



**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
RESOURCES**

COMMUNITY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE OF HOME ENERGY PROGRAMS

OUTREACH PLAN

PROGRAM YEAR 2008



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Introduction

The Maryland Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) administers the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and the Electric Universal Services Program (EUSP). The purpose is to help low income families pay their utility bills, minimize heating crisis and make energy costs more affordable. To meet this challenge, OHEP must conduct outreach to create awareness of the programs benefits to the public and targeted population in all the 24 jurisdictions of the state. Program changes have been made as a result, the income guidelines went from a maximum of 150% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to a maximum of 175% of the FPL. This changed provided an added opportunity for increased Outreach Activities in all jurisdictions.

Since FY 2001, more than 282,000 different households have received OHEP benefits. However, with the move to an expanded target population there is a need for diverse and creative outreach strategies that will help reach the added population. This plan provides a road map on how OHEP intends to increase their Outreach efforts.

Mission

The mission of the Office of Home Energy Programs is to help low income Maryland families pay their energy bills on a regular basis by making energy costs affordable and minimizing energy crises. This mission is achieved through serving the customer with a comprehensive energy strategy including financial assistance, education, promotion of energy conservation methods, and linkages to other community resources and energy suppliers.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 as amended, Section 2605 (B) (3) and Section 2605 (B) (15), requires outreach activities to be conducted to reach specific target populations. The first referenced section, referred to as Assurance Number 3, requires the State to:

“Conduct outreach activities designed to assure that eligible households, especially households with elderly individuals or disabled individuals, or both, and household with high home energy burdens, are made aware of the assistance available under this title, and any similar energy-related assistance available under subtitle B of title V1 (relating to community services block grant program) or under any other provision of law which carries out programs which were administered under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 before the date of the enactment of this Act.”

OHEP meets and implements these requirements in each of the Maryland's jurisdictions by designing its outreach activities to ensure that eligible households, especially the elderly and disabled are made aware of the energy assistance and all related energy resources. While the legislative and regulatory requirements for outreach are specified for LIHEAP, efforts by OHEP and its LAAs shall encompass the EUSP as well.

The purpose of outreach is to increase MEAP and EUSP awareness statewide thereby increasing the number of households served. Part of the effort is to include specific target groups. The State Outreach Team was formed by OHEP. The purpose was to develop and share outreach

ideas and strategies. OHEP believe that the sharing of ideas throughout the state will improve consistency of the message being presented in all outreach strategies. The public will benefit from a uniformed sharing of OHEP information and this is crucial in the enhancement of an effective outreach plan. Members of the committee include State OHEP staff, LAA staff, utility staff, Office of Peoples' Counsel, and representatives of the advocate and non-profit service community (i.e., Fuel Fund of Maryland, Energy Advocates, etc.).

Plan Methodologies

OHEP and each LAA are to develop an Annual Outreach Plan that delineates all activities for the new program year. The Annual Outreach Plan shall be provided using the OHEP Annual Outreach Plan template (Attachment A). This plan shall include a list of activities, objective and goal of the outreach efforts for the year. The plan shall include, but not limited to advertisements, expos, mass mailing, and other campaigns designed to increase outreach activities statewide. It shall include an assurance that the outreach activities will be countywide and captures all targeted population such as aging and disabilities. Local Outreach Plan is incorporated into the State Outreach Plan. LAA Annual Outreach Plans are due to OHEP by the August 5th of each year or as requested by the Statewide Outreach Coordinator. The Annual Outreach Plan document is the agreement to carry out the required activities to inform the public about energy assistance and other related energy resources and is signed by the agency director or designee.

OHEP and each LAA shall develop a monthly Outreach Log that provides monthly data on outreach activities using the existing OHEP designed outreach log template (Attachment B). All LAAs and OHEP must submit a monthly Outreach Log that provides statistical data and activities on types of outreach, number of contacts, etc. This report shall be due to OHEP by the 5th of each month.

OHEP shall assist the LAAs to meet outreach reporting responsibilities and provide information on ideas and strategies on enhancing outreach activities. OHEP shall be responsible for the following:

1. Printing and supply of posters, brochures, flyers, applications, and others to LAAs to display in strategic locations throughout the state for outreach purposes.
2. Issue press releases and articles on the program
3. Participate in public forums to increase the awareness of the availability of energy assistance
4. Develop/produce informational material for use by other federal/private help programs including energy suppliers
5. Provide a toll-free number, **1-800-352-1446**, that is programmed to provide specific information through the voice response system to inquires made in each jurisdiction
6. Conducts special studies to target and enhance outreach activities

The LAA shall ensure that the following list of activities is provided by the agency. If a local Department of Social Services (LDSS) administers the program, affirmation that additional outreach/intake sites are available, including the name(s) and locations of the site(s) is required. Annual Outreach Plans shall demonstrate the establishment of relationships and

partnerships with other organizations serving the community. Activities suggested on the Annual Outreach Plan must include, but not limited to:

1. Sends Mass mailing to previous year's customers including elderly and disabled
2. Make Home visits to disabled or elderly customers who are unable to physically visit the office for application intake
3. Conducts special events to increase program awareness or to take applications
4. Indicate collaboration with other human service agencies and targeted population such as the elderly and disabled
5. Promotes the program through advertisements and community event activities
6. Provide information on Energy Assistance Week activities
7. Place posters, flyers, and brochures in strategic locations to attract new customers or to provide program education

A detailed summary of monthly outreach activities conducted by the LAA that indicated type of activities, number of contacts, location of activity, date of activity, staff time, and expenses record are submitted monthly. Each LAA is required to submit this report by the 5th of each month and/or as requested by the OHEP Outreach Coordinator. The log shall be incorporated in the overall statewide outreach activity reporting responsibility.

Plan Components

The OHEP Outreach Plan components encompassed three major partners:

1. OHEP staff - OHEP has a full-time Outreach Coordinator who is responsible for:
 1. The Coordination, Development, and Monitoring of the OHEP Outreach reports.
 2. Will Coordinate and Collaborate with Local Administering Agencies (LAAs) on monthly reporting of outreach activities
 3. Conduct regular outreach meetings; monitor all LAAs outreach efforts,
 4. Attend all Outreach/Customer Service related meetings, etc.
 5. Collaborate with Utilities partners, state agencies in the development and implementation of all outreach efforts
 6. Conduct or Coordinate Research efforts that seeks to measure the effectiveness of outreach activities and tools
 7. Overall management of Outreach Activities, customer education, and relations statewide
 8. Update and maintenance of OHEP website
2. Local Administering Agencies – LAA's are key participants to the outreach effort. Each LAA will be responsible for:
 1. Implementation of their own Outreach Activity
 2. Design own Outreach measurement tool and submit result
 3. Document and submit Outreach Activity reporting log by the 5th of each month or as requested by the OHEP Outreach Coordinator
 4. Will submit a detailed Annual Outreach Plan by August 5th of the new program year

5. Attend and participate in all Outreach meetings and Telephone Conference Calls to share outreach ideas and strategies.

3. Utility and Community Partners - OHEP has continued to invite and maintain consistency in building relationships with the Utilities and other community partners such of the Fuel fund of Maryland, Maryland Energy Administration etc. OHEP believes that these partnership helps provides additional benefits and enhancement to the outreach efforts. OHEP often collaborate with the Utilities to plan energy expos, application days, and conservation strategies. The relationships help improve OHEP customer relations efforts, increase outreach activities, and improve services to the customers. The utilities help OHEP in these ways:
 1. Identify potential OHEP customers
 2. Help spread the word about OHEP through mail outs flyers included in the energy bill
 3. Collaborate with LAAs in planning energy expos and/or application days
 4. Attends all Outreach meetings and provide information on all utility-related events

Goals and Strategies of the Outreach Plan

There is one primary goal or purpose in conducting outreach activities and that is **to provide energy assistance services to the maximum number of households in the target population as possible**. it is helpful to understand some background and perspective that help create the specific strategies.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for the development and implementation this plan lies with the Maryland Department of Human Resources, Office of Home Energy Programs and its local administering agencies. OHEP, under its designation as the administrator of the federally funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), is required to conduct outreach activities. The LIHEAP law states in Section 2605 (b)(1)(A) “As part of the annual application required by subsection (a), the chief executive officer of each State shall certify that the State agrees to— use the funds available under this title to—conduct outreach activities and provide assistance to low income households....” States must assure such outreach activities in its annual plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under Assurance 3.

Under EUSP, administrative funds may be designated for the purposes of outreach as outlined in the EUSP Plan submitted to and subsequently approved by the Maryland Public Service Commission (Commission). The Commission fulfills an oversight responsibility for the Electric Universal Service Program.

While the State OHEP Office has primary responsibility for implementing outreach efforts, the responsibility is incorporated to local administering agencies (LAA's) by means of agreements or contracts. OHEP, also, recognizes the extreme value of coordinating and working with other partners that have a strategic interest in serving the target population. Those relationships are described in the next section on Strategic Partnerships.

Resource Partnerships

The effort to reach potentially qualified applicants is fortunate to have several organizations acting as partners in the development of strategies and their implementation.

A. Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP)

OHEP is the primary party responsible for the plan. It provides the overall guidance in the development and implementation. Partnerships with the other entities is coordinated and solidified through a State Outreach Team. The Team, already established, meets on a regular basis to develop, coordinate and implement outreach strategies.

B. DHR, Office of Communications

The Office of Communications provides consulting and development services to OHEP. They are responsible for developing and presenting the overall message about DHR. They provide assistance with issuing press releases, posters, brochures, addressing the media, etc.

C. Local Administering Agencies (LAA's)

The LAA's are the agencies under contract or agreement to OHEP responsible for implementing and administering MEAP and EUSP at the local level. LAA's are required as part of their agreement/contract to conduct outreach activities.

D. Energy Suppliers

As the direct beneficiaries of energy assistance benefits, energy suppliers have a vested interest in promoting the use of the programs to those who qualify for assistance. OHEP and its LAA's collaborate with utility companies in developing and implementing outreach strategies.

E. Office of People's Counsel (OPC)

As an advocacy agency whose mission is to protect the consumer, OPC is very much interested in seeing use of MEAP and EUSP maximized. This partnership enables use of OPC resources to help with implementing outreach and the provision of consulting services. OPC regularly participates in the State Outreach Team and conducts its own outreach activities.

F. Energy Advocates

Energy Advocates is an advocacy group comprised of a number of non-profit agencies, government agencies, utilities and other interested persons who are interested in and work towards maximizing the use and development of energy-related services to low-income families.

G. National Association of Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA)

NEADA is leading the effort to develop a nationally focused outreach strategy consisting of standard promotional materials that give the same message from state to state. OHEP has purchased through NEADA an award winning calendar design that presents energy conservation tips.

H. Maryland Energy Administration

Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) partners with OHEP in conservation and energy education activities. In program year 2007, OHEP and MEA collaborated in a Change the Light to Change the World. MEA provided free energy efficient light bulbs to OHEP for use during a special outreach campaign in commemoration of the OHEP Energy Assistance Week.

I. Statistics from DHR Constituent Services

OHEP works closely with DHR Constituent Services and Information is available that identifies the number of energy assistance phone calls received by DHR’s information phone lines by county. The DHR Constituents Services conducts statewide Outreach efforts for all programs administered by DHR, including Energy Assistance.

Outreach Statistics

Distribution of OHEP Literatures and Phone Calls

During the 2007 program year, the DHR Constituent Services received phone calls about energy assistance. The chart below displays the numbers of outreach literatures and phone calls received for energy assistance. Phone calls ranges from obtaining additional information about OHEP programs, request for applications, and referral to local agencies for appointments, etc. For the period July 2006 to September 30, 2007, the following were received:

Number of Phone Call Received About Energy Assistance (Data represent calls through DHR 1-800# only)		
County	FYI 2007 (7/1/06 to 6/30/07)	FYI 2008 (7/1/07 to 9/30/07)
Allegany County	173	34
Anne Arundel County	2,061	542
Baltimore City	11,956	2,501
Baltimore County	5,745	1,614
Calvert County	193	75
Caroline County	149	52
Carroll County	271	88
Cecil County	200	51
Charles County	177	58
Dorchester County	90	31

**Number of Phone Call Received
About Energy Assistance (Data
represent calls through DHR 1-800# only)**

County	FYI 2007 (7/1/06 to 6/30/07)	FYI 2008 (7/1/07 to 9/30/07)
Frederick County	166	41
Garrett County	41	9
Harford County	629	184
Howard County	462	165
Kent County	44	4
Montgomery County	878	213
Prince George's County	2,439	912
Queen Anne's County	63	21
Somerset County	67	19
St. Mary's County	106	37
Talbot County	39	9
Washington County	169	45
Wicomico County	240	46
Worcester County	119	17
Total Phone Received	26,477	6,768

Note: OHEP is already at 26% of calls received compared to total calls received for 2007 program year. This reflects a 1% increase in calls received the same time last program year.

Table - One	Two	Three	Four
Energy Assistance Brochures/ Application/Educational Materials Distribution from July 07 – Sept. 07	Additional Staff Time, Mileage & Other Outreach Expenses from July 07 – Sept. 07	Expenses for Advertisement, Promotional items from July 07 – Sept. 07	Total Number of LAAs Outreach Contacts incl. mass mailing of applications to previous year customers, etc From July 07 – Sept. 07
FYI 2008	FYI 2008	FYI 2008	FYI 2008
151,490	\$26,234	\$86,380	201,386
Energy Assistance Brochures/ Application/Educational Materials Distribution from July 06 – June 07	Additional Staff Time & Mileage & Other Outreach Expenses from July 06 – June 07	Expenses for Advertisement, Promotional items from July 2007 – June 2006	Total Number of LAAs Outreach Contacts From July 06 – June 07
FYI 2007	FYI 2007	FYI 2008	FYI 2007
238,299	\$97,853	\$145,054	1,064,433

Note: **The total outreach expenditures includes expenses incurred as a result of outreach activity such as over-time for staff working after hours in outreach activities which are not covered by outreach funds.** The Constituents Service Program participates in all State and County Community events such as State Fair, County Fair, Baltimore City Stone Soul Picnic and these activities bring in over ten thousand residents and the OHEP information is on display and staff available to answer questions. Those numbers are not captured on this statistical data. This number reflects contacts made by Local Administering Agencies (LAAs) OHEP specific events only.

This information provides statistical reference on calls, OHEP literature distribution, and expenditures. It should be noted that EUSP outreach funding provides only \$200,000. Only one jurisdiction has a full-time outreach coordinator. The remaining 19 LAAs has staff who works on Outreach in addition to data entry, intake specialist and most cases the director of the local office is also the outreach staff. It also provides an opportunity to establish a baseline to later determine if an effort has been productive. It is OHEP's intention to improve and continuing this survey with the beginning of the next program year. It does need to be recognized that the initial survey is of a limited nature.

Goals and Strategies

In order to provide focus to the overall outreach strategy, individual strategies are linked with specific goals. It should be noted that one strategy may actually help to achieve more than one of goals listed. Furthermore, while the specifics are intended to be somewhat comprehensive they are by no means exhaustive. The strategies indicated are a compilation of what has been implemented in the past and deemed successful, ideas from Outreach Team and other group discussions, and what research indicates. Over time, opportunities for additional effort are likely to become available. These opportunities are to be acted upon as they fit into the larger strategy. In effect, they are to be added to the planned effort to make this plan a truly dynamic and working plan.

Goal 1 - Improve awareness of MEAP and EUSP to potential applicants and to persons who interact with potential applicants such as public and non-profit agency personnel.

A. DHR intra-agency effort

1. Issue informational transmittals through and in conjunction with the DHR Family Investment Administration (FIA) explaining the OHEP programs and how and where to make referrals. The transmittals go to all 24 Local Department of Social Services (DSS) throughout the state.
2. Issue e-mail to all DHR staff providing basic details of the program.
3. Publish an article in the DHR employee newsletter.
4. Provide posters, brochures and applications to each DSS site.
5. Conduct presentations for DSS personnel.

6. Provide posters, brochures and applications to all agencies that contract with or administer CSA programs (homeless, domestic violence, adult services, etc.)
7. Mail information and applications to Food Stamp recipients.
8. Arrange for each non DSS LAA to take applications at the DSS.
9. Provide pertinent information (brochures, posters, etc.) to DHR Constituent Services.
10. Mail brochures to DHR stakeholders.
11. Develop a comprehensive mailing list of service delivery organizations and mail informational material to them.

B. Inter-agency strategies – State agencies

1. Develop an OHEP information kit for distribution purposes to the following state agencies or organizations. These agencies often deal with a population that would qualify for assistance through OHEP.
 - a. Targeted units of the State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHCD) ,i.e., Pharmacy Assistance, WIC, etc.
 - b. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), i.e, Weatherization
 - c. Department of Labor and Licensing and Regulation (DLLR)
 - d. Members of the Maryland Legislature
 - e. Office of People’s Counsel
 - f. Maryland Public Service Commission (External Relations)
 - g. Maryland Department of Aging
 - h. Provide information about OHEP to Maryland Relay.

C. Community Based Organizations (CBO)

1. Develop a mailing list of non-profit agencies and distribute information kit.
 - i. Non-profit social service agencies
 - j. Transitional Housing programs
 - k. Meals on Wheels
 - l. Volunteers of America
 - m. Salvation Army
 - n. Targeted groups (interest groups)
 - o. Head Start programs
 - p. AARP local chapter
2. Develop a mailing list of schools and distribute information kit.
3. Thrift shops (Value Village, Salvation Army, Goodwill)
4. Write articles that can be used in school, agency, church, etc. newsletters.
5. Develop contacts with local Housing Authorities to determine best methods of disseminating information to persons in subsidized housing.
6. Distribute information to Purchase of Care Day Care centers. Obtain list from Child Care Administration.
7. Distribute information to organizations serving immigrants. Obtain list from MD Office of New Americans.

D. Unions

1. Develop a mailing list of appropriate unions and distribute information kit. For example,
 - a. AFL-CIO
 - b. AFSCME
 - c. Food and Service Workers
 - d. Hospital Workers

E. Utilities

1. Develop a coordinated strategy with each utility to assure a consistent message and accurate distribution of information
2. Bill inserts and company newsletters
3. Advertising in media
4. Web sites
5. Posters and brochures at bill payment sites
6. Applications and instructions

F. Businesses

1. Information to businesses for inclusion in employee newsletters
2. Discount chains - Walmart, Target, Ames, TJ Max, Ross, "Dollar" stores, etc.
3. Supermarkets
4. Corner groceries
5. City Markets – Lexington, Cross Street, Hollins, etc.
6. Hospitals
7. Home Health Care Companies
8. ACE – BGE and PEPCO Bill Payment locations
9. Beauty salons and barber shops

G. Faith Community

1. Contract with a consultant to develop and implement a plan to involve the faith community in promoting the use of EUSP/MEAP.
2. Distribute information to faith-based service organizations (i.e., Baltimore City Interdenominational Alliance, Associated Catholic Charities, Associated Jewish Charities, Lutheran Social Services, Individual churches, etc.)

J. Professional and Academic Organizations

1. National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter
2. University of Maryland School of Social Work Social Work Outreach Service
3. Maryland Association of Non-Profit Agencies

I. General Public

1. Distribute posters
2. Mail post cards
3. Translate brochures and applications into Spanish and other languages as needed.
4. Issue press advisories:

- a. June - Early June prior to start of program
 - b. July – with the actual start of program
 - c. August – with first payment issuance
 - d. September – focusing on preparation for the winter
 - e. December – Reminding of availability of help for winter heating
 - f. April – Announcing end of the program
5. Update OHEP website.
- a. Place a PDF file of the OHEP application on the website for download
 - b. Place and maintain links to other pertinent sites
 - i. Maryland Energy Administration
 - ii. Public Service Commission
 - iii. Office of Peoples' Counsel
 - iv. Department of Health and Human Services
 - v. LIHEAP Clearinghouse
6. Identify other sites that should have OHEP information and/or link to OHEP
- a. OHEP Local Agencies
 - b. Utilities
 - c. Agencies
 - d. Faith-based organizations
7. Ads or articles in community newspapers – get list LAA's
8. Ads in target group media (Hispanic newspapers, African-American newspapers, AARP newsletter, etc,)
9. Articles and ads in non-profit media (AARP, NAACP, Urban League, Native American Center, University of Maryland Extension Service, etc.)

Goal 2 - Improve the application and application process to assure it is efficient and customer friendly.

- 1. Mail applications to previous year applicants.
- 2. Add to the benefit notice, "You must submit an application each year in order to qualify for a grant."
- 3. Make the application available in Spanish.
- 4. Place application in PDF form on OHEP website. Allow PDF file to be put on other websites.
- 5. Allow other websites to link to DHR website.

Goal 3 - Increase the number of applications taken

While all strategies are ultimately intended to increase the number of applications submitted, specific efforts are planned for taking applications directly.

- 1. Mail partially completed applications to applicants from previous year
- 2. Identify appropriate locations for taking applications off-site.

3. Arrange for non-regular office hours.
4. Develop incentives for applicants.
5. Seek expanded volunteer sites to take and assist applicants.
6. Provide incentives for applying.
7. Increase the number of applications in the Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County. Procure consultants to develop specific plans for these areas and to implement those plans.

Goal 4 - Increase the penetration rate of applications in identified areas.

1. Analysis of data is used to determine the best locations for improving the penetration rate for applications.
2. Maintain a retention rate of 60% from the previous year's applicants by mailing applications to previous applicants.

Goal 5 - Increase the penetration rate of applications with specific target populations -- Working families, Elderly, Disabled, Subsidized Housing.

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Block Grant, the funding mechanism for the MEAP requires that certain groups be targeted to receive assistance. Section 2605 (b)(3) states that LIHEAP funds agrees to use fund to "conduct outreach activities designed to assure that eligible households, especially households with elderly individuals or disabled individuals, or both and households with high home energy burdens, are made aware of the assistance available under this title...".

1. Identify organizations that work directly with these target groups and provide promotional material, conduct presentations, hold special application fairs, etc. to better reach these groups.
3. Working families – unions, religious organizations
4. Seniors – AARP, Office on Aging, community newspapers, Meals on Wheels
5. Disabled –
6. Subsidized Housing – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), local housing authorities
7. Conduct mailings to target groups for information and also for those that were previously in the program.

Goal 6 – Develop effective and consistent promotional material that establishes clear recognition of the program and what it provides.

It is the desire of the Outreach Team and other partners that the message to promote is that the program while having the ability to deal with crisis needs to be understood more as a prevention program. EUSP is strictly geared towards shut-off prevention and affordability. All promotional material is to reflect this message. During FY 2002, applicants whose gas or electric

service was off numbered 15,047 at time of application. A measure of success in this area is for those numbers to decrease.

1. Make use of tabletop and free standing display boards for use at conferences, presentations, fairs, etc. These are available for use by LAA's as requested.
2. Brochures
3. Post cards
4. Printed Ads
5. Billboards
6. Press releases
7. Fact sheets
8. Compact Disks with program information. This could include
 - a. The application form in PDF format
 - b. Power point presentation about OHEP programs
 - c. Benefit amounts
 - d. Screen savers
9. Promotional giveaways – with OHEP imprint for agency personnel
The intent here is to keep the program name readily accessible to agency personnel for the purpose of making referrals for potentially eligible persons. This can be done through items listed here or similar type items.
 - a. Blankets
 - b. Post-it notepads
 - c. Pens
 - d. Coffee mugs
 - e. Mouse pads
 - f. Pen and pencil holders
10. Promotional giveaways for applicants
 - a. Calendars
 - b. Blankets
 - c. Compact fluorescent light bulbs
 - d. Supermarket \$5 gift certificate when client applies
11. Prepare press release ready to distribute upon the advent of snow or severe cold weather. Experience has demonstrated that people apply in greater numbers when a snowstorm occurs or the weather is having a severe cold spell.
12. Work with NEADA to develop promotional material. OHEP has purchased through NEADA items such as calendars with energy conservation tips, posters and postcards.

Goal 7 – Develop and present a consistent message about MEAP and EUSP.

The State Outreach Team working with the DHR Communications Office shall develop the appropriate message and wording. The basic message is to emphasize is that OHEP programs are designed to promote affordability of energy bills and regular payment of those bills. Crafting of the wording is a creative process. A recommendation is that wording be used to imply that if you do not apply then you are giving up “free money”. For example Different messages can be developed in relation to the target groups, but each message should be consistent.

Goal 8 – Maintain maximum accessibility to obtaining information about OHEP programs and application process

1. Implement and publicize the availability of a toll free phone number to contact administering agencies.
2. LAA's are to offer a range of application options to assure complete accessibility to the application process. This may include taking applications in the main office, satellite offices, other community organizations, offering non-work hours such as evenings and weekends, or in-home visits.
3. Provide a downloadable application form on the OHEP web site.

Timeline

The timeline for outreach activities will continue virtually year-round. Presented here is a beginning and basic timeline for initiating the implementation of outreach strategies that are the responsibility of the State OHEP Office.

FYI 2007

Feb	Energy Assistance Week – OHEP/MEA Change Light to Change the World Campaign Energy Expo – BGE/OHEP Planned Event – Ministries Radecke Avenue
March	OHEP Energy and Poverty Symposium – BGE. WGLS, Pepco Collaboration Presentation at Romanian Contingency – International Resources Group
June	Distribute Proposed OHEP Outreach Plan to LAA's with request for LAA's to develop local plans Statewide Outreach Meeting to discuss strategies and ideas for the New Year
July	Distribution of brochures to Community non-profit organizations/Faith-Based Mega Churches
August	Issue Information Transmittal to LDSS Issue Department-wide e-mail about energy programs
September	Statewide Outreach Meeting Table Display at Kingship Conference
November	Statewide Outreach Meeting Distribution of brochures to Katrina Victims Emergency Preparedness Workshop Presentation at Welfare Advocacy conference Presentation w/ETHS/HPP conference
December	Montgomery Co. Energy Assistance Expo w/ Pepco

FYI 2008

May	Print brochures and applications. Statewide Outreach Meeting Distribute applications and brochures to LAA's and designated agencies
June	Presentation at First Call for Help Presentation and Distribution of brochures to Maryland Department of Aging Senior Information and Assistance Manager Meeting Table Display at Baltimore Ariya Neighborhood Association Festival w/ BGE Distribute Proposed OHEP Outreach Plan to LAA's with request for LAA's to develop local plans
July	Distribution of brochures, posters, and "OHEP How to Apply DVD" to LDSS offices. Mass Mailing of brochures to non-profit organizations in the Baltimore City
August	Statewide Outreach Telephone Conference call Issue Information and "OHEP Frequently Asked Question posters" to LDSS front desk staff
September	Table Display at Kingship Conference

Measuring Success

Evaluating the success of the Outreach Strategic Plan is not a simple conclusion since there are other factors in the life environment that can affect whether people come for assistance.

Amount of activity

MEAP policy and procedures already requires each LAA to maintain an Outreach Log consisting of a list of the activities conducted. These logs are to be collected by the State OHEP Office and compiled to demonstrate the level of activity and potential success. State OHEP will also maintain a log of activities. Data pertinent to each type of activity is to be maintained whether it is number of persons attending a particular event or number of OHEP literatures distributed to the community, etc.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Annual Outreach Plan Template
- B. Monthly Outreach Log
- C. Sample of Annual Outreach Plan by County
- D. List of Outreach Activities by County for Program Year 2007
- E. List of Outreach Activities by County for Program Year 2008
- F. State OHEP Outreach Annual Outreach Plan
- H. OHEP Brochure & Application
- I. OHEP Frequently Asked Questions
- J. Copies of OHEP Flyers
- K. OHEP DVD – How to Apply

Attachment A Annual Outreach Plan Template

Attachment B Monthly Outreach Log

Attachment C Sample of Annual Outreach Plan by County

Attachment D List of Outreach Activities by County for Program Year
2007

Attachment E List of Outreach Activities by County for Program Year
2008

Attachment F State OHEP Outreach Annual Outreach Plan

Attachment H OHEP Brochure & Application

Attachment I OHEP Frequently Asked Questions

Attachment J Copies of OHEP Flyers

Attachment K OHEP DVD – How to Apply