**COW CREEK GOVERNMENT OFFICE**

# POLICY – PROCEDURE

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| **SUBJECT:**  **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** | **WRITTEN BY:**  **Human Resources** | **EFFECTIVE DATE:** |
| **APPLIES TO:**  **(LIHEAP)** | **PREVIOUS REVISION DATE:**  **February 3, 2016** | **NUMBER OF PAGES:**  **3** |

**POLICY:**

***To provide income eligible Tribal households with energy assistance (year-round, heating and/or emergency) payments for electric, gas, propane, wood and pellets, utilizing service 1x/service year. Priority is given to Elderly, Youth, and Disabled Tribal members.***

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Administrative Costs-** Costs are assessed towards the management of the grant, as well as direct service/contact time with LIHEAP clients. This will include salaries and fringe.

**Crisis-** This exists when a household faces a sudden or unexpected event beyond their control resulting in the inability to pay household heating costs. Resolving of Crisis is to be done within 48 hours. Below are some examples:

\*Medical conditions \*Sudden job loss or other benefits, income

\*Heating equipment malfunction \*Domestic violence \*Shut off notice

**Expenditures-** Expenditures are based off reporting of actuals, when the check is issued and sent to the energy provider.

**Income-** The Tribe considers all applicable income sources and how it relates to their gross income and the household’s income eligibility.

**Life threatening Crisis-** This exists when a household member(s) health and/or well being would likely be endangered if assistance is not provided, such as in extreme cold, or supply shortage of fuels. Resolving of the life threatening crisis is to be done within 18 hours.

**Obligations-** Obligations of the Tribal LIHEAP program are acknowledged at the time of a signed and approved application through the OPUS system.

**(For more definitions, please refer to the most current LIHEAP & OEAP Intake Operations Manual, pages 7.5 – 7.8.)**

**PROCEDURE GUIDELINES:**

1. A. New Clients- Client acquires Tribal LIHEAP application via the following:
   1. In person at Tribal Government Offices
   2. Tribal website
   3. Mail (standard and/or electronically)

B. Pre-existing Clients not in OPUS management system – Clients obtain Tribal

LIHEAP application as in IA. if significant changes in Residence and/or

Household have occurred

C. Pre-existing Clients in OPUS – Clients only need to provide updated

Information on Income, Energy Statement(s), Residence, and Household

Makeup

1. Completed application returned to LIHEAP Coordinator (for IA and IB)
   1. Complete with client signature
   2. Utility bill (or if wood or propane, completed contract information)
   3. Gross Income verification for all working household members (pay stubs for last 3 months, W2, Benefit statements from all income sources)
   4. Copy of all Social Security cards and photo ID (Tribal ID, Drivers License or ID) for all members of the household regardless of enrollment.
   5. One Tribal Member of the household must be enrolled with the Cow Creek band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians to apply for the program.
   6. Live in the 7 county service area
   7. Qualify by income Federal Poverty Rate Guidelines up to 150%
   8. Have a verifiable utility or source (wood/gas/oil/propane)
   9. Applications taken in chronologically, with priority given to Elders, Youth, and disabled.
2. Established OPUS applicants (conditions in II. Met to continue process)
   1. Applicant communicates information updates via phone or in person with LIHEAP Intake person, who inputs current information in OPUS file
   2. OPUS system qualified household automatically once all information is in and New Payment is processed
   3. LIHEAP Intake person coordinates pledge action with identified utility; W9 form may be needed for a new fuel provider for either/both Tribe and OPUS Help Desk
   4. With pledge confirmed and sufficient funds in the household’s county APC, a pay authorization can be generated through the OPUS system, which operates like a check request
   5. Pay authorization will then be submitted to accounting department, ensuring that Tribal member’s identification is noted, along with line item number, and signature of Tribal LIHEAP Program Coordinator; add copy to hard file as placeholder
   6. Check is processed by Tribal AP Department; processed document copies are sent back to LIHEAP Program Coordinator, to place into hard file
3. Denial of Benefits
   1. Send letter to client, noting action, purpose of action, and opportunity to respond/contest within 30 days of notification, with signed letter of acknowledgement of action and right to respond returned to LIHEAP Program Coordinator for hard file.
   2. Copy all correspondence for file.
   3. If individual/household feels decision provided in error, a grievance can be made formally within 30 days in Action Letter for a second review of that individual’s/household’s case. Further review is to be done, ideally, in person in the Program Coordinator’s office to review the application, especially if that application is set up within the OPUS system, for the purposes of correcting any possible data input errors in the file and education of how the determination was made.
4. Service Area Requirements
   1. Applicants must live within the Tribe’s seven (7) county service area.
5. Eligibility
   1. Must qualify by income, service area, and Tribal enrollment within the household.
6. Due Dates
   1. Model Plan Due Date
      1. September 1 of each year (completed annually by Program Coordinator)
   2. Report Due Dates
      1. Carryover and Re-allotment Report (completed by Grant Specialist)
         1. August 1 of each year
      2. Household Report/Short Format (completed by Program Coordinator)
         1. September 1 of each year
         2. Data collected from the OPUS system and report generated from that, cross-checked with financials from Tribal Grants Department.
      3. Leveraging Report (Optional, if Tribe wishes to participate in the Leveraging Incentive Program)
         1. Due November 30 of each year (not doing at this time)
      4. Standard Form 269A- Financial Status Form (completed by Grant Specialist)
         1. Due 90 days after end of the fiscal year
   3. Funding
      1. Approximate $12,000.00 in funding each year, less $1,200.00 for carryover, with funding available from October 1st through September 30th. Funds allocated based on current year’s benefit matrix from State of Oregon’s LIHEAP and OEAP Intake Operations Manual.
7. Vendors
   1. Vendors established with completed W-9 and uploaded into the vendor list within the OPUS system
   2. Payments are made directly to the utility/energy vendor
   3. If a vendor fails to follow through fully on the service/energy order, the LIHEAP client is to contact the Program Coordinator, who will engage in next steps with the vendor to resolve the situation.
8. Reporting and Files
   1. Monthly and quarterly reports are provided electronically by the Grants Department, noting breakouts in types and dates of service.
   2. Reports to OLDC are done electronically, and are reflected in Section VII, Due Dates.
   3. Case files will have sections for demographics, application information, communication, and case notes. Information is to be organized chronologically.
   4. Case files will be kept indefinitely, with active files being kept in a secured in a fire safe, locking file cabinets in the office of the Program Coordinator. More specific, financial information will be kept with the Grants Department in secured, electronic format.