

MaineHousing

Energy & Housing Services

HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is to provide fuel assistance to low-income households in the State of Maine, and to respond to energy-related crises affecting those households.

The primary objective of the HEAP Handbook is to provide a resource and guide for the administration of HEAP. The Handbook is designed to assist in the procedures for operating the program, and is to be used in conjunction with the following:

- Home Energy Assistance Program Rule - Chapter 24
- State of Maine LIHEAP Model Plan
- HEAP Subgrant Agreement

The Rule, Model Plan and Subgrant Agreement define the requirements, which must be met to ensure compliance and funding. The combined use of these documents provides the information necessary to administer HEAP.

The MaineHousing is available to assist in clarification of any issues.

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COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES – CONTACT INFORMATION

AROOSTOOK COUNTY ACTION PROGRAM, INC.

(Aroostook County)

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CONTACT Presque Isle = 1-800-585-3053 OR 768-3053

INFORMATION: FAX = 768-3021

COMMUNITY CONCEPTS, INC.

(Androscoggin and Oxford Counties)

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INFORMATION: Auburn = 795-4065

FAX = 743-6513

TTY = 743-0276

KENNEBEC VALLEY COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

(Kennebec, Somerset, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc Counties)

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PENQUIS COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM

(Penobscot, Piscataquis, and Knox Counties)

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CONTACT Bangor = 973-3500 OR 973-3630

INFORMATION: Dover = 564-7116

Lincoln = 794-3093

Knox County = 596-0361

FAX = 973-3699

TTY = 973-3520

**THE OPPORTUNITY ALLIANCE
(Cumberland County)**

Nathan Mills, Director Housing & Energy Services, Nathan.Mills@opportunityalliance.org

Crissy Emery, Energy Programs Coordinator, crissy.emery@opportunityalliance.org

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**WALDO COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERS
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**WASHINGTON-HANCOCK COMMUNITY AGENCY
(Washington and Hancock Counties)**

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Jill Gaspar, Energy Services Operations Manager, jgaspar@whcacap.org

CONTACT Ellsworth or Milbridge = 1-800-828-7544 (8:00 AM through Noon) OR
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FAX = 664-2430

**WESTERN MAINE COMMUNITY ACTION
(Franklin County)**

Judy Frost, Community Services Program Manager, jfrost@wmca.org

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**YORK COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION CORPORATION
(York County)**

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CONTACT Sanford = 1-800-965-5762 OR 324-5762
INFORMATION: Biddeford = 283-2402
Kittery/Eliot = 439-2699
FAX = 490-5023
TTY = 490-1078

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS

Aroostook Band of Mic-Macs
7 Northern Road
Presque Isle, Maine 04769

207-764-1972

Houlton Band of Maliseets
88 Bell Road
Littleton, Maine 04730

207-532-4273

Indian Township Tribal Government
Passamaquoddy Tribe
P.O. Box 301
9 Keibasis Road
Princeton, Maine 04668

207-796-2301

Penobscot Nation
Penobscot Nation Tribal Administration
12 Wabanaki Way
Indian Island, Maine 04468

207-817-7349

Pleasant Point Reservation Passamaquoddy Tribe
P.O. Box 343
15 Elders Way, Suite 201
Pleasant Point, Maine 04667

207-853-2600

DEFINITIONS

Capitalized terms not otherwise defined in this Handbook have the same meaning as set forth in the Rule. As used in this Handbook, the following terms have the following meanings:

- A. “CAA” means a community action agency selected by MaineHousing to administer the Programs.
- B. “Degree Days” means the degree days determined by the National Weather Station in Gray, Maine, multiplied by the percentage of population. “DHHS” means the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services.
- C. “Handbook” means the HEAP Handbook.
- D. “Hypothermia” means a medical condition, the symptoms of which may include the Applicant having a below normal body temperature.
- E. “Primary Heating System” means the heating system which provides the majority of heat to the Applicant’s dwelling.
- F. “Rule” means Chapter 24 of the Rules of the Maine State Housing Authority.
- G. “Waiver” means a written request to deviate from the HEAP guidelines, as described in the HEAP Rule, State Plan, and Handbook. The CAA shall submit the Waiver request and supporting documentation justifying the request to MaineHousing for its consideration.

ELIGIBILITY

Except as may be expressly provided for elsewhere in the Rule, eligibility is based on the Household and Dwelling Unit information that is valid on the Date of Application.

MaineHousing and CAAs reserve the right to ask for additional or clarifying information from the Primary Applicant, Applicant(s), or third parties to determine eligibility.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

“Household” means any individual or group of individuals who are living together on the Date of Application as one economic unit for whom residential energy is customarily purchased in common or who make undesignated payments for energy in the form of rent.

For purposes of HEAP eligibility, persons sharing a Dwelling Unit are considered to be one Household, except in cases of Roomers/Boarders.

The following guidelines are not an all-inclusive list, but are major factors used to determine the persons counted as part of the Household.

1. A Household may consist of:
 - a. A person who lives alone.
 - b. Persons legally obligated for the support of each other, for example husband and wife, parents of minor children, and custodians per court order.
 - c. Persons who share a Dwelling Unit, even if only one person in the Household pays the Household expenses (not to include a Roomer or Boarder).
 - d. Persons who share a Dwelling Unit and pool their income to pay Household expenses.
 - e. Persons who share a Dwelling Unit and Household expenses such as persons who pay a percentage of the Household expenses individually.
 - f. Minor children, who are qualified aliens, residing with ineligible non-citizens.
2. A person staying in a drug abuse center or hospital, public or private, may be counted as a part of a Household if they are expected to return home within ninety (90) days.
3. A live-in care attendant will be considered part of the Household if the live-in care attendant does not meet the definition of a **Live-in Care Attendant** in Section 1 of the Rule.
4. **Qualified aliens** will be included/counted as members of the Household if they meet the requirements outlined in the Rule.
5. A person who is away from the home part of the time will be counted as a Household member and their income will be included in the Household income unless the Primary Applicant can provide proof that the person’s primary residence is a separate Dwelling Unit.
6. Legal dependents or **minor children** living with parents/guardians who maintain separate residences can be counted as Household members in only one Household. To determine which Household, CAAs may rely on custodial parent’s/guardian’s declaration of legal custody/guardianship of minor children unless disputed. See the Minor Child(ren) Primary Residency Affidavit in the Completing the Forms section of the Handbook.

Dispute Resolution. If two different Applicants declare the same minor child, only the Household with the appropriate documentation will be allowed to claim the dependent(s) as a member of their Household. The following requirements pertain to only those cases where the declaration has been disputed by another party:

- a. In cases where a divorce decree or parental/guardianship rights document dictates shared residency, the minor child(ren) will be included in the Household where they are designated to reside the majority of the time.
 - b. In cases where a divorce decree or parental/guardianship rights document dictates 50/50 shared residency, the minor child(ren) will be included in the Household that has the earliest Date of Application.
 - c. If there is no divorce decree or parental rights document in place, the Applicant must provide additional documentation to verify the validity of the information being provided. Additional documentation may include, but is not limited to, verification of where the child(ren) are enrolled in school; physician's statement verifying residence on record; day care provider statements, etc. This information should be in writing or specific notes made in MERAC stating the verification source and information given. NOTE: claiming minor children on a tax return does not constitute primary residency.
 - d. If a Benefit has been paid and the other parent/guardian subsequently challenges the declaration, the CAA will investigate. If the initial declaration was not accurate, the appropriate party will be required to repay funds to MaineHousing.
7. If otherwise eligible, **Roomers/Boarders** are eligible for a Benefit to the extent such Applicants prove that the rental arrangement giving rise to their Roomer/Boarder status was in existence for at least sixty (60) days prior to the Date of Application. At a minimum, such proof shall include verification that a reasonable market rate rent amount was paid by the Roomer/Boarder pursuant to the terms and conditions of the rental agreement for the entire sixty (60) day period. Roomers/Boarders cannot commingle funds or share expenses with lessor's Household.
- Roomers/Boarders cannot be related by birth, marriage or adoption to any member of the lessor's Household.
8. No person may be counted as part of a Household if that person:
- a. Is a Roomer or Boarder.
 - b. Has been previously served as part of another Household in the current Program Year.
 - c. Is an unqualified alien.
 - d. Resides in one of the following facilities on the Date of Application:
 - i. A state or federally supported institution, for example state psychiatric facility or federal and state Prisons.
 - ii. A school dormitory, long term nursing home, boarding home, foster care facility, emergency shelter, or military base housing.
 - e. A person staying in a drug abuse center or hospital, public or private, if the person is not expected to return to the Dwelling Unit within ninety (90) days of the Date of Application.
 - f. Is a Live-in Care Attendant. They would not be counted if all of the following are true:
 - i. Not related by birth, marriage, or adoption to any of the Household;

- ii. Does not contribute financially to the Household; and
- iii. Provides needed health/supportive services to a member of the Household as documented by a qualified professional.

RESIDENCY

The intent of the HEAP is to assist people who are Maine residents and who will reside in a Dwelling Unit full time for at least four months during the Heating Season. A Household may be eligible for a Benefit if, on the Date of Application:

- 1) it is a full time resident of Maine and resides in the Dwelling Unit full time for at least four (4) months during the Heating Season and;
- 2) it intends to reside in Maine through April 30.

If the Date of Application is on or after February 1, the Household may be eligible for a Benefit if the Household indicates that at least one Household member has been a full-time resident of Maine for at least sixty (60) days prior. If the Applicant provides inconsistent information or makes questionable statements, the intake/outreach worker shall ask the Primary Applicant to provide documentation to substantiate residency. Examples of documentation may include, but are not limited to, additional utility bills and a lease agreement (current/previous).

HOME ENERGY OBLIGATION

A Household may be eligible for a Benefit if, on the Date of Application, it has a Direct Energy Cost or Indirect Determinable Energy Cost. An Applicant must prove it has an obligation or responsibility to pay its Home Energy bill. Such obligation is reflected through an active account with a utility or fuel vendor, a current energy bill, and evidence that a Household member pays the vendor directly.

Applicants whose **rent includes heat** have an indirect obligation for Home Energy costs.

Applicants residing in **Subsidized housing with heat included** in their rent may be eligible if the Household pays an out-of-pocket expense for a portion of their rent or utility costs. This is documented/verified through the current lease agreement and a copy of their current electric utility bill (if applicable). The maximum Benefit for Households residing in Subsidized housing with heat included is \$21 per Program Year. If the subsidy pays 100% of the rent and utility costs, the Household does not have a Direct or Indirect Determinable Energy Cost; and therefore, would not be HEAP eligible.

DWELLING UNIT

“Dwelling Unit’ means an occupied residential housing structure with one or more rooms that is used customarily as a domicile for one or more persons, when permanently connected to the required utilities (including plumbing, electricity and Heating Systems) and contains bathroom and kitchen facilities specific to that unit. A Dwelling Unit has its own private entrance from the outside or off an enclosed hallway leading from the outside that does not pass through or offer an open access to any other unit within the structure. A Dwelling Unit does not include a Camper, boat, railroad car, bus, yurt or other structure designed and constructed to provide temporary living quarters, or any state or federally funded Subsidized Housing.”

- 1. Required utilities, plumbing, electricity and Heating System, must be permanently connected and in service. If the required utilities are not permanently connected or are not in service on the Date of Application, the CAA may submit a Waiver request for MaineHousing’s consideration. If MaineHousing waives the utility requirement, the Waiver will stay in effect as long as the Primary Applicant and/or any Applicant(s) from the original Application remain in the Dwelling Unit. A

new Waiver would be required if all Household members move from the Dwelling Unit and another Household moves in.

2. The Dwelling Unit must have a functioning Heating System. If a Heating System is not working and there is no secondary system, the Household is not eligible to receive a Fuel Assistance Benefit. If everything else about the Application is complete, all applicable documentation has been provided, and the Household is determined income eligible, the Application can be certified for CHIP only.
3. **Group Homes:** Applicants residing in a group home where they have their own room, but share a bathroom and/or kitchen facilities may be eligible if they are responsible for Home Energy costs whether directly or through their rent. Determine if the Applicant pays a reduced rent amount due to the receipt of federal or state subsidy.
 - a If the subsidy reduces the rent amount and heat is included, they would be categorized as residing in Subsidized housing with heat included. Therefore, they may be eligible for a \$21 Benefit.
 - b If the federal or state subsidy is exclusively for supportive services, they would be categorized as a Roomer/Boarder. Therefore, they may be eligible for a regular/full Benefit.
 - c If there is no subsidy, they would be categorized as a Roomer/Boarder. Therefore, they may be eligible for a regular/full Benefit.
4. An Applicant who **operates and resides in a licensed nursing home, boarding home, foster care facility, emergency shelter, or bed and breakfast** may apply for the program. The Benefit will be determined based on the number of rooms occupied by the Household. That part of the Dwelling Unit used for business will not be included.
5. Applicants residing in a **motel or hotel** may be eligible for a Benefit provided Applicants document that they live in the motel or hotel; and that the terms and conditions of the contract agreement has been in effect for at least sixty (60) days prior to the Date of Application.
6. If a Household's Application has been certified eligible, but all Applicants move to Subsidized Housing with heat included or an ineligible Dwelling Unit prior to the Benefit being paid, the Household may not be eligible for the entire Benefit depending on the Date of Application and Home Energy use during the current Program Year.
7. An Applicant who is housesitting is not eligible for HEAP.
8. An Applicant residing in a Camper, regardless of any and all modification(s) or length, boat, railroad car, bus, yurt or other structure designed and constructed to provide temporary living quarters are not eligible for HEAP.

INCOME

Income is the cornerstone for HEAP eligibility. Applicant income must be documented and verified before an Application can be certified eligible. Household income is determined and verified in accordance with the information provided on the Application and/or verified as part of the eligibility determination process.

The income guidelines are as follows:

1. The lesser of 150% of Federal poverty or 60% of State median income; or
2. The lesser of 170% of Federal poverty guidelines or 60% of State median income for Households that have members who are elderly, twenty-four months of age or under, or susceptible to hypothermia as diagnosed by and documented by a statement from a physician.

If a Household is ineligible due to being over income, the CAA will deduct eligible medical expenses from the Household's gross income in an amount only enough to make the Household income eligible. A medical expense will be considered eligible if:

1. It was not reimbursed by insurance;
2. Applicant made the payment within the income verification period; and
3. It is allowable under IRS Publication 502 (ex. hospital and doctor bills, medical and dental insurance premiums, prescriptions, and the cost of transportation to and from medical appointments. For more information, refer to <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p502.pdf>).

Per IRS Publication 502, **medical marijuana** cannot be counted as a medical deduction: "Controlled Substances – You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for controlled substances (such as marijuana, laetrile, etc.), even if such substances are legalized by state law. Such substances are not legal under federal law and cannot be included in medical expenses."

APPLICATION/INTAKE

Applications must be made with the CAA administering the Programs in the Service Area in which the Household resides. In the event an Application is taken by a CAA for a Household not within their Service Area, the CAA shall notify the Primary Applicant of the error and forward the Application and supporting documentation to the applicable CAA.

An Applicant may only have one certified eligible Fuel Assistance Application per Program Year.

The Application must include copies of all required documentation and pertinent case notes. If a photocopier or scanner is not available, the intake worker will use the Document Verification Form to describe the documentation that was reviewed, and to record the appropriate information (ex. type of identification, pertinent numbers, expiration date, etc.).

PERMISSION TO SHARE PERSONAL INFORMATION

Applicants age 18 and older are required to sign Permission to Share Personal Information form (see Completing the Forms section). This will permit the CAAs and MaineHousing to provide information to and obtain information from the DHHS, Maine Department of Labor, and the Social Security Administration, or other agencies as needed to determine and confirm eligibility, including the amount of Benefits received.

DISCLOSURE OF CAA PERSONNEL APPLICATIONS

The CAA will submit a monthly report to liheap@mainehousing.org identifying CAA personnel, including employees, volunteers, and temporary staff, who have been approved or denied for Fuel Assistance and/or ECIP benefits. The report should include the MERAC application ID, staff person's name, title/responsibilities, and program component(s) (i.e. Standard LIHEAP Application, ECIP-Only Application, and ECIP request on a previously certified Standard Application).

APPLICATION PERIOD

For the 2016/2017 Program Year, CAAs will begin taking Applications on August 29, 2016 and will continue taking Applications through:

1. July 17, 2017 for the following Applicant categories:
 - a. Reside in Subsidized Housing with heat included in their rent;
 - b. Reside in a rental unit with heat included in their rent;
 - c. Are a Roomer/Boarder or;
 - d. Meet the eligibility requirements of and intend to enroll in the Arrearage Management Program.
2. May 1, 2017 for all other Applicants.

An Applicant may submit a new Application if the Household's Application was denied or withdrawn prior to the issuance of a Benefit. The new Date of Application must be on or before May 1, 2017 or July 17, 2017 (whichever is applicable).

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION (FACE TO FACE INTERVIEWS)

The HEAP Application is divided into six (6) sections: Applicant and Member Information, Occupancy/Dwelling Information, Heating System, Energy Vendors, Housing Expense and Household Income.

All questions on the Application and HEAP Additional Information Questionnaire must be asked, and responses documented and entered in MERAC. If the Applicant cannot provide the required information, a Reminder Form, which clearly states the documentation needed to determine eligibility, must be given to the Applicant.

Changes to Application Documents: If changes are made to the Application or any form that the Applicant signs, the changes must be initialed and dated by the Applicant. Once the Applicant has signed the Application and forms, subsequent changes may be initialed and dated by the appropriate CAA staff person, who will document the date they spoke with Applicant and received the Applicant's approval to make the change.

Documentation and Information Requirements:

The following guidance is not all-inclusive, but offers clarification for the major information and documentation required.

HEAP Additional Information Questionnaire

The Primary Applicant must complete and sign the HEAP Additional Information Questionnaire. Intake/outreach worker must review the HEAP Additional Questionnaire form to make sure the information does not conflict with information recorded in any of the Application documents/forms and MERAC.

Applicant and Member Information (#1)

Always enter the **Primary Applicant first** and then other Applicants.

Primary Applicant must be 18 years of age or older.

Contact MaineHousing for guidance on entering/processing Applications for emancipated minors with supporting legal documentation and eligible minor children residing with ineligible non-citizens.

Social Security Numbers (SSN). All household members must provide proof of Social Security Number (SSN). If the Household includes a child 24 months of age or under who has not received a SSN, the Application can still be processed. However, the Applicant must provide the child's SSN for the subsequent program year's Application. Any document used to prove SSN must contain all nine (9) digits and the Applicant's full name. Acceptable documents are:

- a. Social Security Card issued by the Social Security Administration;
- b. SSA-1099 tax form;
- c. Non SSA-1099 tax form;
- d. Medicare card with card number ending in the suffix "A";
- e. Valid unexpired U.S. Military documents such as DD 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty issued by the U.S. Department of Defense;
- f. Bank tax form; or
- g. W-2 (current wage and tax statement).

Foster Care children. Social security cards are held by the DHHS. The CAA or the foster parent will need to contact the DHHS caseworker to request foster care child(ren)'s social security number verification. The written verification should be included in the Application file.

Non-US Citizens. Applicant must provide an unexpired foreign passport with a valid unexpired U.S. Visa affixed accompanied by the approved I-94 form documenting the Applicant's most recent admittance into the United States. When entering the I-94 Admission number, enter the last nine (9) digits. Enter entire I-94 Admission number (11 digits) in MERAC notes.

Primary Applicant's identity shall be verified by requesting a valid unexpired government-issued photo identification card. One of the following is acceptable to establish the identity of the Primary Applicant provided it includes the Primary Applicant's photo:

- a. Driver's license;
- b. State issued ID card;
- c. Passport or passport card;
- d. U.S. Military ID; or
- e. SNAP/EBT card with photo.

If the Primary Applicant acknowledges they have one of the government-issued identification cards listed above, but they do not have it with them at the time of Application, the intake/outreach worker will need to put this on a Reminder form.

If the Primary Applicant indicates they do not have one of the documents listed above, the Application will continue through the application process and be appropriately certified. Not having a government-issued photo identification card would not be grounds for denial (provided the Application is otherwise eligible). This must be documented in Section II of the HEAP Additional Information Questionnaire.

POA or Guardian: If a guardian or Power of Attorney completes the Application, the CAA must obtain a copy of the court ordered guardianship documents or the notarized Power of Attorney documents for the file. The CAA must ask the guardian or POA to provide a government-issued photo ID to verify their identity. The CAA should verify that the guardianship or POA documentation matches the Government ID.

If the guardian or POA indicates they do not have a government ID, the Application will continue through the Application process and be appropriately certified. The intake/outreach worker will document this in the paper file and in the LIHEAP App Comments in MERAC.

Mailing Address (#3). Distinguish between a rural box number and a post office box number. Enter the apartment number, if applicable (post office may return checks if apartment number is missing).

Primary Contact (#12.a – f). Check the appropriate box indicating if the number is a landline, cell phone, message phone, or other. If this is not checked in MERAC the phone number will not print on the Application.

Occupancy Information (#14)

To avoid misunderstanding or confusion, be sure to give the Primary Applicant all of the **Ownership Type** options (own, rent, rent with heat included, room/board, subsidized, subsidized with heat included).

Dwelling Information (#15)

Modular Home is designated as a single-family. A modular home is a dwelling that is built offsite, transported to the site, placed on a pre-made foundation and is permanently anchored.

Manufactured Home is designated as a mobile home. (A manufactured home has a metal chassis and is considered a mobile home even if the wheels have been removed or it has been placed on a foundation.) The dimensions must be entered into MERAC. CAA should ask the Primary Applicant questions to verify that the dwelling is not a camper.

Duplex is designated as an apartment. The number of apartments would be indicated as 2.

If the Applicant indicates they own the duplex, CAA must ask:

- Do they provide the heat for both units (one Heating System, individual Heating System, one tank, individual tanks). This information must be documented because it will determine if the benefit is based on consumption or DHLC.
- Applicant to provide self-employment (rental income) documentation.

Lease/Rental Agreements

Obtain a copy of a signed current lease/rental agreement. A lease/rental agreement should contain, at a minimum, the following information:

- i. Landlord's name, address and telephone number.
- ii. Physical address of the property.
- iii. Rent amount.
- iv. Rental term (effective dates)
- v. Names of all persons living in the residence.
- vi. Details regarding who is responsible for paying what utilities.
- vii. Signatures (landlord and tenant).

If the lease/rental agreement has expired a Terms of the Verbal Rental/Lease Agreement will need to be completed by the landlord (See Completing the Forms section).

If the Primary Applicant indicates they do not have a lease/rental agreement, the landlord must complete the Terms of the Verbal Rental/Lease Agreement (See Completing the Forms section).

If the Primary Applicant indicates they cannot obtain a copy of the signed lease/ rental agreement, or the landlord is unwilling to complete the **Terms of the Verbal Rental/Lease Agreement** the CAA must submit a waiver request for MaineHousing's consideration. The request must indicate the due diligence performed by the CAA to substantiate where the Household lives, Applicants residing at the dwelling, the terms/conditions of the rental, the landlord's name, address and phone number and the rental amount (see Completing the Forms section).

Subsidized with heat included tenants

Tenants living in subsidized housing **with heat included** may be eligible for a \$21 Benefit provided they pay a portion of their rent or utility costs.

Receipt of a \$21 HEAP benefit entitles the client to the SNAP Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) provided the benefit was paid within the twelve (12) months preceding their SNAP application or recertification date.

If the subsidy pays 100% of the rent and utility costs, the tenant does not have a direct or indirect heating cost; and therefore, would not be eligible for HEAP.

Documentation: Applicant must provide **one of the following:**

- a. Recertification worksheet/summary or Rent Calculation sheet signed by property manager or subsidy housing specialist; **or**
- b. Valid lease agreement; **or**
- c. Recertification form (HUD 50058/59 or RD 3560-8).

Subsidized housing tenants who are responsible for paying all or a portion of their heating costs

Tenants living in subsidized housing who are responsible for their own heat may be eligible for a regular HEAP benefit that is greater than \$21/year. The HEAP benefit amount is based on the tenant’s estimated home heating cost minus any subsidy received, or included in the rent reduction calculations, to assist the tenant with home heating costs. Since the tenant has a direct heating cost, their eligibility for the SUA is NOT contingent on receiving a HEAP benefit.

Documentation: Applicant must provide **one** of the following:

- a. Recertification worksheet/summary or Rent Calculation sheet signed by property manager or subsidy housing specialist **and** Home Energy Assistance – Subsidized Housing Form; **or**
- b. Valid lease agreement and Home Energy Assistance - Subsidized Housing Form; **or**
- c. Recertification form (HUD 50058/59 or RD 3560-8) **and** Home Energy Assistance Program - Subsidized Housing Form.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Properties

1. **LIHTC properties where the tenant’s rent is Subsidized** – refer to the guidelines for Subsidized and Subsidized with heat included.

2. **Affordable housing units** where tenant pays fixed rent amount – the table below provides guidance on how to determine the Occupancy Type and Utility Allowance.

	Who is responsible?		Utility Allowance	MERAC	
	Heat	Electricity		Ownership Type (Dwelling tab)	Monthly Allowances (Income/Expense tab)
1	Tenant	Tenant	Yes	Rent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter Utility Allowance amount • Check “Use 70% of Utility Allowance”
2	Tenant	Landlord	No	Rent	N/A
3	Landlord	Landlord	No	Rent with Heat	N/A
4	Landlord	Tenant	Yes	Rent with Heat	N/A

Roomers/Boarders

Tenants living as a Roomer/Boarder may be eligible for a regular HEAP benefit if they can provide proof the rental arrangement was in existence for at least sixty (60) days prior to the Date of Application.

Documentation: Applicant must provide **one** of the following:

- a. Signed current lease/rental agreement to include terms/conditions and responsibility for utilities responsibilities; **or**
- b. Copies of rent receipts extending back at least sixty (60) days prior to the Date of Application.

If the above documentation is not available the Applicant would not be eligible for HEAP.

Types of Rooms (#16)

Indicate the number and types of heated rooms: LR, DR, Kit, BR, Others (list).

If the number of rooms increased/ decreased since last year's Application, ask the Applicant what changed. Did they put an addition on the home or convert a previously unused area of the home?

Heated rooms are those used as living space. Do not include bathrooms, hallways, closets, and basement or attic areas unless the basement or attic is used as living space. A mud room or laundry room would not be considered living space unless other activities occur in that room such as a computer/office set up in the laundry room, along with the washer/dryer. Enter these rooms in the "List Other Rooms" field in MERAC as Laundry Computer, Attic/Playroom, etc.

When a **room is larger than the standard room size**, use the standard room sizes below to determine the number of rooms.

Dwelling Unit Type	Standard Room Size
Stick-built/Modular	144 square feet
Manufactured Home/Mobile Home	100 square feet
Apartment	120 square feet

Divide actual square footage of the room by standard room size for the applicable dwelling type. The result equals the adjusted number of rooms. If the result is 2.4, round down to 2 rooms and if 2.5, round up to 3 rooms.

Examples:

1. Mobile home with kitchen/living room located in one large room with no dividing wall. The approximate dimensions (supplied by the Primary Applicant) are 14 feet by 15 feet or 210 square feet. $210/100 = 2.1$ (the kitchen/living room area would count as 2 (two) rooms, since it is more than the room size used by the DHLC for mobile homes of 100 square feet.
2. One room single-family dwelling (combined kitchen/living room/bedroom located in one room). The approximate dimensions (supplied by the Primary Applicant) are 15 feet by 18 feet or 270 square feet. $270/144 = 1.9$ (this would count as 2 (two) rooms, since it is more than the room size used by the DHLC for a single-family house of 144 square feet. However, it is only two rooms, not three, since it is less than twice the DHLC amount of 288 feet (144×2).
3. Apartment with combined dining room/living room located in one room. The approximate room dimensions (supplied by the Primary Applicant) are 10 feet by 11 feet or 110 square feet. This would count as ONE room, since it is less than the room size used by the DHLC for apartments of 120 square feet.

Utility Information (#19)

MERAC Field:	Must be checked or filled in if:
All Utilities Included	Rent includes heat and electricity
Electricity Included	Rent includes electricity, but does not include heat
Has Electric Account	Account is in Household member's name
Requested LIAP	<p>Applicant wants to apply for LIAP and electricity account is in a Household member's name. Do not check if electricity account is not in a Household member's name.</p> <p>MaineHousing sends a weekly report to the electricity Vendors listing those Households that have requested and been certified for LIAP. The electricity Vendor uses the report to verify the Household's HEAP eligibility.</p> <p>Subsidized Housing tenants may be eligible for LIAP if a Household member is on oxygen or ventilator 8 hours or more per day. If the electricity account is in a Household member's name, the box should be checked so that the Household appears on the weekly LIAP report. The electricity Vendor will work with the Primary Applicant to obtain proof of oxygen/ventilator use.</p>
Own Electric Meter	Electric meter serves only the Applicant's Dwelling Unit (meter is not shared with other Dwelling Units).
Has Energy Cost	<p>Applicant has a direct or indirect energy cost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Account for electricity and/or Home Energy must be in a Household member's name; or • If rent includes heat and electric, Applicant must pay all or portion of rent.
Own Tank	Tank serves only the Applicant's Dwelling Unit (tank is not shared with other Dwelling Units).
LIAP Denial Date	May be used to document LIAP denial date (if applicable)
Outside Tank	<p>Oil tank is located outside or in an unheated space or building.</p> <p>Do not check if the tank and furnace/boiler are both located in a basement.</p>
Tank Size Known	Check if Applicant knows tank size.
Tank Size	Enter the tank size. This information is needed to substantiate future eligibility for ECIP.

Heating Systems (#20)

Heating System information is entered into MERAC for the purposes of:

1. Verifying the existence of a functioning Heating System (functioning means “working well” or “not working well”); and
2. Documenting all heating appliances that are permanently installed in the Dwelling Unit, their condition/usage, and priority (i.e. primary, secondary, second backup or third backup).

HEAP eligibility is contingent on the Dwelling Unit having a permanently installed and functioning Heating System. The intention of this requirement is two-fold:

1. Validate the Dwelling Unit is a legitimate full-time residence; and
2. Ensure the Benefit can/will be used for its intended purpose, to supply a Heating System that is permanently installed.

All permanently installed heating appliances must be entered in MERAC regardless of condition and heating capacity. For example, if a Household has a permanently installed wood stove or monitor heater, it would be entered in MERAC regardless of its heating capacity/adequacy. The wood stove or monitor heater would meet the intent of and requirements for HEAP eligibility even if its capacity is insufficient to heat the entire Dwelling Unit.

Portable heating devices should not be entered in MERAC. On the Date of Application if the only source of heat is a portable device, the Household is not eligible for fuel assistance or ECIP. In such cases, the Application can be certified for CHIP only if the Household meets all eligibility criteria for HEAP, except working Heating System.

When/if a Household is referred for CHIP services, CAA’s housing staff would need to assess the heating situation in the Dwelling Unit in order to verify eligibility and priority for CHIP.

Heating System Priority: The following information/examples are intended to help clarify the priority designations:

1. The Heating System which provides all of or a significant portion of heat to the dwelling should be designated as the primary Heating System.
2. The Primary Heating System is whatever Heating System the Household is using as the primary means to heat their home during the current Program Year.
 - a. *Example:* Applicant has an oil Heating System, which had been previously used as their Primary Heating System. However, this Heating Season they decided to heat their home using wood pellets, due to the rising costs of oil. Wood pellets would be designated as the Primary Heating System.
 - b. *Example:* When a Household uses two Heating Systems equally, designation of the Primary Heating System should be based on annual fuel cost (as declared by the Primary Applicant). The Heating System with the highest total (annual) fuel cost would be designated as the Primary Heating System. The Benefit calculation will be based on the heating fuel type with the highest total (annual cost).

Indicate/select the following for each Heating System:

1. **Type of Heating System.** If Applicant indicates they have electric heat, CAA should verify that it is not a portable space heater. A portable space heater is not considered a Heating System.
2. **Priority.** Select the applicable priority from the dropdown list – e.g. primary, secondary, second backup, or third backup.
3. **Fuel Type**
4. **Condition:** Working Well, Not Working Well, Not Working, or Not Applicable. It is important to accurately document the condition as it will determine the Household’s eligibility for Fuel Assistance, ECIP, and CHIP. If the Household does not have a working Heating System, refer to the Certification section – CHIP Only Certification.

Energy Vendors (#21)

Have more than one Vendor: Ask the Applicant if they used more than one vendor for primary fuel type last Heating Season.

Indicate the **Vendor and the Fuel Type(s)**.

The Applicant can choose to have their Benefit go to the fuel used for their secondary Heating System. However, the fuel type for the Primary Heating System will be used to determine the Benefit amount.

Example: If the Household uses an oil system as their Primary Heating System and a wood stove as backup, the oil system would be indicated as primary. The Primary Applicant can choose to have the Benefit go to a wood vendor. The Benefit amount would be calculated based on oil.

Electricity Information:

The following fields must be completed on the Application and entered in MERAC:

- a. **Electric Utility Name** – electricity Vendor name
- b. **Name on Account**
- c. **Account Number:** A valid account number is required for all Households. A copy of the most recent electricity bill for the Dwelling Unit is required (even if the electricity account is not in a Household member’s name).
- d. **Electric Utility Only:** Check this box only if the requested fuel type is not electricity.
- e. **Deceased Spouse:** Check this box if the electricity account is in the deceased spouse’s name.

Rent with heat included. Benefit can be issued to:

- Primary Applicant (direct check); or
- Electricity Vendor if the account is in a Household member’s name.

Housing Information (#22-25)

Rent/Mortgage Amount:

- If the Household pays \$0 rent or mortgage, explain why in the “Zero Rent Reason” field.
- Rent amount must be consistent with the amount indicated on the rental/lease agreement or Subsidized Housing form.

Monthly Allowances: Fuel Subsidy Allowance and Utility Allowance

This information pertains to Subsidized Housing and some Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties.

Landlord Information: Applies to all renters (including Subsidized and Subsidized with heat). The following information must be obtained and entered in MERAC:

- Name (first name/middle initial/last name)
- Mailing Address, Municipality, State, and Zip
- Telephone Number

Income Verification Time Period (#27)

Do not automatically select a time period on behalf of the Primary Applicant. Offer and explain the time period options to the Primary Applicant. Ask the Primary Applicant to choose the time period.

- Standard HEAP Application: based on previous 3 months or 12 months
- ECIP Only Application: may be based on previous 30 calendar days, 1 month, 3 months, or 12 months

If a Household appears to be income-eligible and the only income is “fixed” meaning they receive the same amount each month (such as SS/SSDI, SSI), the Primary Applicant may want to consider choosing the previous 3 months (which will require minimal documentation).

If it appears the Household income may be over income but they had paid, non-reimbursed medical expenses 6 months ago, the Household may want to consider choosing the previous 12 months. Explain the differences to the Primary Applicant and ask them to make the decision.

Signatures (#28)

Before the Primary Applicant signs the Application:

- Review the completed Application with the Primary Applicant.
- Make sure they read (or read to them) the front and back of the Application to ensure the information is correct.
- If changes are made to any signed documents during the face-to-face application process, have the Primary Applicant verify the change(s) and initial/date each change.

The outreach or intake worker must sign the Application and specify the Date of Application.

Income Documentation

Proof of Income:

- Primary Applicant must provide documentation of all Household Income. Lack of proof will cause denial of services.
- CAA reviews the proof of income the Primary Applicant has provided and documents the proof of income on the Income Worksheet (See Completing the Forms section).
- **Social Security Benefits:** Specify the type of Social Security benefits (ex. SSI, SSD, and/or SS).

If the Primary Applicant provided all income information and proof of income for the Household:

1. Fill out an Income Worksheet: CAAs are required to use/complete the Income Worksheet to document income for all Household members 18 years or older. See Completing the Forms.
2. Attach all proof.
3. Fill out the appropriate worksheets such as Odd Jobs Worksheet, Minimal/Zero Income Worksheet, and/or Self-Employment Worksheet.
4. Fill out Applicant Income Affidavit (if applicable). See Completing the Forms.

If there is missing or additional information or proof required:

1. Fill out the **Income Worksheet** with the information that is available.
2. Fill out the **Reminder form**. Indicate what information is needed and the date it must be submitted by. Make sure the Primary Applicant signs the Reminder form. The intake/outreach worker must also sign the Reminder form. Give the Primary Applicant one signed copy and attach a copy to the Application.

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WITH HEAT INCLUDED PROCESS

CAA must follow the requirements outlined in this section for a face-to-face Application or telephone application process, whichever is applicable.

Applicants living in Subsidized housing with heat included will be considered income eligible for a HEAP Benefit in the amount of \$21 if:

- The Applicant pays a portion of their rent each month, **or**
- The Applicant is responsible for the electricity as outlined in the Rental/Lease Agreement. The HEAP file requires a copy of the most recent electricity bill.

Note: the electricity account does not have to be in a Household member's name.

Income. Applicants residing in Subsidized housing with heat included are NOT required to provide income documentation. However all other documentation (i.e. Permission to Share Information form, SSN documentation, government-issued identification, Lease Agreement or completed Subsidized Housing form and other pertinent documentation) must be in the file.

Enter one income record for the Household in MERAC (enter as zero income).

In cases where there is a live-in care attendant who is not listed on the Subsidized housing documentation, but is considered to be part of the Household according to HEAP guidelines, the income from all Household members, including the live-in care attendant, must be verified, documented, and entered in MERAC to determine the Household's income eligibility.

TELEPHONE APPLICATION PROCESS

The telephone Application process may be used for any Applicant.

All information and documentation requirements are the same as the requirements for the face-to-face Application process. This includes a copy of the Primary Applicant's government-issued photo ID (if applicable).

The telephone interview is to be conducted in the same manner as face-to-face Application. It is critical that the intake/outreach worker go through all of the questions/information contained in the Application and HEAP Additional Information Questionnaire with the Primary Applicant. All information will be recorded in MERAC.

1. At the beginning of the telephone interview, ask the Primary Applicant for the last 4 digits of their SSN and date of birth to verify the person on the other end of the phone is the Primary Applicant.
2. Complete the HEAP Additional Information Questionnaire with the Primary Applicant.
3. Verify and update all information in MERAC.
4. Review and verify the information recorded on the Application with the Primary Applicant.
5. Intake/outreach worker will sign and date the Application.
6. CAA will mail the following to the Primary Applicant:
 - a. Application
 - b. Applicable documents/forms
 - c. Reminder form listing the required documentation and the due date. The Reminder form will give the Primary Applicant twenty (20) business days to return the signed Application and required documentation.
 - d. Instructions for completing the Application process, including:
 - i. Reviewing the Application
 - ii. Reading the back of the Application
 - iii. Initialing and dating any changes to the Application
 - iv. Signing and dating the Application

PROCESSING TELEPHONE APPLICATIONS

The Application, signed by the Primary Applicant, must be received by the CAA within twenty (20) business days of the date of the telephone interview. The CAA must date stamp the Application and all documents upon receipt. The Date of Application is the date the CAA received the signed Application.

Examples:

1. Signed Application is received within the allowed twenty (20) business days. However, there is missing income documentation. The CAA will date stamp the Application with the new Date of Application and send the Primary Applicant another reminder allowing twenty (20) business days from the new Date of Application.
 - a. Original Date of Application (listed on the Reminder form) is November 11, 2016.
 - b. Signed Application is received by the CAA on November 22, 2016 and there is missing income documentation. CAA date stamps the Application and the new Date of Application is November 22, 2016.
 - c. A Reminder form reflecting the new Date of Application is sent to the Primary Applicant on November 23, 2016 giving the Primary Applicant an additional twenty (20) business days from the new Date of Application to submit the required documentation.

2. CAA mails the Primary Applicant an Application dated January 22, 2017 with an income verification period requested of three (3) months (October, November and December).
 - a. CAA receives the signed Application on February 6, 2017; which now becomes the new Date of Application. The income verification period will be different (November, December, and January). In these instances the CAA will need to notify the Primary Applicant of this fact and obtain documentation for the corrected income verification time period.
 - b. If the signed Application is not received within the twenty (20) business day period the Application will be voided.
 - i. CAA will need to enter the reason for voidance into the notes section of MERAC.
 - ii. The CAA will need to notify the Applicant they will need to reapply. Note: this would NOT be in the form of a Denial letter. Remember whenever a Denial letter is sent to the Applicant they are granted an additional fifteen (15) business days to submit documentation and 30 calendar days to appeal a decision.

INCOME

HEAP is an income based program; therefore it is important to ensure all sources of income and support have been captured.

It is the responsibility of the Primary Applicant to provide documentation of all Household income. **If the Primary Applicant is unable to provide adequate proof of income**, the CAA will assist the Applicant(s) in understanding the documentation that is required. Lack of proof may cause the application to be denied.

The Primary Applicant must be given the option to choose the income verification period that best serves them – i.e. previous three (3) or twelve (12) months.

EXEMPTIONS FROM HOUSEHOLD INCOME

See Rule, Section 3(F)(3).

COUNTABLE INCOME INCLUDES, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLWING:

A. Gross wages, salaries, and bonuses before any taxes or deductions

1. Any income received by an Applicant age 18 or under who is NOT a full time high school student, must be counted as part of the total Household income.
2. If an Applicant has wages from a job and the paystubs state the year-to-date (YTD) amount, calculate the income using the first check received and the last check received during the income verification period. Use the date of the check – not the pay week ending date.

<i>Example:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Date of Application = 08/29/2016• Income Verification Period = 05/01/2016 to 07/31/2016	
YTD gross - 07/31/2016 paystub	\$5,000
Minus YTD gross - 05/01/2016 paystub	- \$2,000
Subtotal	= \$3,000
Add the gross amount paid on 05/01/2016	+ \$300
Total Wages for Income Verification Period	= \$3,300

3. If the paystubs do not show YTD amounts, calculate income as follows: add all actual gross pay received for all weeks during the income verification period (i.e. prior three (3) or twelve (12) calendar months).
4. One of the following must be included in the Application file:
 - a. copy of **all** paystubs for the income verification period;
 - b. copy of first and last paystubs for the income verification period showing YTD amounts; or
 - c. signed letter from Applicant's employer confirming the gross wages received during the income verification period.

If a photocopier is not available, use the Document Verification Form to describe the documentation that was reviewed, and to record the dates, amounts, source, etc.

B. Social Security, SSI (Supplemental Security Income) and SSD (Social Security Disability) (SVES)

All Social Security, SSI, and SSD income, along with Applicant identity, will be verified through MERAC using the electronic verification process established between MaineHousing and the Social Security Administration. Errors documented by this process will be researched by the CAA and corrected. In situations where Social Security benefits cannot be verified via the electronic verification process (i.e. children or widows receiving Social Security benefits under a parent's or spouse's name), documentation will be required for the file. The CAA will assist the Primary Applicant in understanding the documentation requirements.

If an Applicant cannot provide their current award letter, the CAA may calculate the benefit by using the previous year's award letter and adjusting the benefit rate appropriately.

For informational purposes, the following are some facts about SSI. Additional information about SSI can be obtained from <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/text-eligibility-ussi.htm>.

"SSI" means Supplemental Security Income. SSI pays monthly checks to persons who are aged, disabled, or blind and who have limited assets or income. It is a Federal income supplement program run by Social Security. Funding for SSI comes from general tax revenues, not Social Security taxes.

The following persons may be eligible for SSI benefits:

1. A person who is age 65 or older;
2. A person who is age 18 or older and has a physical or mental disability, that is expected to keep the person from working for at least 12 months or is expected to result in death;
3. A child who is below age 18 and has a physical or mental disability that would keep an adult from working, is expected to continue for at least 12 months, or is expected to result in death; and
4. A person of any age who is blind. A person is blind if the person has 20/200 vision or worse or has a limited visual field of 20 degrees or less in the better eye with the use of eyeglasses. If a person's sight is not poor enough to be considered blindness, the person may still be eligible for SSI as a person with a disability.

In addition to above, the following persons may be eligible for SSI benefits:

1. A citizen or national of the United States; or
2. A non-citizen who meets the alien eligibility criteria under the 1996 Legislation and its amendments. Non-citizens must meet two requirements to be eligible for SSI:
 - a. non-citizen must be in a qualified alien category; and
 - b. meet a condition that allows qualified aliens to get SSI benefits.

All other requirements for SSI eligibility, including income, resources, etc. must be met to be eligible.

For more information:

- visit: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-11011.pdf>
- write to: Social Security Administration
Office of Public Inquiries
SSA Publication No. 05-11011
1100 West High Rise
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21235

C. Worker's compensation, strike benefits from union funds, and/or Maine State or Out-of-State Unemployment:

Unemployment verification or an Applicant Income Affidavit is required for any Applicant(s) who meets **all** of the following:

- Who declares they were not employed at any time during the income verification period; and
- Is 18 years of age or older, is not a full-time high school student; and
- Has been employed within the past 2 years or has declared unemployment as a source of income.

If an Applicant received unemployment benefits during the income verification period, the Applicant must provide the CAA with a Department of Labor benefit history report/transcript. Appendix C provides instructions for Applicants who need to obtain a DOL benefit history/transcript using.

If an Applicant did not receive unemployment benefits during the income verification period, the Applicant will be required to complete and sign an Applicant Income Affidavit. See Completing the Forms section.

D. TANF, Pass-Through, GAP, ASPIRE, Transitional Workers Supplement, or any other regular support from a government or private agency: Ask if the Applicant receives TANF and child support, and if they have documentation. Applicant's file must include proof for the income verification period or a completed Document Verification Form (if photocopier is not available).

If there are other sources of income in the Household, the amount of TANF and child support may change from month to month. It is the responsibility of the Primary Applicant to provide all proof.

E. Alimony, child support, or mortgage/rent payments in lieu of or in addition to support payments:

1. Alimony: Calculate the amount received during the income verification period. Applicant(s) file must include one of the following:
 - a. written statement from the absent spouse;
 - b. signed Applicant Income Affidavit form or a copy of the divorce decree; or
 - c. photocopy of the check.
2. Child Support: Calculate the amount received during the income verification period. Include a copy of the divorce decree, parental rights document, or the Minor Child(ren) Primary Residency Affidavit.

3. Non-TANF payments are child support payments collected by DHHS, Support Enforcement Division, and sent to the custodial parent on a monthly basis. Calculate the amount received during the income verification period. Include a copy of the Official Record of Child Support Disbursements Made by the Department of Health and Human Services report.

F. Self-employment income: Income must be documented on an annual basis for all self-employed individuals. If the Household is using the three (3) month income verification period, self-employed income will be prorated to three (3) months by dividing the total profit, if any, by four (4).

If using IRS form 1040 and applicable schedules:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return must be signed by Applicant. • Electronically filed returns must be accompanied by the electronic signature page to demonstrate that the return was actually submitted to the IRS.

If using Self-employment Worksheet:
The Self-employment Worksheet and instructions can be found in the Completing the Forms section. Deductions must be supported by documentation.

The following guidelines will be used in determining income for a self-employed Applicant:

1. Self-employment income is defined as the total of net income (including net rental income) plus the total net gain from sales of capital goods or equipment plus depreciation.
2. Self-employed individuals must provide the most current Federal tax return (Form 1040) and appropriate supporting schedules/forms.

Sole Proprietorship	Schedule C
Capital Gains	Schedule D
Farm	Schedule F
Real Estate	Schedule E
Partnership	Form 1065
Corporation	Form 1120S

3. Use the amounts shown on the appropriate form/schedule. If the tax form is showing a loss (negative amount) then use zero income. Negative amounts cannot be used to reduce overall Household income.
4. If the net profit is a loss but the equipment plus depreciation is a positive then the total income amount would be positive.

Example:	
Net profit is loss	-\$12,000 (counted as \$0)
Equipment plus depreciation	\$2,000
Countable income for HEAP	\$2,000

5. If a person has two or more businesses and one business shows a profit and another shows a loss, use the amount of the profit and use zero in place of the loss. The loss cannot be deducted from the overall profit.

<i>Example:</i>	
Business A has total profit of	\$32,000
Business B has loss of	-\$12,000
Countable income for HEAP	\$32,000

6. An Applicant must complete a **Self-Employment Worksheet** (see Completing the Forms) and provide supporting documentation to substantiate self-employment income for the last 365 days if:
- i. The self-employed Applicant does not have a completed tax return for the current year, or the previous year;
 - ii. The business was established during the current year; or
 - iii. The self-employed Applicant is not required to file a tax return per IRS guidelines.

The application cannot be certified eligible until the supporting documentation is presented and verified. It is the Primary Applicant's responsibility to provide adequate proof of income and expenses. It is the CAA's responsibility to verify that all submitted documentation is accurate and complete.

If the Primary Applicant chooses the three (3) month income verification period, divide the total net income from the Self-Employment Worksheet by four (4).

7. If there is not enough income indicated on the tax return or the Self Employment Worksheet to meet basic necessities, then the Primary Applicant will be required to complete a Minimal/Zero Income Worksheet. (See Certification)
8. Examples:

Example 1: Robert Smith is self-employed, and Ann Smith works.

Primary Applicant chooses the three (3) month income verification period.

Ann must provide the previous three (3) months of wage information.

Robert provides a recently filed income tax return with the appropriate schedules.

Robert's self-employment income for the three (3) month income verification period is determined by taking the net profit and adding any equipment plus depreciation or net gain from sales of capital goods. This resulting amount is then divided by four (4).

Ann's three (3) months of wages plus Robert's self-employment income equals the total Household income for three (3) months.

Example 2: Mary has been self-employed for only four months, and John works.

Primary Applicant chooses the three (3) month income verification period.

John provides the previous three (3) months of wage information.

Mary completes the Self Employment Worksheet based on the date her business began. She also provides documentation to substantiate the stated amounts on the Self Employment Worksheet.

Mary's self-employment income for the three (3) month income verification period is determined by taking the net profit and dividing by 4.

John's three (3) months of wages plus Mary's self-employment income equals the total Household income for three (3) months.

G. Odd jobs self-employment: Individuals who perform miscellaneous "odd jobs" such as mowing lawns, raking leaves, babysitting, and shoveling snow as their means of support must document this income by providing a signed Odd Jobs Income Worksheet. (See Completing the Forms) This worksheet includes a listing of jobs performed, names and addresses of persons for whom work has been performed, date of work and gross payment received. The form needs to be signed by the Applicant who received the income. CAA must obtain supporting documentation from the Primary Applicant/Applicant(s) to substantiate odd job income (i.e. copies of ledgers and /or statements from customers).

Examples:

1. Mark Jones mowed Mrs. Roberts' lawn all summer and kept a receipt book. A copy of the receipt book will serve as proof.
2. Tammy Smith provides childcare to Ms. Carter but does not keep records. A letter from Ms. Carter stating the terms of the agreement can serve as proof.

The CAA or MaineHousing may request, at any time, a copy of the Applicant(s) income tax return to verify income. At that time the Applicant(s) will be held liable if they have misstated or understated their income in any way.

H. Net rental income: Rental income is categorized as self-employment income. Either the Income Tax Form 1040, with applicable schedules, or the Self-Employment Worksheet will be used as proof of income.

If using IRS form 1040 and applicable schedules:

- Return must be signed by Applicant.
- Electronically filed returns must be accompanied by the electronic signature page to demonstrate that the return was actually submitted to the IRS.

If using Self-employment Worksheet:

The Self-employment Worksheet and instructions can be found in the Completing the Forms section. Deductions must be supported by documentation.

H. Income from Roomers/Boarders: If an Applicant has a Roomer/Boarder in his/her home, the Applicant must provide self-employment documentation to receive any deductions. (See Self Employment Worksheet) If such documentation is not provided, then the full amount of the Roomer/Boarder income must be included in calculating the Applicant's income.

A copy of the Roomer/Boarder lease must be included in the Applicant's file

I. Support from someone or a family member not living in the household, including loans, if received within the income verification period.

J. Assets drawn down from financial institutions when used for expenditures and not reinvested.

K. Income from dividends, rents, royalties, estates, trusts, and interest: All interest must be counted as income and documented on the Income Worksheet.

Applicants who earn interest income under \$200 annually are not required to provide documentation; however the interest income must be counted and entered as income in MERAC.

Interest from the direct sale of property pursuant to which the Primary Applicant/ Applicant(s) receives a regular direct payment from the buyer must be counted as income. The Primary Applicant/Applicant(s) must provide a copy of the agreement/contract.

L. Government employee pensions, private pensions, and regular annuity payments: Use the gross amount shown on the check stub. Not all pensions and retirement checks are gross. Applicant must provide a copy of the check stub or verification of gross income from the provider. A statement from a financial institution showing direct deposit is not adequate documentation.

Fixed annuities guarantee a certain payment amount; variable annuities do not.

The recipient is taxed only when they start taking distributions or if they withdraw funds from the account. A check stub or statement from the company showing gross payments is required.

M. VA Pensions: Recipients receive checks on a monthly basis. There are two types of VA pensions. One type increases every December and the second type is fixed and does not change. There is no way to distinguish between the two types. If you need more information about an Applicant's VA pension, the Primary Applicant must provide documentation from the VA.

N. VA Disability: The above procedures for VA Pensions apply to VA disability payments with the following exceptions:

1. Disability payments increase annually every December.
2. Benefit levels are based on other Household income. If there is a change in the Household's income, this will alter the monthly benefit.

O. Military family allotments: Only those military personnel who are not living in military housing are eligible for a Fuel Assistance benefit. When an active-duty military person, who lives off base, applies for Fuel Assistance benefits, include the military family allotments plus housing allowance (BAQ).

P. Foster care payments if the foster child/adult is an Applicant on the Date of Application.

Q. Adoption subsidy

R. Rent to own: If the buyer is paying a monthly amount to live at the property and to take care of the property, include the monthly payments as income.

- S. **Work study:** The work-study program provides part-time employment to undergraduates and graduates to help with college expenses. There are two different kinds of work-study: Federal Work-Study and non-Federal Work-Study.
- T. **Forgone rent** in exchange for services rendered.

Example:

John Smith selected the three (3) month income verification period (05/01/2016 – 07/31/2016).

John's lease agreement indicates that his monthly rent is \$500.

John performed work for his landlord. In exchange for the work performed, John's May rent was reduced by \$500 (paid \$0), and his June rent by \$250. The \$750 of forgone rent would be counted and entered in MERAC as income.

- U. **Lottery winnings**
- V. **Capital gains**
- W. **Jury duty**

CERTIFICATION

HEAP is an income based program. It is the certifier’s responsibility to review and verify the entire Application file and MERAC (not solely income). It is important to remember that the certifier is not only certifying the Household’s eligibility for fuel assistance/ECIP benefits, but also income-eligibility for other programs such as the Weatherization Assistance Program and the Central Heating Improvement Program (CHIP).

An Application is not considered certified until it is certified in MERAC, the system of record. The certifier must review all information in MERAC prior to certifying the Application. “Certifying” an Application on paper is ineffective and should be avoided. If an Application is “certified” on paper, the certifier must fully review/compare the paper file against the information in MERAC, make any corrections, and complete the certification process in MERAC.

Each Application must be certified eligible or denied within thirty (30) business days from the Date of Application. Once all documentation has been received, certification may occur any time before thirty (30) business days.

If an Application cannot be certified due to lack of documentation (whether the documentation is pending from the Applicant or a third party) the Application is put on hold. However, the Application must be certified eligible or denied within thirty (30) business days of the Date of Application.

Separation of duties is required and provides essential checks and balances to ensure accuracy and compliance. On any given Application, intake and certification cannot be performed by the same person. Additionally, the person who enters/creates the Application in MERAC cannot certify the Application.

The certifier is responsible for:

1. Verifying all documents are in the file (see Application section)
2. Reviewing the entire Application and file for accuracy and completeness
3. Assessing the Application file as a whole (Does it make sense?)
4. Determining if the Household income is sufficient to meet basic living expenses
5. Resolving any inconsistencies or errors

The following highlights some key considerations the certifier should take into account when reviewing/certifying the Application file.

Certifier will review and verify the following:	
If there are changes/corrections each change must be initialed and dated by the Primary Applicant or the CAA. If the CAA is initialing/dating the change, the CAA will document the date they spoke with the Primary Applicant and received verification from and the consent of the Primary Applicant to make the change.	
1	Compare Primary Applicant’s address to the landlord’s address. If they are the same, additional information and documentation may be required to ensure all Household members and income have been accounted for.
2	Application is complete, signed and dated.
3	Permission to Share Information Form: Certifier must review the form and verify all Applicants 18 or older have signed with no additional comments added that would negate permission.

4	<p>Verify that the requested fuel type is compatible with the Heating System. MERAC will produce an error if fuel type and Heating System do not match.</p> <p>In the case of oil tanks located outside or in unheated out buildings, kerosene (K-1) is the only eligible fuel type. No Waivers will be allowed.</p>
5	<p>Roomer/Boarder: By definition there should not be more than 1 or 2 rooms listed.</p>

Income	
<p>HEAP is an income based program. Therefore, it is critical the certifier carefully follow the instructions outlined in the forms section when reviewing for completeness.</p>	
<p>Income Worksheet: Income must be documented for all Household members 18 years of age or older who are not high school students. All sources of income must be verified and proof must be attached to the Income Worksheet.</p> <p>Interest: All interest must be counted as income, recorded on the Income Worksheet, and entered in MERAC. Interest income must have supporting documentation unless it is under \$200 annually.</p>	
<p>Minimal/Zero Income Worksheet:</p> <p>A worksheet must be completed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant is 18 years or older and claims zero income for any month during the income verification period; • Household Income for the income verification period minus the total mortgage/rent amount for the income verification period is less than or equal to \$600 or \$2400 (i.e. 3 months or 12 months respectively); or • CAA has questions or needs clarification about the Household Income information provided by the Primary Applicant. <p>Certifier will ensure the amounts listed cover the basic needs and make sense. This includes totaling amounts listed on the worksheet (excluding SNAP and General Assistance) to be sure the total does not exceed declared Household income.</p> <p>Supporting documentation is required for any past due bills. If bills are current and exceed the declared Household income, additional information may be necessary to determine income-eligibility and how the Household is meeting basic necessities.</p> <p>MERAC Data Entry: All information in Table 1 of the worksheet must be entered in MERAC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter a zero income row for all adult Household members who had zero income during the income verification period. • Enter zero income worksheet for the Primary Applicant. When entering the information into MERAC, amounts MUST be entered along with the funding source. 	
<p>Percent of federal poverty level will be calculated by the MERAC system. MERAC rounds all percentages to the next higher percentage.</p>	

Over Income Applications (Medical Deductions):

The CAA shall deduct any paid and documented medical expenses not reimbursed for the income verification period. Only deduct enough expenses to make the Household eligible in the highest income bracket for which the Household could possibly be eligible (150% or 170%). The CAA will deduct only enough expenses to put the Household \$1.00 below the maximum income bracket. All documentation must be provided in order to deduct any allowable expenses.

Allowable Deductions: Deductible medical expenses (paid) may include, but are not limited to, hospital and doctor bills, medical or dental insurance premiums, prescription drugs, and the cost of transportation to and from medical care providers.

Hospital or doctor's appointments may document proof of medical transportation expenses. If the Applicant is unable to provide actual costs, the CAA may use the current MaineCare reimbursement rate per mile to calculate deductible transportation costs. The MaineCare rates can be found at <http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/ch101.htm> (Ch. II – Section 113 Non-Emergency Transportation Services).

Unallowable Deductions: Refer to the IRS Publication 502 medical deduction exclusions - <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p502.pdf>. Per IRS guidelines, medical marijuana is a violation of federal law and not an allowable medical deduction (even if legalized by the state).

Example:

Mr. and Mrs. Jones are over the age of 60. Their Household Income is \$6,859 (over income).

\$6,859 (over income) = Total Income

\$6,809 = 170% (maximum income)

\$890 = Documented/paid medical expenses (paid within the income verification period)

\$51 = Less Medical Expenses

\$6,808 (170%) = Net Income

The Benefit must be calculated based on 170%. Even though their medical deductions reduced the Jones' gross income into the lower 150% level, the medical deductions may only be used to reduce the Jones' income to the highest level for which they could possibly be eligible, 170%.

Deductions to bring the Household to the lower end of the 170% are not used. Only the amount of deductions necessary to bring the household within the applicable % of poverty is used. (In this example, the household income is \$6,859 – the maximum income limit is \$6,809; therefore, only \$51 of \$890 medical expenses can be deducted from the Household's income.

Income is then certified at \$1.00 below the maximum level.

Subsidized Housing with heat included:

Applicants living in **Subsidized Housing with heat included** will be considered categorically income-eligible for HEAP. These Applicants do not need to provide income documentation.

A zero income line must be entered in MERAC along with all other required fields (see Application section).

An Applicant living in Subsidized Housing with heat included may be eligible to receive a \$21 Benefit if:

- Applicant pays a portion of their rent each month; or
- Applicant is responsible for the electricity per the Rental/Lease Agreement. The electric account does not have to be in a Household member's name. A copy of the most recent electric bill must be in the file.

Subsidized Housing form is **not** required for Subsidized Housing with heat included Applicants.

Subsidized Housing (Applicant is responsible for heat):

If applicable, enter the monthly utility and fuel allowance amounts in MERAC provided on the Subsidized Housing form. The Certifier signs the Subsidized Housing form indicating the information provided has been reviewed and entered into MERAC correctly.

Utility Allowances:

Applicants living in Subsidized Housing (Applicant/tenant is responsible for heat) will need verification of their utility allowance. The annual utility allowance will be a factor in calculating the Fuel Assistance Benefit.

A Subsidized Housing form should have been completed during the intake process and sent to the housing agent/manager. The completed form should be in the file. Any conflicting information must be verified by the CAA.

Housing agent/manager to provide:

1. Actual monthly amount tenant pays for rent (net).
2. Tenant's total monthly utility allowance.
3. Tenant's monthly utility allowance for heating (if known) – [not always completed by the agent]
4. Primary fuel type to heat home

Once the form is completed and returned by the housing agent/manager, the certifier enters the appropriate information in MERAC. MERAC will calculate the applicable monthly allowances.

Examples of how the annual utility allowance factors into the Benefit calculation:

Example 1:

1. Information provided by the housing agent/manager:
 - a. \$230 = Actual monthly amount tenant pays for rent (net)
 - b. \$75 = Tenant's total monthly utility allowance.
2. Check the 70% box in MERAC.
3. MERAC calculates the annual utility allowance as follows:
 - a. Uses total cost to heat the residence as determined by the DHLC or actual consumption.
 - b. Multiplies total monthly utility allowance by 70% ($\$75 \times 0.70 = \52.50)
 - c. Product is then multiplied by 12 (months) to arrive at the annual utility allowance for heating ($\$52.50 \times 12 = \630).
 - d. Deducts calculated annual utility allowance for heating from total heating cost as determined by DHLC or actual consumption. The Applicant's Fuel Assistance Benefit is then determined based on the adjusted heating cost.

$$\begin{array}{r} 959.00 \\ \text{minus } 630.00 \\ \hline \text{Household's Adjusted heating cost} = \$329.00 \end{array}$$

Example 2:

1. Information provided by the housing agent/manager:
 - a. \$230 = Actual monthly amount tenant pays for rent (net)
 - b. \$75 = Tenant's total monthly utility allowance.
2. \$52.50 = Tenant's monthly utility allowance for heating
3. Enter the monthly utility allowance (\$52.50) provided by housing agent/property manager.
4. MERAC will calculate the cost to heat the residence by deducting the annual utility allowance for heating from the total heating cost as determined by the DHLC or actual consumption. The Fuel Assistance Benefit will be based on \$329.00 (which is the adjusted heating cost ($\$959.00 - \$630.00 = \$329.00$)).

If the client's primary heat system is electric and the benefit is being determined based on actual consumption, MERAC will deduct \$600 for non-heating purposes from the consumption amount.

Consumption or Design Heat Load?

Using the established criteria and information provided on the Application and HEAP Additional Questionnaire form, determine whether the household is eligible to receive a Consumption Based Benefit.

Criteria for Consumption Based Benefit:

1. The Eligible Household has a Direct Energy Cost; and
2. An Applicant occupied the residence for the entire previous Heating Season; and
3. An Applicant had an eligible Application in the prior Program Year; and
4. The Eligible Household purchased all of their Home Energy for their Primary Heating System from a Reporting Vendor(s) for the previous Heating Season; and
5. Reporting Vendor(s) submitted an Annual Consumption Report to MaineHousing that provided the Eligible Household's Home Energy delivery information; and
6. The Eligible Household's Energy Costs, as reported by Vendor(s) to MaineHousing, is for their residence only; and
7. The Eligible Household's Primary Heating System does not use wood, wood pellets, corn, coal, or bio-bricks.

Must use DHLC if:

1. Applicant does not meet all of the consumption criteria;
2. Primary Heating System is different than what was designated on prior year's Application;
3. Applicant resides in apartment building or duplex serviced by a shared/common tank or meter for Home Energy with another Dwelling Unit(s);
4. Applicant is self-employed and uses part of their Dwelling Unit for business. Benefit will be determined based on the rooms occupied and used by the Applicants as a residence; that part of the Dwelling Unit designated for business use will not be included;
5. Dwelling Unit shares a heating system with a non-residential area such as a garage; or
6. Household received fuel from Citizen's Energy, private agency funds, and/or Keep ME Warm funds from a Vendor other than the Applicant's Vendor of record. Document MERAC, "Other Override Reason" field accordingly.

Did the Household carry fuel?

If the Primary Applicant indicates they carried fuel, the Benefit should be calculated on both DHLC and consumption. Based on the outcome, select DHLC or consumption, whichever generates the most favorable Benefit. Document MERAC, "Other Override Reason" field accordingly.

Landlord requires Applicant/tenant use a specific vendor

Participating Vendor: CAA will review the Lease/Rental Agreement to determine who is responsible for heat. If the Lease/Rental Agreement does not indicate a specific vendor must be used, Primary Applicant must provide alternative documentation to substantiate the situation.

A direct check may be issued if:

- Applicant is responsible for heat; and
- Applicant's name is not on the Home Energy account and cannot be added to the account.

A Benefit for an Applicant who resides in an apartment or duplex that shares a common tank or meter for Home Energy with another Dwelling Unit would be issued as a direct check.

The Benefit will be issued to the Vendor if:

- Applicant is responsible for heat; and
- Tank/meter supplies Home Energy to the Applicant's Dwelling Unit only; and
- Applicant's name is on or can be added to the account.

Non-participating vendor: CAA will need to review the Lease/Rental Agreement to ensure the validity of the information provided. Does the Lease/Rental Agreement specifically state that the Applicant is responsible for the purchase of Home Energy? Does the Lease/Rental Agreement specifically state that the Applicant must purchase Home Energy from a specific vendor? If yes, a direct check may be issued.

If there is no lease/rental agreement or the agreement does not address the above, the CAA will need to verify the following before the Application can be certified eligible for a direct check:

- Verify the Applicant's responsibility for Home Energy;
- Verify the name of the vendor;
- Verify that the vendor has an account with the Applicant's physical address as the delivery location; and
- Obtain any other information as necessary for verification.

Household moves prior to certification:

If all Applicants **move to Subsidized Housing with heat included or an ineligible Dwelling Unit** prior to certification, the Household may not be eligible for the entire Benefit depending on the Date of Application and the amount of any Home Energy deliveries made during the current Heating Season.

CAA would certify based on the information at the time of Application. CAA will notify MaineHousing of the date of the move. MaineHousing will determine what (if any) portion of the Benefit the Applicant is entitled to. MaineHousing will prorate the Benefit amount and issue the payment accordingly.

If all Applicants **move to an eligible Dwelling Unit** prior to certification.

1. Add the new Heating System as a secondary or third in order to ensure the Benefit is based on the primary Heating System chosen on the Date of Application.
2. Change the mailing address in MERAC. Enter the new address in the delivery address on the dwelling tab in MERAC. Submit a Change of Address form to MaineHousing.
3. Once updated, CAA will certify based on the information provided on the Date of Application.

Certifying the Application:

Certifier must sign and date the Application and be sure to check the appropriate box identifying the Household's eligibility or non-eligibility for energy assistance and all other programs, i.e. ECIP, Weatherization, CHIP, REACH, and LIAP.

An Application must be certified (i.e. eligible or denied) within thirty (30) business days of the Date of Application.

Benefit Notification:

- Standard LIHEAP Benefits: CAA must mail Benefit Notifications to Primary Applicants on the Tuesday after the Benefit has been issued/paid.
- Food Stamp Benefits (Subsidized Housing with heat included): MaineHousing mails the Benefit Notifications for \$21 payments.

Denial Notification:

- Must clearly state the reason for the denial. Original denial notification must be mailed to the Primary Applicant within three (3) business days of the date of the denial. A copy must remain in the file.
- **Lack of Documentation:** list all documents needed.
- The Denial Notification can be used for Fuel Assistance and ECIP.

Do not, for any reason, issue a Reminder form that would extend the allowable time period beyond the thirty (30) business days to certify. If the CAA overlooked needed documentation, the Application would still be denied, as the Applicant(s) will have fifteen (15) business days to supply the documentation.

Wood Purchase Orders

Certifier will issue a purchase order to the Wood Vendor for the Benefit amount and include delivery specifics (i.e., number of cords, type of wood, size of wood).

Wood Vendors have thirty (30) calendar days to contact the Household and make the delivery. If the purchase order is not returned within those thirty (30) calendar days from the date of issuance, the purchase order may be considered void. MaineHousing may grant an extension on a case-by-case basis.

In cases where the Vendor is unable to deliver the total number of cords in one delivery load, the Vendor will deliver his load capacity; write the number of cords delivered in the load, and the date of the delivery on the purchase order. The client will initial the “partial” delivery information on the purchase order. Each partial delivery will be handled in this manner until the total number of cords has been delivered.

LOW INCOME ASSISTANCE PLAN (LIAP)

Eligibility for LIAP is contingent on a Household being HEAP eligible. Certification for LIAP does not mean the Household is eligible to receive a LIAP benefit, but that they are HEAP eligible and interested in participating in the utility's LIAP program.

Every Friday MaineHousing sends each electricity Vendor a LIAP report listing those Households that have been certified eligible. This report includes the following information:

- AppID
- Primary Applicant Name
- Physical Address
- Electric account number
- Certification date
- CAA
- Homeownership type
- Percent of Poverty

All Applications should be certified for LIAP provided the Primary Applicant requests LIAP and the electric account is in a Household member's name. The electricity Vendor will not issue a LIAP benefit to a Household unless the Household is listed on the LIAP report.

How does a Household get on the LIAP report?

1. HEAP Application status must be "Eligible-Benefit Pending" or "Eligible Benefit Determined"; **and**
2. "Requested LIAP" box on the Heating System tab must be checked; **and**
3. "Eligible LIAP" box on the Certification tab must be checked.

Subsidized Housing:

Applicants living in Subsidized housing who use oxygen or a ventilator for eight (8) hours or more per day may be eligible for LIAP. CAA should check both the "Requested LIAP" and "Eligible LIAP" fields in MERAC to ensure the Household appears on the LIAP report. The electricity Vendor will do the eligibility check for subsidized and subsidized with heat Households – i.e. Household will need to provide physician's note to electricity Vendor to verify use of oxygen or ventilator.

By checking the "Requested LIAP" and "Eligible LIAP" boxes in MERAC, the CAA is representing that the Applicant has expressed interest in LIAP, is eligible for HEAP, and is providing information to the electricity Vendor, who will determine the Household's eligibility for a LIAP benefit.

Electric account is not in a Household member's name on the Date of Application:

HEAP eligibility is determined on the basis of the Household's information/circumstances on the Date of Application. If on the Date of Application the electric account is not in a Household member's name, they may be certified eligible for HEAP, but not LIAP.

The following are some considerations for Households who subsequently get electric service in a Household member's name and how they may be able to access LIAP benefits:

1. If the Application has not been certified eligible, the Primary Applicant may withdraw their HEAP Application and reapply (eligibility for HEAP and LIAP would be based on new Date of Application).
2. If the Application has been certified eligible, the electricity Vendor could request written confirmation of the Household's HEAP eligibility and percent of poverty from the CAA.

DOE ONLY CERTIFICATION

The Department of Energy (DOE) income guidelines for the Weatherization Assistance Program go up to 200% of poverty (which is higher than HEAP income guidelines).

If the Application is otherwise eligible (income is the only reason for denial), the Application may be certified for DOE only provided the:

- Household income is less than or equal to 200% of poverty. If Household income exceeds 200%, the CAA will deduct paid and documented medical expenses not reimbursed for the income period from the gross income in an amount only enough to make the Household DOE eligible; and
- Application is complete and all required documentation has been submitted and accepted; and
- Applicant complies with all HEAP guidelines, and applies no later than May 1, 2017 or July 17, 2017 for AMP candidates.

DOE Only Certification:	
1	If the Household is over income for HEAP, but the percent of poverty is 200% or less, proceed with certifying/denying the Application.
2	When the Application is denied, select “Over Income” from drop down list as the reason for denial. In the “Denial Comment” box, enter “Over Income for HEAP. May be eligible for the DOE Weatherization Assistance Program” as the denial reason.”
3	Refer the Household to CAA’s housing department for possible DOE weatherization services.
4	If the Primary Applicant subsequently provides medical deductions in an amount that would bring them within HEAP income guidelines, the Application would be recertified for the applicable programs.

CHIP ONLY CERTIFICATION – NO WORKING HEATING SYSTEM

No working Heating System:

If there is no working Heating System in the Dwelling Unit, the Household is not eligible to receive a Benefit. Refer to Application section of this Handbook (Heating System (#20)).

If everything else about the Application is complete and all applicable documentation has been provided, the Application can be certified for CHIP only. (See below.) The Applicant must comply with all HEAP Rules, and apply no later than May 1, 2017 or July 17, 2017 for AMP candidates.

CHIP Only Certification:

1	<p>On the certification page, proceed with the certification process (adding the certifier name, selecting the calculation method). In the “Eligible” section, ONLY check off CHIP as eligible. Once this occurs, MERAC will proceed with the denial screen.</p> <p>The difference between this situation and a regular denial is that the Household’s Application would have been eligible to receive a Benefit had a Heating System in the Dwelling been working at the time of Application.</p>
2	<p>When the Application is denied, “Other” should be checked off as the reason for denial. In the “Denial Comment” box, the CAA must enter “Primary Heating System not working. No secondary heating system” as the denial reason. The Application will remain denied until the Heating System is replaced/repared through CHIP or by the Primary Applicant/Applicant. The no heat situation should be referred to the CHIP program.</p>
3	<p>If a CHIP only Application is taken on the last day of the applicable Application period and denied due to any other reason than stated previously. The Primary Applicant will be afforded time allowances as documented on the Reminder form and Denial letter to provide the information/documentation. If the Primary Applicant meets the requirements in the allotted time frame, CAA will request a reopen and certify as CHIP only.</p>
4	<p>If the heating system is repaired/replaced prior to the end of the applicable Application period the CAA will request a reopen. This would mean the Household had a working system prior to the close of the program. If there was a Heating System replacement, the CAA should verify and update (as necessary) the fuel type and Vendor information. Follow the procedures below for changing the Heating System or Vendor as applicable:</p> <p>Replace existing primary Vendor with new primary Vendor. Update the new Vendor on the Heating System tab in the fuel vendor section. Once updated, you must delete the old Vendor from this section.</p>
5	<p>The Household would not be eligible for a PY 2017 Benefit if the repair/replacement was completed on or after May 1, 2017 or July 17, 2017, whichever is applicable. The Household did not have a working system prior to the end date of the applicable Application period.</p>

CHIP Only – Completing MERAC Certification Tab

Maine Energy Assistance and Conservation System

File Benefits Reports Tools Security Help

Forest, Jane

Certifier: **Kyme Ferenc** Consumption Figure Is: **Electric** Consumption Amount: \$ 0.00 LIHEAP Benefit: \$ 0.00

Certification Date: **08/02/2016** Calculation Method: **Design Heat Load** Benefit Paid: \$ 0.00

Consumption Override Reasons

- Client used a non-reporting vendor for the primary fuel.
- Client did not reside here continuously from October 1, 2014 to April 30, 2015
- Client shares heating system with other units of a multi-unit dwelling.
- Client heats non-residential area such as a garage.
- Heating system replaced with one using a different fuel type.
- Client replaced the dwelling (Example: bought a new trailer).
- Other

Other Override Reason

Eligible: LIHEAP ECIP **CHIP** LIAP REACH LIHEAP WZ DOE WZ APR

Denial Reason: **Other** Denial Comment: **Primary heating system does not work, no secondary system.**

Denial Reversal Date:

Summary Household Members Dwelling Heating Systems Income/Expense **Certification** Benefit History Application History ECIP

1:14 PM 8/2/2016

REOPENS

If CAA needs to make a change to a certified Application, a reopen request must be submitted to MaineHousing. Before requesting a reopen, verify all documentation necessary to recertify the Application has been received and the HEAP program guidelines have been met. The request must clearly explain the reason and justification for reopening the Application.

Common reasons for reopens:

1. Missing documentation has been received
2. Information entered in MERAC was incorrect as of Date of Application
3. MaineHousing requested corrections
4. Medical deductions have been received
5. Instead of direct check, Benefit to be issued to electricity Vendor
6. New Heating System needs to be added - i.e. Applicant moved or changed Heating Systems.

Submitting Reopen Request Through MERAC:	
1	Check to make sure the Application file is complete.
2	Do NOT change the reason why the Application was denied or add “Reopen Requested”.
3	Tools>Reopen Request
4	Type in the reason for your request. List each document that was received and the date of the receipt for each document. Do NOT enter “all documentation received”, click continue.
5	If the comments entered are correct, click on OK
6	If this is an emergency request, add the word “URGENT” to the subject line
7	You do NOT need to enter any information into the email message box. Click send and your request will be submitted to LIHEAP@mainehousing.org

The following examples provide guidance on the appropriate steps to take prior to submitting a reopen request.

Example 1:

Application denied on January 10th for lack of documentation – missing social security cards, electricity bill and a current rental agreement.

Jan 13 th	Social Security cards received - Do NOT request reopen until all required documentation has been received and reviewed/approved.
Jan 15 th	Rental Agreement received – Do NOT request reopen until all required documentation has been received and reviewed/approved.
Jan 20 th	Electric bill received – Review file and if complete, request reopen.

Example 2:

Application denied on October 30th for lack of documentation – missing proof of wages.

Dec 30 th	Proof of wages received – Do NOT request a reopen as the client did not provide the requested documentation during the fifteen (15) day time period.
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Example 3:

Application certified as subsidized w/heat included. An audit was performed and discovered that the Applicant was subsidized but heat was not included.

Request reopen to correct discrepancy.

Example 4:

Application denied on February 15th for lack of documentation. Denial stated the Applicant needed to provide a Minimal/Zero Income Worksheet.

Feb 27 th	Minimal/zero Income Worksheet was received – File was reviewed and discovered that the rental agreement had expired before Application date. Do NOT request a reopen. CAA will send letter to Primary Applicant stating what additional documentation is needed, and the Applicant has an additional ten (10) business days from the date of the letter to provide it.
May 5 th	Rental agreement received- File reviewed and reopen requested.

The following provides guidance for handling situations where all Applicants move prior to certification or payment.

Moves before Application is certified

If all Applicants **move to an eligible Dwelling Unit** prior to certification:

1. Add the new Heating System as a secondary or third in order to ensure the Benefit is based on the primary Heating System chosen on the Date of Application.
2. Change the mailing address in MERAC.
3. Enter the new address in the delivery address on the dwelling tab in MERAC.
4. If the Applicant has a prior year Benefit remaining, the CAA will complete/submit one of the following forms:
 - o **Change of Address Form** if Household is keeping the same Vendor. The Change of Address form must be submitted to MaineHousing (do not send it to the Vendor).
 - o **Benefit Return Form** if Household is changing Vendor
5. Once updated, CAA will certify the Application. The Benefit calculation will still be based on the primary fuel type designated on the Date of Application.

Certified Eligible and Moves before payment is issued

If all Applicants move to **Subsidized Housing with heat included or an ineligible Dwelling Unit** prior to the Benefit being paid, the Household may not be eligible for the entire Benefit depending on the Date of Application and the amount of any Home Energy deliveries made during the current Heating Season.

Before certifying the Application, the CAA will notify MaineHousing of the date of the move. MaineHousing will determine what (if any) portion of the Benefit the Applicant is entitled to. MaineHousing will prorate the Benefit amount and issue the payment accordingly.

If all Applicants **move to an eligible Dwelling Unit:**

1. Request a reopen.
2. Add the new Heating System as a secondary or third Heating System.
3. Change the mailing address in MERAC.
4. Enter the new address in the delivery address on the dwelling tab in MERAC.
5. Once updated, CAA will recertify the Application. The Benefit calculation will still be based on the primary fuel type designated on the Date of Application.

BENEFITS

HEAP Benefits are determined so that Eligible Households with the lowest income and the highest Energy Cost receive the highest Benefit.

Applicants residing in Subsidized Housing with heat included in their rent may be eligible if the Household pays an out-of-pocket expense for a portion of their rent or utility costs. The maximum Benefit for Households residing in Subsidized Housing with heat included is \$21 per Program Year. If the subsidy pays 100% of the rent and utility costs, the Household is not eligible to receive a Benefit.

Applications are entered into MERAC, which automatically calculates the Benefit amount for an Eligible Household. A comprehensive description of the Benefit calculation can be found in the Rule. The Benefit calculation takes into account:

1. Household's actual fuel consumption data collected from energy Vendors or estimated heating costs calculated by using the Design Heat Load Calculation (DHLC) formula
2. Percent of Poverty, which takes into account Household income and size (see Appendix B)
3. Susceptibility to hypothermia
4. Average fuel price for the Primary Heating System (average fuel prices are based on prior Heating Season). See Appendix A.
5. Climate/region – Degree Days
6. Dwelling type and number of rooms (if using DHLC)

The following illustrations demonstrate how Benefits are calculated in MERAC, for more details consult the Rule.

Illustration #1: Consumption

- **Subsidized Housing**
- **Primary Heating System = Electric**

Consumption Method Calculation
✕

Consumption		Fuel Subsidy	less	Electric Lighting, etc	less	Heating Burden	gives		
\$1,151.63		\$579.60		\$600.00		\$0.00			
Points Allowed	X	% of Points Allowed	X	Dollars per Point	X	Benefit Amount			
5		1.00		\$40.00		\$200.00			

Contributing Factors

Dwelling Type:
Apartment

Fuel Type:
Electric

Poverty Level:
76 - 100%

Hypothermia Risk:
True

Illustration #2: Design Heat Load Calculation

- Subsidized Housing
- Primary Heating System = Electric

Design Heat Load Calculation						
Number of Rooms	Sq Feet per Room	BTUs per Sq Foot	Degree Days	/ 1,000,000 gives		MBTUs Needed
3	X 120	X 8.3	X 7373			22.031
MBTUs Needed	Fuel Cost per MBTU	Fuel Efficiency Rate	gives		Estimated Consumption	
22.031	X \$43.96	/ 1.00			\$968.00	
Est. Consumption	Fuel Subsidy	Electric Lighting, etc	gives		Heating Burden	
\$968.00	less \$579.60	less \$0.00			\$388.40	
Points Allowed	% of Points Allowed	Dollars per Point	gives		Benefit Amount	
5	X 1.00	X \$27.00			\$135.00	

Contributing Factors

Dwelling Type: **Apartment**

Fuel Type: **Electric**

Poverty Level: **76 - 100%**

Hypothermia Risk: **True**

Illustration #3: Consumption

- Single Family
- Primary Heating System = Oil

Consumption Method Calculation					
Consumption	Fuel Subsidy	Electric Lighting, etc	gives		Heating Burden
\$299.21	less \$0.00	less \$0.00			\$299.21
Points Allowed	% of Points Allowed	Dollars per Point	gives		Benefit Amount
5	X 1.00	X \$40.00			\$200.00

Contributing Factors

Dwelling Type: **Single Family**

Fuel Type: **Oil**

Poverty Level: **76 - 100%**

Hypothermia Risk: **False**

Illustration #4: Design Heat Load Calculation

- Single Family
- Primary Heating System = Oil

Design Heat Load Calculation
✕

Number of Rooms		Sq Feet per Room		BTUs per Sq Foot		Degree Days		MBTUs Needed
<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="4"/>	X	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="144"/>	X	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="14.3"/>	X	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="7771"/>	/ 1,000,000 gives	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="64.008"/>
MBTUs Needed		Fuel Cost per MBTU		Fuel Efficiency Rate		Estimated Consumption		
<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="64.008"/>	X	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$20.86"/>	/	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="0.65"/>	gives	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$2,054.00"/>		
Est. Consumption		Fuel Subsidy		Electric Lighting, etc		Heating Burden		
<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$2,054.00"/>	less	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$0.00"/>	less	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$0.00"/>	gives	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$2,054.00"/>		
Points Allowed		% of Points Allowed		Dollars per Point		Benefit Amount		
<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="30"/>	X	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="1.00"/>	X	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$27.00"/>	gives	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text" value="\$810.00"/>		

Contributing Factors

Dwelling Type:
Single Family

Fuel Type:
Oil

Poverty Level:
76 - 100%

Hypothermia Risk:
False

PAYMENT OF BENEFITS

MaineHousing will make FFY 2017 payments as follows:

- Subsidized Housing with heat included: \$21 Benefits will be issued beginning the week of September 5, 2016.
- All other Eligible Household: Benefits will be issued after receipt of FFY 2017 grant funding (typically mid-November).

Weekly payment process:	
1	<p>Tuesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. MaineHousing begins processing payments in MERAC b. All Applications certified eligible no later than 5pm Monday evening, will be included c. All Applications in the payment process will be locked for changes.
2	<p>Wednesday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. MaineHousing prints checks, Vendor Vouchers and \$21 Benefit Notification letters. b. All payments are posted
3	<p>Thursday:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Federal Funds are received b. MaineHousing mails checks, Vendor Vouchers and \$21 Benefit Notification letters.
4	<p>Following Tuesday: CAA mails Benefit Notification letters to Applicants (except \$21 Benefit Notifications).</p>
<p>If there is a holiday week, the payment process may move ahead/back a day depending on when the holiday is observed.</p>	
Benefits are issued as follows:	
<p>Vendor (pre-delivery): Except in the case of wood, Benefit is issued to Vendor within ten (10) business days of the certification of eligibility date, or when HEAP funds are available, whichever is later.</p>	
<p>Direct Check: Applicant may receive a direct check if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There’s no Vendor for their designated fuel type in their area. (CAA will enter notes in MERAC); or • Rent with heat included (Subsidized or Non-Subsidized) <p>Paid within ten (10) business days of the certification of eligibility date, or when HEAP funds are available, whichever is later.</p> <p>The Primary Applicant may choose to have their Benefit applied to their electricity account if their Benefit cannot be used for their Primary Heating System, there is no secondary Heating System, and the electricity account is in the Primary Applicant’s or a Household Member’s name.</p>	
Wood Vendor (post-delivery):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vendor must return a completed purchase order, including Applicant and Vendor signatures, to the CAA, within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of purchase order issuance. • CAA must review and enter the purchase order into MERAC. • Contingent on MERAC entry, MaineHousing will make payment within ten (10) business days of the signed purchase order receipt date. If the purchase order is not returned within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of issuance it may be considered void. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. 	

BENEFIT RETURNS

A Benefit Return is the return of funds (to MaineHousing) for all or part of a payment made to the Vendor on behalf of a Household. Benefit Returns can be initiated by MaineHousing, the CAA or the Vendor. In processing Benefit Returns, MaineHousing will make the final determination as to when funds can and cannot be reissued as directed by federal guidelines.

The following overarching principles apply to Benefit Returns:

1. Reissuance of funds
 - a. Current Program Year - may be reissued
 - b. Prior Program Year – may be reissued
 - c. Benefits more than two Program Years old – are expired and may NOT be reissued. These funds must be returned to the federal government.
2. A given Household may not receive more than one standard HEAP Benefit in a Program Year.
3. If there is a change in Household composition, the Benefit will stay with the original Dwelling Unit. If all Household members move, the benefit will follow the Primary Applicant.
4. Benefits can only be reissued to Households residing in an eligible Dwelling Unit.
5. Benefit Returns require documentation to substantiate the continued eligibility of a Household. If for any reason the required documentation is not provided, it may delay the reissuance and/or result in forfeiture of Benefits.

CAA RESPONSIBILITIES

The CAA must initiate a Benefit Return request if:

1. CAA becomes aware that the sole member of an Eligible Household has deceased.
2. Upon written notice from the Applicant that they no longer desire to receive services from the Vendor.
3. Upon written notice from the Applicant that they have moved and will be using a different Vendor.
4. Upon written notice from the Applicant that they have moved and are no longer eligible to use the Benefit.
5. CAA becomes aware of an Overpayment.
6. CAA becomes aware that a Benefit was issued to the wrong Vendor.

Primary Applicant Request: The CAA must obtain a signed letter from the Primary Applicant for the HEAP file prior to requesting the return of funds. The letter should include the applicable information listed below:

1. Primary Applicant's name
2. Previous address
3. Current address
4. Current phone number
5. Current rental agreement (if an Applicant is renting, you MUST obtain a current rental agreement to ensure they are entitled to any remaining Benefit)

6. Current electricity Vendor, name on account, and account number (copy of bill required)
7. Heating System
8. Home Energy type
9. Location of oil tank and Heating System
10. Current
11. Name on account
12. Current Home Energy Vendor name, address, and account number
13. Primary Applicant's signature and date submitted

MERAC updates to be completed when there is a:

1. **Change of Address:** Update the address in two places in MERAC.
 - a. "Summary Tab" update the mailing address field
 - b. "Dwelling Tab" update the **delivery** address field.
2. **Change of Vendor: Replacing existing Primary Vendor with new Primary Vendor.** Add the new Vendor on the Heating System tab and check the Requested Vendor field. Once this change has been made, you must delete the old Vendor from this section.
3. **Change of Heating System:** When a client moves and the new Dwelling Unit has a different Heating System than the previously approved system, a reopen must be requested. Once the Application has been reopened, the CAA will add the new Heating System in MERAC as a secondary or third system, thus ensuring the Benefit amount remains unchanged. CAA will ensure the Vendor and the fuel type have been changed as well. When completed, recertify the Application.

VENDOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon receipt of a HEAP Benefit Return Request, the Vendor will:

1. Reconcile and verify the amount of HEAP funds remaining on the Applicant's account compared to the requested amount.
2. Attach a complete transaction history of the Applicant's account to the Benefit Return Form (transaction history should be consistent with and support the amount being returned).
3. Return funds, transaction history and HEAP Benefit Return Form to MaineHousing by the date indicated on the HEAP Benefit Return Form.

BENEFIT RETURN EXAMPLES:

1. **The Primary Applicant and all Applicant(s) move and change Vendors.**
The Vendor must return the unused funds to MaineHousing. The Primary Applicant or an Applicant must provide the CAA or MaineHousing with a change of address and a change of Vendor in writing. The funds will be re-issued to the new Vendor. If renting, the Applicant(s) will need to provide a new rental agreement to ensure they are still entitled to any remaining Benefit.
2. **The Primary Applicant and Applicant(s) move from a residence with direct heating costs to a residence with heat included in their rent.**
The Vendor must return the unused funds to MaineHousing. The Primary Applicant or Applicant must provide the CAA or MaineHousing, in writing, with a change of address and a notification of the change of Heating Systems (if applicable). The Primary Applicant or Applicant is then offered a choice of having their benefit re-issued directly to them or re-issued to their electricity Vendor provided the electricity account is in an Applicants name. The Primary Applicant or Applicant is strongly encouraged to apply these benefits to their electricity account, but has the option of having the Benefits reissued as a direct check. The Applicant will need to provide a new rental agreement to ensure they are still entitled to any remaining Benefit.
3. **All Household members, listed on the Application, move from the Dwelling Unit.**
The Vendor must return the unused funds to MaineHousing. The Benefit would follow the Primary Applicant. The Primary Applicant must provide the CAA or MaineHousing with a change of address and change of Vendor or change of living situation. The Benefits would be re-issued to the Primary Applicant's new heating Vendor, electricity Vendor, or directly to the Primary Applicant. If renting, the Primary Applicant will need to provide a new rental agreement to ensure they are still entitled to any remaining Benefit.
4. **The Primary Applicant is deceased or moves out of state.**
If any Applicant on the original application still lives in the Dwelling Unit the Benefit stays with the Dwelling Unit.

If Primary Applicant was the sole Household member on the original Application, the Vendor must return the funds to MaineHousing. The funds will be returned to the program, and are not available to be reissued for this Application.
5. **The Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) decease, and the surviving Applicant moves into another person's household that is not on the original Application and is not HEAP approved.**
The Vendor must return any unused funds to MaineHousing. The surviving Applicant must provide the CAA or MaineHousing a change of address and a change of Vendor. The surviving Applicant must add their name to the existing fuel account for the new address, or open a fuel account in their name for that address. If renting, the Applicant(s) will need to provide a new rental agreement to ensure they are still entitled to any remaining Benefit.
6. **The Primary Applicant or Applicant committed or is suspected of committing fraud.**
If the CAA becomes aware of potential program abuse/fraud, the CAA should immediately notify MaineHousing's Program Compliance Officer. The Compliance Officer will investigate and submit a Benefit Return Request to the Vendor or put the Benefit on hold.
7. **The Applicant has no activity on his/her account for a period of twelve (12) consecutive months.**
The Vendor must return the unused funds to MaineHousing. MaineHousing will attempt to locate the Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) to determine the Household's status.

8. **The Primary Applicant's permanent residence changes to a nursing home or long term care facility, and there are no Applicant(s) remaining in the Dwelling Unit.**
The Vendor must return any unused Benefits to MaineHousing. Benefits will be returned to program.
9. **All Applicants move to Subsidized housing with heat included after Benefits have been paid.**
Benefits may be applied to eligible deliveries if the delivery(ies) occurred on or after October 1st of the Program Year for which it was issued, and before the date the Applicant(s) moved to Subsidized Housing with heat included. If there are remaining funds after applying Benefits to eligible deliveries, MaineHousing will reissue a prorated amount based on the number of (Heating Season) months the Applicant resided in the non-subsidized Dwelling Unit. A copy of the lease/rental agreement must be provided to CAA or MaineHousing.
10. **All Applicants move to Subsidized housing after Benefits have been paid. The Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) are responsible for paying the heating costs in the new Dwelling Unit.**
Primary Applicant is eligible to have the Benefit reissued to the new fuel Vendor. A copy of the lease/rental agreement must be provided to CAA or MaineHousing.
11. **Household received a Benefit in the current Program Year. All Applicants move into a Household that was also served in the current Program Year.**
Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) is not eligible to have their current Program Year Benefit reissued to the new location as a Household cannot be served twice in one program year.
12. **Household received a Benefit in the prior Program Year. All Applicants move into a Household that was also served in the prior Program Year.**
Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) is not eligible to have their prior Program Year Benefit reissued to the new location as a Household cannot be served twice in one program year.
13. **All Applicants moved into a Household that was served in the prior Program Year, but not the current Program Year. The Applicant wants their remaining prior AND current Program Year Benefits reissued to the new location.**
Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) is not eligible to have their prior Program Year Benefit reissued to the new location as a Household cannot be served twice in one Program Year. However the current Program Year Benefit can be reissued since the new location has not been served in the current Program Year.

<i>Example:</i>
<p>John and Mary Smith:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resided at 5 Ash Street, Portland on the Date of Application • PY 2016 Benefit paid on 01/05/2016 • On 02/01/2016 moved in with Susan Jones at 10 May Street, Portland • Have a remaining PY 2015 Benefit on account with Vendor <p>Susan Jones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received a PY 2015 Benefit • Did not receive a PY 2016 Benefit <p>The Smith's PY 2016 Benefit may be reissued. However, the Smith's remaining PY 2015 Benefit cannot be reissued.</p>

14. **Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) received a Benefit in the prior Program Year. The current Program Year Application was denied (or they did not apply) because they have moved into a camper.**
Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) is not eligible to have the funds reissued because they reside in a non-eligible Dwelling (regardless of the Program Year).

15. **The Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) pays for the heat; however, the fuel account is not in a Household member's name.**
 Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) will receive a direct check. The Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) must submit documentation proving they are responsible for the heat and explaining the reason the account is not in Household member's name.
16. **The Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) uses a propane vendor that is not a participating vendor.**
 Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) may receive a direct check with instructions that the funds are to be used to pay for heating expenses. The **Primary Applicant or Applicant(s)** should also be informed that they will need to select a participating Vendor should they decide to apply the following Heating Season.
17. **Current Program Year Benefit is returned and new product is wood.**
 MaineHousing will notify CAA of funds. The CAA will enter the wood product and Vendor information into MERAC. The CAA will issue a purchase order to the selected wood Vendor.
18. **Prior Program Year Benefit is returned and new product is wood.**
 MaineHousing will issue and process a manual purchase order to the selected wood Vendor.
19. **Applicant moves from an eligible Dwelling Unit to a Roomer/Boarder situation.**
 Any remaining Benefit cannot be reissued until such time as the Applicant can demonstrate they have been a Roomer/Boarder for 60 days.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR CHANGE OF PRODUCT (COA/COP)

If an Applicant has moved or wants to change fuel type, but is keeping the same Vendor:

- CAA to confirm which Household members (if any) will continue to reside at the original address.
- CAA to obtain all of the necessary information/documentation to determine if the Benefit is still eligible for use.
- Once all information is received, the CAA must submit a completed COA/COP form to MaineHousing. MaineHousing will provide the Vendor with written authorization to deliver to the new address and/or new fuel type.

DO NOT send the Change of Address/Change of Product form to the Vendor. The contractual relationship is between MaineHousing and the Vendor. CAAs do not have the authority to approve such changes with the Vendor.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR CHANGE OF PROEDUCT EXAMPLES:

- 1. The Primary Applicant and all Applicant(s) move but continue with same Vendor:**
The Vendor does not have to send back the Benefit. The Primary Applicant or Applicant must provide the change of address in writing to the CAA. The CAA will submit the COA/COP form to MaineHousing. MaineHousing will notify the Vendor of the address change in writing to authorize delivery to the new address and the appropriate fuel type. If renting, the Applicant(s) will need to provide a new rental agreement to ensure they are still entitled to any remaining Benefit.
- 2. The Primary Applicant moves out of the Dwelling Unit but an Applicant(s) remains in the Dwelling Unit; or an Applicant(s) moves out of the Dwelling Unit but the Primary Applicant remains in the Dwelling Unit:**
The Benefit stays with the Dwelling Unit. If the fuel account is the Primary Applicant's name, the Vendor may choose to return the Benefit. The Vendor is not required to return the Benefit as long as an Applicant is listed on the original application and remains at the address listed on the Vendor Voucher Report. CAA will need to confirm this information to avoid any potential conflict between Primary Applicant and Applicant(s). If the Vendor does return the Benefit, the Applicant would be notified to open an account with a contracted Vendor of their choice, supply that change in writing to MaineHousing, and MaineHousing would reissue the Benefit.
- 3. The Primary Applicant changes the type of fuel used for heating the Dwelling Unit:**
Primary Applicant or Applicant(s) must provide the information on the new fuel type and new Vendor (if there is one) to the CAA in writing. The CAA will submit a COA/COP form to MaineHousing. MaineHousing will notify the Vendor, in writing, authorizing the change in fuel type.

ENERGY CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM (ECIP)

ECIP timeframe is November 1st through the following March 31st. CAAs are required to budget their ECIP allocation to ensure funds are available through March 31st.

MAXIMUM BENEFIT

The maximum ECIP benefit per Eligible Household per Program Year shall be determined each Program Year by MaineHousing based on Home Energy costs, economic conditions, and available funding. **The maximum ECIP benefit for 2016/2017 is \$400.00.**

An Eligible Household will receive an ECIP benefit equal to the maximum ECIP benefit or the cost of a standard minimum delivery of Home Energy, whichever is less. It's important and appropriate to consider a number of factors so as to ensure effectiveness in meeting the intent of ECIP – to avert Energy or Life Threatening Crises. These factors include:

1. Maximizing the reach of program resources (i.e. serve more households)
2. Taking into account home energy prices
3. Avoiding surcharges/delivery charges
4. Providing a sufficient amount of Home Energy to support the household's heating needs for a reasonable period of time – i.e. two to three weeks.

If for example, a Vendor's minimum delivery is 50 gallons of oil, this may only support the Household's heating needs for seven to ten days and may also carry a surcharge/delivery charge. In such cases, it may be appropriate and consistent with the intent of the program to issue the ECIP purchase order for a larger volume delivery (typically 100 gallons) to avoid surcharges (provided the Household's total ECIP benefit for the program year will not exceed \$400).

CRISIS DEFINITIONS

The CAA is responsible for determining and verifying the type of crisis the Household is experiencing. Each CAA must have established procedures to ensure crises are addressed within the required timeframes outlined below:

1. Energy Crisis: a weather-related and supply shortage emergency and other Household energy-related emergencies. Conditioned on the availability of ECIP funds, the CAA must provide some form of assistance that will resolve the Energy Crisis, if Household is eligible to receive such benefits, will be provided within forty eight (48) hours after Household has been certified eligible for ECIP.
2. Life Threatening Crisis: the Household is currently without heat or utility service to operate a Heating Source. Heating Source means any device, including space heaters, designed to provide heat to a Dwelling Unit. Conditioned on the availability of ECIP funds, some form of assistance that will resolve the Life Threatening Crisis, if Household is eligible to receive such benefits, will be provided within eighteen (18) hours after a Household has been certified eligible for ECIP.

INTAKE

ECIP Applications are given priority at all intake and processing steps.

CAAs should refer Households who are ineligible for ECIP benefits to community organizations, 211, or other programs that may be able to assist.

CAAs may take an ECIP Application by one of the following methods:

1. If the Household has previously completed a Standard LIHEAP Application and has been certified income-eligible in the current Program Year, the CAA must complete an ECIP Worksheet over the telephone or in person to assess and document the crisis situation.
2. If the Household has a pending Standard LIHEAP Application, the CAA should certify that Application (if all required documentation has been received) and arrange to have a Vendor make an upfront delivery.
3. If the Household's pending Standard LIHEAP Application is missing documentation or the Household has not yet applied, an ECIP Only Application will need to be completed and appropriately documented.
4. CAA will provide the Primary Applicant immediate verbal notice of the ECIP denial and written notice of ECIP denial within three (3) business days.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY

CAAs must use one of the following means to determine a Household's income-eligibility for ECIP:

1. The Household has a certified-eligible **Standard LIHEAP Application** for Fuel Assistance for the current Program Year; or
2. For an **ECIP Only Application**, the Household's income-eligibility for ECIP will be based on one of the following verification periods, whichever allows eligibility:
 - a. The twelve (12) calendar months immediately preceding the Date of Application for ECIP;
 - b. The three (3) calendar months immediately preceding the Date of Application for ECIP;
 - c. The calendar month immediately preceding the Date of Application for ECIP; or
 - d. The thirty (30) days immediately preceding the Date of Application for ECIP.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Does the Household's Home Energy status meet the criteria for ECIP?

1. A Household member's health and safety is threatened by an Energy Crisis or Life Threatening Crisis situation and the Household does not have the financial means or ability to receive credit from a Vendor to avert the crisis.
2. The Household may be eligible for ECIP if there is an imminent loss of heat due to:
 - a. Less than three (3) day supply of fuel (e.g. reading of 1/8 tank or less on a standard 275 gallon heating oil tank; reading of 25% or less on a propane tank; "three (3) days or less" supply standard applies to other delivered fuel types).
 - b. Dysfunctional or unsafe primary Heating System and no secondary Heating System.
 - c. Disconnection of service notice from electricity or natural gas provided the Household's Heating System requires electricity or natural gas, and the Household has exhausted ability to negotiate and pay the terms of a reasonable payment arrangement.
 - d. Disconnection of service for an Applicant who lives in Subsidized Housing with heat included or a Rental Unit with heat included may be eligible for ECIP if:
 - i. The Applicant is responsible for the electric bill (the bill must be in a Household member's name); **and**

- ii. The Heating System relies on electricity to operate; **and**
- iii. The electricity account that is in a Household member's name provides the service to operate the Heating System; **and**
- iv. The Household has exhausted ability to negotiate and pay the terms of a reasonable payment arrangement.

If the Household meets all of the above criteria, the CAA will need to verify and document the following:

- CAA to secure a written or verbal statement from the landlord to confirm the Applicant is responsible for the electricity account used to operate the Heating System. If the landlord's confirmation is verbal, the intake worker will document the file and MERAC with the specifics of the conversation. It is the CAAs responsibility to conduct due diligence in securing adequate and accurate information.
- The rental/lease agreement must indicate the Applicant is responsible for the electricity.

3. A Household is **not eligible for ECIP** if:

- a. Household has a safe, operating secondary Heating System and has a supply of product for that system;
- b. Vendor is willing to make a delivery on credit to the Household;
- c. Household has the financial means to purchase fuel; or
- d. Applicant with an Overpayment balance is not eligible for ECIP Benefits unless they have entered into and are in compliance with the terms of a repayment agreement with MaineHousing to resolve the Overpayment. MaineHousing ask CAAs to make a good faith effort to review MaineHousing's "Do Not Pay" list and any notes in MERAC. If there are indications that the Applicant may have an unresolved Overpayment, please contact MaineHousing to verify the situation.

HOME ENERGY DELIVERIES

1	Complete ECIP Worksheet to determine: <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Household's Home Energy status.b. Type of crisis the Household is experiencing - i.e. Energy Crisis or Life Threatening Crisis.c. If the Household has a secondary Heating System and a supply of Home Energy for the secondary system. What (if any) other Heating Systems and/or Heating Sources are currently being used.d. The date of their last fuel delivery (by any Vendor), the number of units delivered or purchased (ex. gallons, bags, cords, etc.), size of their tank (if applicable). The CAA will need to confirm this information with the Vendor.
2	When possible and appropriate, consider coordinating services with other sources of assistance – e.g. General Assistance or other state, federal, and local sources that are immediately available.
3	Contact the Vendor to ask: <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. If Vendor will deliver on credit.b. If Vendor will do an upfront delivery pending receipt of a Fuel Assistance Payment.c. Is there any Benefit remaining on account, if so how much? Those funds would be used as part of the total maximum ECIP amount or in lieu of ECIP funds. If there are HEAP funds on the Applicant's fuel account and the Vendor cannot make the ECIP delivery, the CAA will need to submit a waiver requesting MaineHousing's approval to pay the full amount of the delivery with ECIP funds.d. If there will be any delivery changes incurred for the ECIP delivery and the amount.e. Price per unit/gallon of the fuel type being authorized.

If a Household receives ECIP and it is subsequently determined that the Household was not eligible, MaineHousing or the CAA will require the Household to repay the amount of ECIP. MaineHousing may deduct the amount of ECIP received from a current and/or future HEAP Benefit.

ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES

See Rule, section 7 (B) and (C)

PROCESSING AND VERIFICATION

UTILITY DISCONNECTS	
1	Review disconnect notice to determine if it is a notice for a past due amount or a broken payment arrangement.
2	Complete ECIP Worksheet to determine: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Name of the Utility Vendor. b. Disconnect Date. c. Amount of Disconnect. d. Will ECIP prevent disconnection? If not, what other arrangements will be made?
3	Contact the utility Vendor to determine: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Amount of financial assistance necessary to prevent disconnection. b. Amount of the current month’s charges listed on the most recent bill. c. If the Household has a payment arrangement and the terms of payment arrangement. d. If the Applicant has exhausted their ability to comply with the terms of a reasonable payment arrangement. e. The amount necessary to prevent disconnection. If paid, what will be the amount of and the due date for the next payment? If it is obvious that the Household cannot make the next payment, reassess whether the ECIP benefits are adequate and if alternative resources are necessary. <p>CAA must document the above information in the file and MERAC (ECIP Comments section).</p>

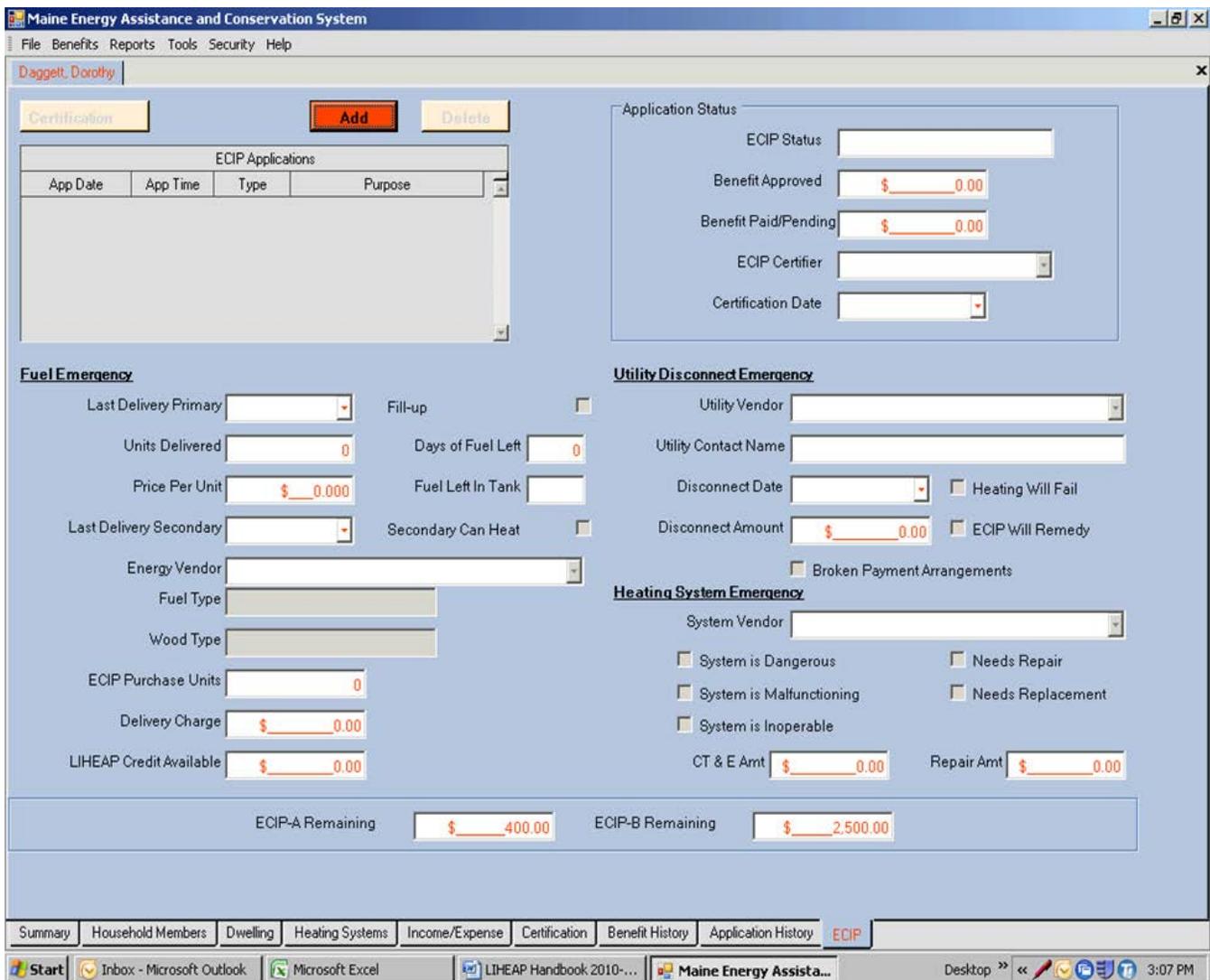
ENTERING ECIP INTO MERAC

1. **ECIP Only Application.**
 - a. Enter the Application information as you would a Standard LIHEAP Application.
 - b. The Application should be documented with the income for the applicable income verification period. For income calculated thirty (30) days prior to the ECIP Date of Application select the one month option from the drop down. Enter a MERAC comment stating “income was based on the previous thirty days.”
 - c. Enter the ECIP information on the “ECIP” tab in MERAC.

2. **Certified-eligible Standard LIHEAP Application.** Enter the ECIP information on the “ECIP” tab in MERAC.

COMPLETING THE ECIP TAB IN MERAC

- 1 Click the Add button at the top of the screen.
- 2 Enter the Application date, Application time, type, and purpose of the ECIP.
- 3 Fuel Emergency / Utility Disconnect Emergency / Heating System Emergency: enter all information in the applicable section.
- 4 **Standard LIHEAP Application:** If the ECIP Vendor is different than “Requested Vendor” listed on Heating System tab. Add the ECIP Vendor on the Heating System tab and enter “ECIP” in the Name and Account Number fields.
- 5 Once all the required information has been entered, the ECIP Application will need to be certified. In MERAC, enter the name of the ECIP Certifier from the drop down box and click the “Certification” button. Enter the date the ECIP was certified and price per unit.



Maine Energy Assistance and Conservation System

File Benefits Reports Tools Security Help

Daggett, Dorothy

Certification **Add** Delete

Application Status

ECIP Status

Benefit Approved \$ 0.00

Benefit Paid/Pending \$ 0.00

ECIP Certifier

Certification Date

Fuel Emergency

Last Delivery Primary Fill-up

Units Delivered Days of Fuel Left

Price Per Unit \$ 0.00 Fuel Left In Tank

Last Delivery Secondary Secondary Can Heat

Energy Vendor

Fuel Type

Wood Type

ECIP Purchase Units

Delivery Charge \$ 0.00

LIHEAP Credit Available \$ 0.00

Utility Disconnect Emergency

Utility Vendor

Utility Contact Name

Disconnect Date Heating Will Fail

Disconnect Amount \$ 0.00 ECIP Will Remedy

Broken Payment Arrangements

Heating System Emergency

System Vendor

System is Dangerous Needs Repair

System is Malfunctioning Needs Replacement

System is Inoperable

CT & E Amt \$ 0.00 Repair Amt \$ 0.00

ECIP-A Remaining \$ 400.00 ECIP-B Remaining \$ 2,500.00

Summary Household Members Dwelling Heating Systems Income/Expense Certification Benefit History Application History **ECIP**

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PURCHASE ORDER

1. After certification, CAA will email or fax a purchase order to the Vendor, which includes:
 - a. Vendor name
 - b. Primary Applicant name, delivery address, and telephone number
 - c. Type of fuel
 - d. Dollar amount (including delivery charges, if applicable)
 - e. Instructions: CAA must indicate the required timeframe for the delivery or Heating System Repair – i.e. 18-hours for a Life Threatening Crisis or 48-hours for an Energy Crisis
2. Processing for payment:

MaineHousing
Issues payment to Vendor for approved/completed purchase orders.

Vendor	
1	Makes delivery within the required timeframe
2	<p>Submits the following to CAA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Completed purchase order b. Metered delivery ticket (except in the case of wood) c. Invoice <p>Utility Disconnects: CAAs are encouraged to send a purchase order to the utility Vendor. If CAA provides utility Vendor with verbal purchase order only, the file and MERAC must fully document any conversations that took place between the CAA and the utility Vendor to stop the disconnection.</p>

CAA	
1	<p>Verifies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Fuel was delivered to the correct address. b. Delivery date on the metered ticket was within the required timeframe. c. Correct fuel type was delivered. d. Dollar amount on the invoice is correct. CAA should recalculate the total delivery amount – e.g. (price/unit x number of units) + delivery fee. For example, a Vendor who delivered \$396.00 worth of fuel cannot charge \$400.00.
2	<p>Approves purchase order in MERAC if all documentation has been verified and is correct. According to MaineHousing’s Vendor Agreement, the Vendor will be paid within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the completed purchase order, metered delivery ticket and invoice. Therefore, it’s important that completed purchase orders be processed in a timely manner.</p>

FILE DOCUMENTATION

Application (paper) file must include the following:	
1	Copy of certified ECIP Only Application or certified-eligible Standard LIHEAP Application.
2	ECIP Worksheet is required for both ECIP Only Applicants and those Applicants who were previously certified-eligible for Fuel Assistance.
3	Copy of the purchase order. Wood purchase order must be signed by the Applicant and Vendor.
4	Utility disconnect notice (if applicable)
5	Vendor's invoice and metered delivery ticket (if applicable)
6	Vendor's invoice for Heating System repairs (if applicable)

APPEAL

The appeals process allows the Applicant an opportunity to disagree with a denial determination or dispute the length of time to process an Application. Federal regulations require the Applicant be informed of their rights to an appeal at the time of Application.

CAA intake and certification staff are expected to be familiar with when and how an Applicant can file for an appeal. For more information see section 15 of the Rule.

The back of the HEAP Application includes information about an Applicant's rights. The intake person must notify the Applicant of their rights by actually going over this information with the Applicant at the time of Application.

The following outlines responsibilities and steps for processing an Applicant's request for appeal:

MaineHousing will:	
1	Review Applicant's file for errors.
2	Work with the CAA to resolve all errors (if applicable).
3	Communicate with the Applicant to resolve the issue.
4	Schedule a fair hearing date and notify the Applicant of their rights if the issue cannot be resolved to the Applicant's satisfaction.
5	Conduct the scheduled fair hearing with the Applicant, Fair Hearing Officer, and MaineHousing staff.
6	Render a final decision based on the recommendation of the Fair Hearing Officer.

CAA will:	
1	Provide the Application file, case notes, and required documentation to MaineHousing.
1	Work with MaineHousing to correct all errors (if applicable).
2	Participate in the fair hearing upon MaineHousing's request.