support (court order, DOR print out, or notarized letter from ex-spouse)
 - Unemployment (4 consecutive weeks)
 - Lease/Full name address and phone number of Landlord
 - Mortgage statement/Tax bill, Home Owners Insurance
 - Current Gas and Electric bills
- *If taxes are self-prepared an IRS tax transcript is needed and can be obtained by calling 1-800-829-1040

Eligible Applicant Information

Eligibility for home energy assistance is based on several factors, including (but not limited to) household size and combined gross annual income of household members. Household income cannot equal more than [60% of Massachusetts' estimated State Median Income](#) (for example in 2023, \$55,461 for a family of 2 and \$81,561 for a family of 4). To learn if you are eligible, apply [Portal - Customer Portal \(toapply.org\)](#). Once you are determined eligible for fuel assistance, you will be mailed an eligibility letter stating the amount of your benefit. You may also call our automated phone system at **1-866-216-6200**, which is available 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week. You will need to enter your Social Security Number to access information about your application, including status, benefit level, and any payments made to your heating account.

Important Note: Payments may not show up on your heating bill immediately. Always attempt to make payments on your bill, even if you are not able to pay the full amount. Fuel Assistance encourages you to maintain a good standing with your heating company so our staff will be able to negotiate on your behalf if you receive a shut-off notice.

Discount

If you are eligible for fuel assistance through LIHEAP, you may also be eligible for a discount on your other utilities. The gas and electric companies offer a discount if the bill is in the name of the Head of Household listed on your fuel assistance application. Fuel Assistance will automatically notify all utility companies. Additionally, Verizon offers a discount called Lifeline: contact them directly to determine your eligibility.

Consumption Benefits

You may be eligible for an additional benefit if the cost of heat in your home over the last 12 months exceeds the threshold set for your heating cost. The consumption threshold and benefit amount are determined by our funding source and is subject to change each year. Consumption threshold amounts and benefit levels are announced when the fuel program begins.