



Seneca Nation of Indians
Tribal Advocate Program

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September 22, 2010

Nick St. Angelo, Director
Division of Energy Assistance
Office of Community Services/ACF/HHS
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W., 5th Floor West
Washington, D.C. 20447

Mr. St. Angelo,

At this time, the Seneca Nation of Indians is submitting the Program Integrity Assessment Supplement for the FY 2011. As mentioned in the initial letter that accompanied the abbreviated model plan for the tribe for FY 2011, additional information was required from other departments to complete this packet. I hope that this completes the necessary requirements for the funding application for FY 2011. If you have any questions, please contact me at (716) 532-4900 ext. 5055, or by email at charisse.jimerson@sni.org. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charisse Jimerson,
Program Director

*Background
supporting
documents
missing.
See attached RFA. 10/25/10
RJA*

ATTACHMENT 1
SAMPLE PROGRAM INTEGRITY ASSESSMENT SUPPLEMENT TEMPLATE
 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

ABSTRACT:

HHS is requiring further detail from States on their FY2011 plans for preventing and detecting fraud, abuse, and improper payments. HHS is also requiring that States highlight and describe all elements of this FY2011 plan which represent improvements or changes to the State's FY2010 plan for preventing and detecting fraud, abuse and improper payment prevention.

State, Tribe or Territory (and grant official): <p style="text-align: center;">Seneca Nation of Indians</p>	Date/Fiscal Year: September 16, 2010/ FY 2011
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RECENT AUDIT FINDINGS

Describe any audit findings of material weaknesses and reportable conditions, questioned costs and other findings cited in FY2010 or the prior three years, in annual audits, State monitoring assessments, Inspector General reviews, or other Government Agency reviews of LIHEAP agency finances.	Please describe whether the cited audit findings or relevant operations have been resolved or corrected. If not, please describe the plan and timeline for doing so in FY2011.	If there is no plan in place, please explain why not.	Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies
<p>There were no audit findings on federal awards for fiscal year ending September 30, 2009.</p> <p>For both fiscal years ending September 30, 2008 and September 30, 2007, one finding was reported on federal awards.</p> <p>The significant applicable deficiency was in regard to the Cost Allocation plan. It had not been updated in a few years. The grants needed to be reviewed and have the indirect costs adjusted as necessary for each fiscal year. It was noted that the allocation rate should be decreased.</p>	<p>The cited audit findings have been resolved as mentioned below.</p> <p>The National Business Center had approved the Seneca Nation of Indians Indirect Cost Proposal through and until September 30, 2009. All agencies that are assessed indirect cost charges will have necessary adjustments made.</p> <p>The Acting Comptroller will update the Indirect Cost Proposal for October 1, 2009 through September 30, 2010.</p>	<p>This section is not applicable at this time.</p>	<p><i>The timely and thorough resolution of weaknesses or reportable conditions as revealed by the audit.</i></p>

COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Describe the State's FY2010 strategies that will continue in FY2011 for monitoring compliance with State and Federal LIHEAP policies and procedures by the State and local administering agencies.	Please highlight any strategies for compliance monitoring from your plan which will be newly implemented as of FY2011.	If you don't have a firm compliance monitoring system in place for FY11, please describe how the State is verifying that LIHEAP policy and procedures are being followed.	Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies
<p>The Seneca Nation of Indians Tribal Advocate Program is responsible for administering the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program Grant. All program regulations and policies are reviewed annually on all levels. This program conducts client intake, verifies eligibility, issues benefits, processes benefit payments, and completes and submits grant reports.</p> <p>The Seneca Nation of Indians Fiscal Affairs Department has a Grants & Contracts office that coordinates and facilitates all aspects of outside funds. All activities of the grant programs are continually monitored. The Grants & Contracts office provides monthly financial statements and reports for review. They also provide a schedule for all of the grant programs on the different reporting requirements and due dates.</p> <p>All grant award letters, budget proposals, budget modifications, and carry-forwards are submitted to the Grants & Contracts office for review. This is the initial step to verify that everything that has been submitted is allowable by the grant. Final review and approval for all of the above is granted by a 16 member Budget & Finance committee.</p> <p>All purchases and vendor payments are processed by the Purchasing and Accounts Payable departments.</p>	<p>There are no newly implemented strategies planned for FY2011 at this time.</p>	<p>This section is not applicable at this time.</p>	<p><i>A sound methodology, with a schedule for regular monitoring and a more effective monitoring tool to gather information.</i></p>

FRAUD REPORTING MECHANISMS

<p>For FY2010 activities continuing in FY2011, please describe all (a) mechanisms available to the public for reporting cases of suspected LIHEAP fraud, waste or abuse? [These may include telephone hotlines, websites, email addresses, etc.] (b) strategies for advertising these resources.</p>	<p>Please highlight any tools or mechanisms from your plan which will be newly implemented in FY2011, and the timeline for that implementation.</p>	<p>If you don't have any tools or mechanisms available to the public to prevent fraud or improper payments, please describe your plan for involving all citizens and stakeholders involved with your program in detecting fraud.</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes of these strategies and systems</p>
<p>All program announcements do include both program locations' contact information. Addresses and phone numbers are included.</p>	<p>A section highlighting contact information as a means of reporting suspected abuse and fraud shall be newly implemented in FY 2011. Previously, only the contact information was provided without a public statement regarding the ability of the public to contact the program regarding abuse and fraud. The slight change of including a statement on all program announcements shall assist in this endeavor. In addition, email addresses shall also be included as a means of contact.</p>	<p>In the event that there may be a case of fraud or improper payment, the vendor relationships that this program has makes it possible to rectify the situation in a timely manner. It is very rare that this occurs and is not caught prior to payment. However, if that is the case, the vendors have worked very well with this program and have not had any problems with sending the payment back.</p>	<p><i>Clear lines of communication for citizens, grantees, clients, and employees to use in pointing out potential cases of fraud or improper payments to State administrators.</i></p>

VERIFYING APPLICANT IDENTITIES

<p>Describe all FY2010 State policies continuing in FY2011 for how identities of applicants and household members are verified.</p>	<p>Please highlight any policy or strategy from your plan which will be newly implemented in FY2011.</p>	<p>If you don't have a system in place for verifying applicant's identities, please explain why and how the State is ensuring that only authentic and eligible applicants are receiving benefits.</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>
<p>Continuing through fiscal year 2011, from FY 2010, identities of applicants and household members are verified through a variety of documents that are provided by the applicants. Each applicant is required to provide at least one form of identification documentation per household member. Acceptable documentation has included:</p>	<p>To enhance this area, we are planning on requiring tribal enrollment identification cards and/or signed tribal enrollment certification letters. With this, we will be looking to verify this information with the Seneca Nation of Indians Clerk's office either via contacting their staff or by requesting and utilizing a tribal enrollment book that</p>	<p>Generally, the Seneca Nation of Indians processes approximately 350 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program applications for service. This amount of clients allows this program to seek pertinent information on a case by case basis, in a timely fashion.</p>	<p><i>Income and energy supplier data that allow program benefits to be provided to eligible individuals.</i></p>

<p>birth certificates, social security cards, school records, court orders, marriage certificates, tribal enrollment identification cards, and tribal enrollment certification letters.</p>	<p>includes a listing of all enrolled members and their current addresses.</p>	
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SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER REQUESTS

<p>Describe the State's FY2011 policy in regards to requiring Social Security Numbers from applicants and/or household members applying for LIHEAP benefits.</p>	<p>Please describe whether the State's policy for requiring or not requiring Social Security numbers is new as of FY2011, or remaining the same.</p>	<p>If the State is not requiring Social Security Numbers of LIHEAP applicants and/or household members, please explain what supplementary measures are being employed to prevent fraud.</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>
<p>For several years, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program applications that the Seneca Nation of Indians utilizes have included space to list each household member's social security number. It is required for each applicant to complete all non-shaded areas of the program application to apply for the program.</p>	<p>The policy for requiring social security numbers for applicants and all household members is not new as of fiscal year 2011. However, the part that is new this fiscal year will be the requirement of providing the actual social security card, or verification letter from the local Social Security Administration office when a new card is requested. If an applicant does not have either, they shall be notified of the requirement and will be required to provide such documentation the next time that they apply for assistance.</p>	<p>No supplementary measures are necessary as all social security numbers are required.</p>	<p><i>All valid household members are reported for correct benefit determination.</i></p>

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CROSS-CHECKING SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS AGAINST GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS/DATABASES

<p>Describe if and how the State used existing government systems and databases to verify applicant or household member identities in FY2010 and continuing in FY2011. (Social Security Administration Enumeration Verification System, prisoner databases, Government death records, etc.)</p>	<p>Please highlight which, if any, policies or strategies for using existing government databases will be newly implemented in FY2011.</p>	<p>If the State won't be cross checking Social Security Numbers and ID information with existing government databases, please describe how the State will supplement this fraud prevention strategy.</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>

<p>At this time, there is currently no system or process in place to verify applicant or household member identities using the agencies listed above. Access to this information is limited to those that have signed a release of information for the Social Security Administration. We currently do not have access to these agency's databases from within our office (ex. computer login to system)</p>	<p>There are no plans in the near future to seek direct access to use existing government databases. We will expand the process of requesting a release of information for the SSA to allow access to this program through contact with the agency rather than directly through the database. The State of New York has been working on getting access for their certifiers and alternate certifiers. Perhaps once that system has been established, we can pursue a similar route.</p>	<p>This section is not applicable at this time.</p>	<p><i>Use of all available database systems to make sound eligibility determination.</i></p>
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VERIFYING APPLICANT INCOME

<p>Describe how the State or designee used State Directories of new hires or similar systems to confirm income eligibility in FY2010 and continuing in FY2011.</p>	<p>Please highlight any policies or strategies for using new hire directories which will be newly implemented in FY2011.</p>	<p>If the State won't be using new hire directories to verify applicant and household member incomes how will the State be verifying the that information?</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>
<p>The Seneca Nation of Indians LIHEAP has not used State Directories of new hires to confirm income eligibility in FY 2010. However, we do work with the Seneca Nation of Indians Payroll Department, New York State Department of Labor (unemployment), Social Security Administration, and local Department of Social Services offices to verify wages and benefits. The majority of these agencies do require applicant consent or a signed release of information.</p>	<p>For fiscal year 2011, we will be looking at implementing a process of requesting signed releases of information from all applicants for the purpose of verifying wage and benefit information that has been provided or to request that information for those that are lacking the documentation.</p>	<p>If the agencies already listed do not have dealings with an applicant, collateral contact with the actual employers shall be made to verify income information.</p>	<p><i>Effective income determination achieved through coordination across program lines.</i></p>

PRIVACY-PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

<p>Describe the financial and operating controls in place in FY2010 that will continue in FY2011 to protect client information against improper use or disclosure.</p>	<p>Please highlight any controls or strategies from your plan which will be newly implemented as of FY2011.</p>	<p>If you don't have relevant physical or operational controls in place to ensure the security and confidentiality of private information disclosed by applicants, please explain why.</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>

<p>The employees that work with client information for this program are employees of the Seneca Nation of Indians and are therefore, required to adhere to the Seneca Nation of Indians Employee Handbook that was adopted September 21, 2002. Within the Code of Ethics and Rules of Conduct on page 10 of said handbook is a section labeled Confidentiality. According to policy, all employees must protect confidential business, or other related information from outside parties. In addition, all employees are required to sign a confidentiality agreement.</p>	<p>There shall be no new controls or strategies from the plan that will be implemented as of FY 2011. All employees shall be asked to review the policies mentioned prior to the new FY 2011 to reinforce the importance of maintaining the integrity of the program. In doing so, this shall also assist in protecting the clients' information and confidentiality to avoid misuse and disclosure.</p>	<p>This section is not applicable at this time.</p>	<p><i>Clear and secure methods that maintain confidentiality and safeguard the private information of applicants.</i></p>
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LIHEAP BENEFITS POLICY

Describe FY2010 State policies continuing in FY2011 for protecting against fraud when making payments, or providing benefits to energy vendors on behalf of clients.	Please highlight any fraud prevention efforts relating to making payments or providing benefits which will be newly implemented in FY2011.	If the State doesn't have policy in place to protect against improper payments when making payments or providing benefits on behalf of clients, what supplementary steps is the State taking to ensure program integrity.	Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies
<p>The majority of the vendors that work with this program are local and have a smaller client base. Many of the benefits that are issued to the clients are done so by writing through a fax or verbally over the phone. The vendors are well aware of the HEAP guidelines that limit the amount of benefits that a client receives within the State of New York. Should a client be in receipt of more than they are eligible for, the vendors will refuse additional benefits. In the case where payment has already been made, the vendors do contact the program to inform us that they will be sending the payment back and why. In addition, the vendors are very familiar with the local population and their client base. In the event that they feel that someone may be committing fraud, they do not hesitate to inform the program.</p>	<p>One improvement on the procedures in place currently shall be making contact with the vendors prior to issuing payments for the benefits authorized. This shall assist with identifying any duplicate benefits that have already been paid for.</p>	<p>This section is not applicable at this time.</p>	<p><i>Authorized energy vendors are receiving payments on behalf of LIHEAP eligible clients.</i></p>

PROCEDURES FOR UNREGULATED ENERGY VENDORS

Describe the State's FY2010 procedures continuing in FY2011 for averting fraud and improper payments when dealing with bulk fuel dealers of heating oil, propane, wood and other unregulated energy utilities.	Please highlight any strategies policy in this area which will be newly implemented in FY2011.	If you don't have a firm plan for averting fraud when dealing with unregulated energy vendors, please describe how the State is ensuring program integrity.	Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies

<p>Vendor agreements shall be in place prior to the beginning each fiscal year's HEAP heating program season. The Seneca Nation of Indians utilizes the benefit matrix that the State of New York has approved for each applicable fiscal year. In regards to these types of vendors, client benefits are all based on one standard amount with the opportunity of two additional supplemental amounts. There shall be minimal if any problems in relation to the benefit amounts.</p> <p>With respect to fraudulent or improper payments, the vendors that work with this program are local and have an excellent history of working to avoid this. Usually, the vendors themselves are reporting any overlap or suspected fraud.</p>	<p>New vendor agreements are being created and at this time. There are no new strategies to report for fiscal year 2011.</p>	<p>Increased vendor contact and correspondence shall be necessary to ensure the program integrity.</p>	<p><i>Participating vendors are thoroughly researched and inspected before benefits are issued.</i></p>
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VERIFYING THE AUTHENTICITY OF ENERGY VENDORS

<p>Describe State FY2010 policies continuing in FY2011 for verifying the authenticity of energy vendors being paid under LIHEAP, as part of the State's procedure for averting fraud.</p>	<p>Please highlight any policies for verifying vendor authenticity which will be newly implemented in FY2011.</p>	<p>If you don't have a system in place for verifying vendor authenticity, please describe how the State can ensure that funds are being distributed through valid intermediaries?</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>
<p>The Seneca Nation of Indians requires all vendors to complete a new vendor application and a request for vendor information form. Information gathered includes tax identification numbers or social security numbers, official business addresses and contacts, etc. Payments will not be made without the current information. The Seneca Nation of Indians Purchasing Department assists the individual programs with setting up services and accounts with the various vendors.</p>	<p>New for FY 2011 may be the process of verifying vendor authenticity with the Better Business Bureau and/or the municipalities that they operate within.</p>	<p>The client population of 300-350 per funding year allows this program to keep track of the vendors more closely. The majority of the vendors that are utilized in this area are local and have been well established for many years. There is a total of (3) larger vendors that are PSC regulated companies. In the case where a lesser known vendor is needed, electronic research is completed to verify that the vendor is authentic. To participate, the vendor is also required to sign a vendor agreement/contract with the program as well.</p>	<p><i>An effective process that effectively confirms the existence of entities receiving federal funds.</i></p>

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

<p>In regards to fraud prevention, please describe elements of your FY2010 plan continuing in FY2011 for training and providing technical assistance to (a) employees, (b) non-governmental staff involved in the eligibility process, (c) clients, and (d) energy vendors</p>	<p>Please highlight specific elements of your training regimen and technical assistance resources from your plan which will represent newly implemented in FY2011.</p>	<p>If you don't have a system in place for anti-fraud training or technical assistance for employees, clients or energy vendors, please describe your strategy for ensuring all employees understand what is expected of them and what tactics they are permitted to employ.</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>
<p>The Seneca Nation of Indians is located within the State of New York. For several years, the Seneca Nation of Indians LIHEAP staff has had the opportunity to work with the State LIHEAP in many areas. The Program Director for this program has participated in many regional training sessions and meetings held by NYS each year. This allows for the program to be made aware of any upcoming changes to the HEAP. It is at these meetings where different scenarios are questioned regarding client eligibility.</p> <p>New York State holds vendor meetings annually to provide the vendors with any program changes for the new fiscal year or to work on any issues. It is also a time where they can review the responsibilities of the vendors in this area.</p>	<p>This section is not applicable at this time.</p>	<p>All of the information that has been gathered from the various trainings offered by NYS is brought back to the program and shared with all employees.</p> <p>There are a total of (5) employees that work within (2) locations that handle client information, applications, and eligibility. All employees reside within the service area and have been part of the communities for several years.</p> <p>Since the client population that we serve is smaller and local, the majority of the employees are well aware of each client's current situations. This assists a great deal in fraud prevention.</p>	<p><i>The timely and thorough resolution of weaknesses or reportable conditions as revealed by the audit.</i></p>

AUDITS OF LOCAL ADMINISTERING AGENCIES

<p>Please describe the annual audit requirements in place for local administering agencies in FY2010 that will continue into FY 2011.</p>	<p>Please describe new policies or strategies to be implemented in FY2011.</p>	<p>If you don't have specific audit requirements for local administering agencies, please explain how the Grantee will ensure that LIHEAP funds are properly audited under the Single Audit Act requirements.</p>	<p>Necessary outcomes from these systems and strategies</p>

<p>The Seneca Nation of Indians does have an Investments and Audit Department. An annual Single Audit is done in accordance with OMB Circular A-133 that is filed annually by the deadline of June 30.</p>	<p>At this time, no new policies or strategies are being planned to be implemented in FY 2011.</p>	<p>This section is not applicable at this time.</p>	<p><i>Reduce improper payments, maintain local agency integrity, and benefits awarded to eligible households.</i></p>
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Additional Information

Please attach further information that describes the Grantee's Program Integrity Policies, including supporting documentation from program manuals, including pages/sections from established LIHEAP policies and procedures.