

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 14, 2009

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Governor Rell Authorizes \$2M in Heating Aid to State's Homeless, Domestic Violence Shelters

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced a plan to direct up to \$2 million in federal energy assistance funding to Connecticut's extensive network of shelters for the homeless and victims of domestic violence.

"A rare surplus in federal heating aid funding is allowing us to bring additional support to our non-profit emergency shelter providers," Governor Rell said. "I have directed the Department of Social Services to distribute as much as \$2 million to shelter programs based on heating costs they incurred last winter."

The one-time boost in funding is part of Governor Rell's larger plan to allocate \$28 million in surplus funds from the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Block Grant. The funding can only be allocated to energy programs and the bulk of it – \$16 million – must be used by September 30 or the state will be forced to return the money to the federal government.

Department of Social Services staff will poll shelter programs to determine their energy costs for last winter then send reimbursement checks out of the \$2 million.

"This allocation will provide a sorely-needed infusion of dollars directly to the front lines of the human service agencies where many of our most vulnerable citizens turn in a time of personal crisis," Governor Rell said. "Helping shelter programs cover the cost of winter heating is an especially productive use of this surplus federal funding."

The Governor said DSS will amend the state energy assistance plan and work with the Legislature's Appropriations, Human Services and Energy & Technology Committees in submitting it to federal authorities for expected approval.

The surplus funding is planned for 44 shelter programs for the homeless and 16 shelter programs for residents who need protection from domestic violence.

Connecticut will be able to carry over \$12 million of the \$28 million in surplus energy assistance funds to help cover winter heating costs for eligible households next winter. Later this week, Governor Rell is expected to announce further steps for the allocating the remainder of the \$16 million that must be spent by September 30.

In a related initiative, the Governor announced in May a commitment of \$10.8 million in federal stimulus funds for a state housing program aimed at reducing homelessness by providing assistance for rent, utility bills and relocation costs.

The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program offers a comprehensive range of services including rental assistance, security deposits, utility deposits and utility bill payments, moving cost assistance, motel or hotel vouchers, housing relocation and stabilization services including outreach, housing search, legal services and credit repair. The Department of Social Services is currently reviewing proposals from organizations responding to a request for proposals.