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## **Governor Rell Announces State Begins Taking Applications for Winter Heating Aid**

Governor M. Jodi Rell announced the state will begin taking applications today for winter heating aid for eligible low-income and some middle-income households under state energy assistance programs.

The Governor said with heating oil prices expected to top \$5 a gallon, the state intends to distribute a record \$84 million this winter to more than 90,000 households. This year's plan makes substantial increases in "safety net" benefit levels for the elderly, low-income families, the elderly and other vulnerable households.

"We have all watched heating oil prices reach record levels and know for certain that many Connecticut families and senior citizens are headed for a financial crisis just to stay warm this winter if we do not act now," Governor Rell said.

To apply, call the Department of Social Service winter heating aid hotline at 1-800-842-1132 or visit the agency's Web site at [www.ct.gov/dss](http://www.ct.gov/dss) for full information on eligibility requirements.

Last winter, the state provided \$69.9 million in energy assistance to 86,257 households. This year's aid will be distributed through the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) for low-income families and the state Contingency Heating Assistance Program (CHAP) for households with higher incomes.

Both CEAP and CHAP are administered through the state Department of Social Services and are coordinated through regional Community Action Agencies. Eligible households can start receiving the aid on November 3.

Basic benefits for CEAP range from \$400 to \$675 for homeowners and renters whose heat is not included in the rent; and up to \$270 for tenants whose heat is included. Also, households using "deliverable" fuels – heating oil and propane – may be eligible for a one-time \$400 crisis assistance benefit.

Safety net assistance benefits of up to \$625 a delivery may also be authorized for households if they use up their initial and crisis assistance benefits. This year's program increases the number of safety net deliveries from two to three.

Eligibility is based on household size, income and liquid assets. The following are examples of eligibility for CEAP:

- Households with maximum income at 150 percent of the federal poverty level. (Family of four with an income of \$31,800.)
- Families with incomes at 200 percent of federal poverty level if household includes disabled person or someone 60 or older (\$42,400 for a family of four)

Households with higher incomes may be eligible for a \$300 benefit and \$325 crisis benefit through CHAP:

- Households with 60 percent of median state income (Example: \$56,293 for family of four)

Applicants also can sign up at one of several Community Action Agencies around the state (see attached list) or can call 2-1-1 Infoline for the location of the nearest agency.

The state's fuel oil assistance programs are funded primarily through the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant. State officials anticipate receiving at least \$40.9 million from the LIHEAP program. The state has historically received tens of millions of dollars more in the LIHEAP "contingency" fund awarded at the discretion of the President. Governor Rell and other New England governors have been pressing Congress to increase LIHEAP funding for this winter.

"We will use every resource available to the state of Connecticut to keep our families and seniors safe and warm this winter," Governor Rell said. "High gas and grocery prices continue to place tremendous burdens on budgets everywhere and our most vulnerable citizens must be reassured there will be help for them when they need it most this winter. It is important they apply as soon as possible for energy assistance and that can begin as early as Monday."

#### **Community Action Agencies:**

- **The Community Action Committee of Danbury, Inc.** (203) 748-5422
- **New Opportunities, Inc. (Waterbury area)** (203) 756-8151
- **Bristol Community Organization, Inc.** (860) 582-7490
- **Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.** (860) 223-2288
- **Community Renewal Team, Inc. (Hartford area)** (860) 560-5800 or 1-800-798-3805; **(Middletown area)** (860) 347-4465 ext.223 or 224
- **ACCESS, Inc. (Willimantic - Danielson area)** (860) 450-7423
- **Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (Norwich-New London area)** (860) 425-6681
- **New Opportunity for Greater Meriden** (203) 235-0278 (sponsored by New Opportunities, Inc.)
- **Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc.** (203) 387-7700
- **TEAM, Inc. (Derby-Ansonia-Shelton area)** (203) 736-5420

- **Action for Bridgeport Community Development, Inc.** (203) 384-6904
- **Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now, Incorporated** (203) 899-2484
- **CTE, Inc. (Stamford area)** (203) 352-4846