Buncombe County Department of Social Services/Human Services

ENERGY PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded block grant program that is comprised of three different programs - Crisis Intervention Program (CIP), Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Weatherization. There are also non-Federal Crisis Intervention Programs – Duke Energy Progress Share the Light, Piedmont Natural Gas Share the Warmth, Duke Energy Progress NC Settlement Rate, and Wake Electric Round Up

To maximize the success of this program, outreach to county residents through key community partner stakeholders, each county department of social services is required to develop and implement an Energy Program Outreach Plan (EPOP). This plan is a framework to assure that eligible households are made aware of the assistance available through these programs.

The county director and/or his/her designee is required to develop the EPOP, which addresses outreach and application activities related to the Energy Programs. The Outreach Plan is due to North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) by **July 31, 2025**.

Each county must form an outreach planning committee that creates the opportunity for county level collaboration to discuss and plan how to effectively reach county residents to inform them of the services provided by the energy programs. The committee should meet at least twice yearly; September for outreach planning related to LIEAP and April to review the outcomes related to LIEAP and to plan for outreach activities for summer weather. *Energy Assistance Outreach Plan*

Answer all questions below. Address CIP, non-Federal CIP, and LIEAP were appropriate:

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Director of Social Services should engage a number of various community partners such as Vendors, Housing Authority, Public Libraries, Public School System/Local Colleges/Head Start, Legal Services, Meals on Wheels, Media, Public Health/Health Centers, Churches, Food Banks, Councils on Aging/Senior Centers, Community based Indian organizations, Volunteer Programs, Vocational Rehabilitation Offices, and Transportation, services, etc.

1. Provide a list of committee members and their agencies.

   The Buncombe Emergency Assistance Coordinating Network (BEACON) is a group of member agencies that meet bi-monthly for outreach and problem solving. This group serves as the committee.

   See a listing of agencies and members on the next page.

2. Provide potential meeting dates, times, locations, as well as agenda topics.

July 22, 2025- 9 am, virtual meeting	Jan 28, 2026- 9 am, virtual meeting
Sept 23, 2025- 9 am, virtual meeting	Mar 24, 2026- 9 am, virtual meeting
Nov 25, 2025- 9 am, virtual meeting	May 26, 2026- 9 am, virtual meeting

Define how DSS/DHS will work with the committee as well as any other agencies to collaborate regarding the Energy Program and how outreach will be provided to the citizens in your area.

The mission of the committee is to coordinate the efficient, effective and compassionate provision of emergency assistance through information sharing and joint problem solving by member agencies. Each agency will be provided information about LIEAP and CIP guidelines, services and application procedures along with outreach materials to share with their customers.

1. What is the process for referring customers? What marketing tools or items will be used (please provide a copy of your previous marketing materials & how you plan to enhance those in the future)?

Program flyers are distributed at community agencies and Human Services. Information is also listed on the county website. Applicants are directed to EPASS, to apply by phone, or to apply in person if they choose.

2. What strategy does the county have, to continue collaborative efforts with community partners to complete outreach activities to target potential eligible households including individuals and families?

The Council on Aging offers paper applications or to assist with EPASS applications during their home visits if appropriate. These applications will be submitted to HHS for processing. Eblen Charities assists with EPASS applications for their customers if needed.

3. What additional activities will be conducted to target households with members with children under 5, age 60 and over and disabled?

We will use a Nixle communications system several times during the heating season to perform robocalls to public assistance recipients, targeting households with children under 5, age 60 and older, and the disabled. These calls provide information about the LIEAP program and how to apply.

Media involvement is vital to the success to outreach activities. How will your county utilize media such as newspapers, social media, radio and television stations to publicize the Energy Programs?

The Health and Human Services Communications team will send out a press release to the local newspaper, radio stations, news websites, and television stations. They also add this information

to the Buncombe County Government website www.buncombecounty.org.

1. Provide a list of media outlets that will be used as well as timeframes in which they will be contacted (provide examples of how the county can enhance these efforts):

Asheville Citizen-Times, The Mountain Xpress, Asheville Radio Group, Ashevegas, Asheville Blade, Biltmore Beacon-Mountaineer, Black Mountain News, Carolina Public Press, IHeart Radio, La Voz (Spanish), La Noticia (Spanish), WGZM Radio, Weaverville Tribune, Urban News and WLOS.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

Counties are required to provide application processes for CIP, non-Federal CIP programs, and/or LIEAP. This information must be reported to the NCDHHS annually.

1. Provide hours of operation, location and whether the programs are in house or contracted out. If your agency contracts out to other agencies attach the contract(s).

Applications will be taken in-house at 40 Coxe Asheville NC 28801 from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm Monday through Friday.

BEST PRACTICES:

Best practices are a method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results. Best practices are essential to the program.

1. If your county has gone above and beyond what is listed on this form please provide this information below:

2. Any additional comments or activities for CIP, non-Federal CIP, and/or LIEAP:

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Your contact information is essential to the success of the Energy Programs. Please complete the following information.

Name: Phillip Hardin

Address: P.O. Box 7408 Asheville NC 28802

Telephone: 828-250-5500

Email: phillip.hardin@buncombecounty.org

Please indicate which program:

- ☑ LIEAP
- ☑ CIP

This plan must be approved by the local Board of Social Services/Human Services Board or local agency governing body prior to submission. Refer to the latest Dear County Director Letter for instructions on how to submit this document to the North Carolina State office.

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Board of Social Services/Human Services or governing body Signature

_____

Date

_____

Director's Signature

_____

Date