**SECTION III (Illinois LIHEAP Manual 2011)**

**OUTREACH**

Outreach is the agency’s first contact with a potential client. This contact may be as direct

as a *walk-in* client who has questions about energy assistance or as indirect as a person

reading an agency’s program flyer posted on the bulletin board at the local grocery store.

Agencies perform many outreach activities during the course of a normal day.

**Outreach Responsibilities**

Required by the grant agreement, agencies must carry out the following responsibilities

with regard to outreach:

\_ General information brochures and/or posters that include the agency name,

address and telephone number will be disseminated throughout the services

area.

\_ Local offices of other energy-related agencies and low-income service

providers will be contacted to coordinate outreach/publicity efforts and to

implement referral mechanisms.

\_ Other groups, clubs, churches, schools and local units of government will be

contacted to coordinate outreach/publicity efforts.

\_ The offices of State and U.S. Senators and Representatives and other

officials such as township supervisors will be contacted to coordinate

referrals and publicity efforts.

\_ A news release about the program, which contains a program description,

eligibility criteria, and application procedures including a list of the

documentation that the applicant is expected to provide will be developed

and utilized.

\_ Other local service agencies will be contacted to arrange for sites for intake

that are preferably transportation accessible to disabled persons and visible

at the community level (i.e., senior centers, nutrition sites, etc.).

\_ Local resources such as DHS and community colleges will be contacted to

arrange for interpreters as needed.

\_ Where appropriate, door-to-door canvassing will be conducted to identify

potential applicants.

\_ Top priority will be placed on outreach efforts to seniors, disabled and lowincome

minority heads of households, but without discrimination against any

other population groups.

To summarize, the agency must develop outreach procedures that ensure the eligible

population is aware of and has access to LIHEAP benefits.

It is important that each agency develop a positive working relationship with groups in the

community that have regular contact with low-income populations.

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**Outreach Plan**

Because proper outreach is so critical, agencies should devote time and effort to developing

an Outreach Plan. The plan should include the number and time commitments of outreach

staff employed by the agency, as well as, volunteers and other staff not employed by the

agency. An intake schedule should be devised that lists the sites, dates and times each site

will be taking applications. Also, a list of resources that can be contacted to arrange for

interpreters should be included. Training procedures for all outreach workers must be

devised and delineated in the Outreach Plan. Training guidelines should include times, size

of groups, handout materials, etc.

**Coordination and Referral Procedures**

LIHEAP is only one of several residential energy assistance programs. Often a client who

is not eligible for LIHEAP may be eligible for a utility-sponsored program such as “Add a

Dollar,” “Share the Warmth,” “Rate Relief” or “Dollar More”. The agency needs to be

aware of these other energy assistance programs and include such information in outreach

materials.

In addition to make referrals to energy assistance programs, they agency should determine

other needs of the household and make the appropriate referrals to other low-income

service providers. For example, does the household know about and utilize

benefits/programs such as Circuit Breaker tax relief, food stamps, CSBG, IHWAP,

Supplemental Security Income (SSI), senior services such as Homemaker and Chore

Service, nutrition programs, Head Start or local discount programs.

Adequate information should be available for agency staff to coordinate services and refer

clients responsibly at the local level. It is strongly advised that a directory of services be

complied and routinely updated. The Service Directory should be developed for

distribution to both the outreach worker and the client. At a minimum it should include the

information below:

\_ program title

\_ program components

\_ eligibility criteria

\_ limitations on availability

\_ contact agency/person and phone number

A possible entry in the Service Directory could resemble the following:

PROGRAM NAME: Jaycees Neighborhood Repair Program

Contact Person: John Brown

Agency: Jaycees

Address: 2714 W. Elm, Center City, Illinois 60000

Telephone: 312/555-5678

Effective date: Ongoing

Eligibility criteria: Age 60 or over, must reside within Maple Grove

subdivision

Program description: At request of individual, Jaycees (volunteers) make

repairs/improvements on homes (interior and/or

exterior); up to $400 in materials may be used.

Finally, as a low-income service provider, the agency will regularly receive inquiries and

referrals from various agencies, hotlines and clients. The service directory will assist in the

proper routing of these calls. The following toll-free hotlines can be of assistance to you

and your clients.

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HOTLINE AGENCY PURPOSE

800/252-8966 Illinois Department onAging

Seniors with diverse needs

800/843-6154 DHS-Public Aid Family needs

800/252-2873 DCFS – Child Abuse

Hotline

Child abuse and neglect

800/524-0795 IL Commerce Commission,

Consumer Service Division

Concerns about ICC

regulated utilities

877/411-WARM

(9276)

Keep Warm Illinois \_ Households needing

home energy

assistance and

weatherization

\_ Energy cost savings

tips and tips to stay

warm, healthy and

safe during winter

**Consumer Education**

Consumer education should be predicated upon raising the awareness of LIHEAP

applicants about energy conservation by providing energy-saving tips and related

brochures to LIHEAP applicants; providing information about community-based

resources to assist LIHEAP applicants in securing affordable energy-saving appliances;

referring LIHEAP applicants to community-based workshops and other energy-related

educational program sites; and organizing energy conservation workshops.

It is recommended that agencies provide a consumer education packet for each LIHEAP

applicant. Consideration should be given to developing materials which

explain/demonstrate energy conservation techniques. Information to help strengthen the

LIHEAP applicant’s financial literacy should also be provided. This includes, but is not

limited to, information on spending habits and priorities, budgeting, and saving. This

education effort could make the difference between the client being able to pay the bill or

being disconnected.

**Publicity**

Good program publicity is critical. Whether your agency expends its funds in a month or

still has money left at the end of the year, a good publicity effort lets all potential clients

know when and where to apply to LIHEAP. Furthermore, publicity aimed at the general

public lets the communities you serve know the good things you are doing— bad news

travels fast; good news takes an effort!

Agencies are encouraged to participate in activities that will educate the public and

publicize the program such as writing newspaper articles, giving presentations before

local organizations, doing presentations for children during classroom sessions or

assemblies, and participating in local cable television public service programs and

announcements.