

INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

MAINE STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY

CHAPTER 24

Home Energy Assistance Program Rule

Summary: The Rule establishes standards for the Home Energy Assistance Program for the State of Maine as administered by the Maine State Housing Authority. The Home Energy Assistance Program provides Fuel Assistance and Energy Crisis Intervention Programs to income Eligible Households. The Rule also establishes standards for the HEAP Weatherization, Central Heating Improvement Program, Heat Pump Program, and Supplemental Benefits funded by TANF funds.

1. Definitions.
 - A. “Act” means the Maine Housing Authorities Act, [30-A M.R.S.A. § 4701](#) et seq., as it may be amended from time to time.
 - B. “Annual Consumption Report” means the annual report Vendors must submit to MaineHousing to report their HEAP customers’ Home Energy deliveries from May 1st through April 30th.
 - C. “Apartment” means a Dwelling Unit within a multi-unit building.
 - D. “Applicant” means a person listed as a Household member on a Primary Applicant’s Application.
 - E. “Applicant Household” means the Household members listed on the Application whose Countable Assets will be considered when determining eligibility for CHIP services. A Household member will be considered to be part of the Applicant Household if they have a familial relationship with or a joint financial account with an occupying owner of the Dwelling Unit. Full time high school students would not be considered Applicant Household members unless they are Primary Applicants.
 - F. “Application” means forms and documents completed, signed, and provided by Primary Applicant to determine eligibility for a Benefit and ECIP.
 - G. “Application Create Date- Non Online” means the date an application is taken with the Primary Applicant by Subgrantee personnel for applications not submitted online.
 - H. “Application Create Date- Online” means the date the Primary Applicant starts their application online.
 - I. “Application Intake Date” means the date an online application is taken with the Primary Applicant by Subgrantee personnel.
 - J. “Arrearage Management Program (AMP)” means the program to assist eligible low-income residential customers who are in arrears on their electricity bills as defined by [35-A MRSA §3214, sub-§2-A](#), as may be amended from time to time.
 - K. “Benefit” means the dollar amount of Fuel Assistance an Eligible Household receives.
 - L. “Benefit Return” means a Benefit, partial or whole, returned to MaineHousing.

- M. “Boarder” means a Roomer who is provided meals and is not related by birth, marriage or adoption to the household.
- N. “BTU” means British Thermal Unit.
- O. “Camper” means a trailer, semitrailer, truck camper, or motor home primarily designed and originally constructed to provide temporary living quarters for recreational, camping, or travel use regardless of modification(s) or length.
- P. “Categorical Income Eligibility” means an Applicant has a Household member who receives either TANF or SNAP assistance. The Household is considered income eligible for HEAP, as the Household income has already been vetted by Maine Department of Health and Human Services, and it is permissible under the HEAP Act for Households receiving TANF or SNAP assistance to be considered income eligible for HEAP.
- Q. “CHIP” means the Central Heating Improvement Program component of HEAP.
- R. “Contractor” means a provider of materials or services to Eligible Households.
- S. “Countable Asset” means a resource that is available to meet the immediate and urgent needs of a Household, and includes: cash and funds on prepaid debit cards, money in a checking or savings account (health savings accounts, educational funds, and burial accounts are excluded), stocks or bonds, U.S. Treasury bills, money market funds, and retirement accounts provided there are no penalties or fees for withdrawals.
- T. “Close-out” means the reconciliation of receipts and use of all Fuel Assistance and ECIP funds by Vendor. It is Vendor’s responsibility to keep this information by Eligible Household and provide it to MaineHousing upon request.
- U. “Credit Notification Report” means the document sent to the Vendor guaranteeing payment post-delivery for Eligible Households. The Credit Notification Report lists each Primary Applicant’s name, address, Home Energy type, account information, and, as applicable, Benefit or TANF Supplemental Benefit.
- V. “CTE” means to clean, tune, and evaluate a Heating System to ensure safe and efficient operation.
- W. “Date of Application” means the date an Application is received by the Subgrantee.
- X. “Date of Discovery” means the date MaineHousing receives information relating to suspected fraud.
- Y. “DHLC” means the design heat load calculation method for estimating Home Energy consumption.
- Z. “Direct Energy Cost” means an Energy Cost that is directly paid by the Household.
- AA. “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.
- BB. “ECIP” means the Energy Crisis Intervention Program component of HEAP.
- CC. “Eligible Household” means a Household that satisfies all eligibility and income requirements of the HEAP Act and requirements of this Rule.
- DD. “Energy Cost” means cost of energy used for heating a Dwelling Unit, Apartment, or Rental Unit.
- EE. “Energy Crisis” shall have the same meaning as set forth in [42 U.S.C.A. §8622\(3\)](#), as same may be amended from time to time. The term "energy crisis" means weather-related and supply shortage emergencies and other household energy-related emergencies.
- FF. “Errors and Program Abuse” means the act of obtaining assistance to which one is not entitled by means of submitting false statements or withholding information pertinent to the determination of eligibility or benefits. Also applies to Vendors who retain Benefits that should be returned or use Benefits for something other than intended purpose.
- GG. “Fuel Assistance” means the component of HEAP that assists Eligible Households with their Home Energy costs.
- HH. “HEAP” means the Home Energy Assistance Program established pursuant to the HEAP Act and the Act.
- II. “HEAP Act” means [42 U.S.C.A. §8621 et seq.](#), and the regulations promulgated there under, including [45 C.F.R. § 96.1](#) through 96.68 and [45 C.F.R. § 96.80 et seq.](#), all as may be amended from time to time.
- JJ. “HEAP Handbook” means the handbook in effect for a Program Year that is used as a resource and guide for the administration of HEAP.
- KK. “HEAP Weatherization” means the weatherization component of HEAP that provides Low- cost/no-cost Weatherization Activities and other cost-effective energy-related home repairs or installations.
- LL. “Heating Season” means the period of time beginning October 1 and ending April 30.
- MM. “Heating Source” means any device used to provide heat to a Dwelling Unit.
- NN. “Heating System” means a permanently installed system that is used to heat the Dwelling Unit. A portable space heater is not considered to be a HeatingSystem.
- OO. “Heat Pump” means a ductless heating system that provides heat by extracting heat from outside air and delivering it indoors as needed.
- PP. “Home Energy” means a source of heating or cooling in residential dwellings as set forth in [42 U.S.C.A. §8622\(6\)](#), as same may be amended from time to time.
- QQ. “Household” means any individual or group of individuals who are living together 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 as set forth in [42 U.S.C.A. §8622\(5\)](#), as same may be amended from time to time.

- RR. “Household Income” means the total income from all sources before taxes and deductions as further defined in this Rule.
- SS. “Incidental Costs” means costs of services billed to a Household by a Vendor related to the use or delivery of Home Energy including, but not limited to: surcharges, penalty charges, reconnection charges, clean and repair service charges, security deposits, , and insurance.
- TT. “Incidental Repairs” means those repairs necessary for the effective performance or preservation of weatherization materials.
- UU. “Indirect Determinable Energy Cost” means a cost for Home Energy used by the Household that is not directly paid for by the Household. For example, heat included as part of the rent for a Rental Unit.
- VV. “Invitation to Bid” or “Request for Proposals” means the process to solicit bids or proposals to satisfy the requirements of this Rule.
- WW. “Live-in Care Attendant” means a person, not considered part of the household, who; (i) provides needed health/supportive services to a member of the households as documented by a qualified professional; (ii) would not be living in the unit except to provide the necessary supportive services; and (iii) does not contribute financially to the household.
- XX. “Life Threatening Crisis” means the household is currently without heat or utility service to operate a Heating Source or a Heating System.
- YY. “Low-cost/no-cost Weatherization Activities” means those activities authorized pursuant to [10 C.F.R. §440.20](#), as may be amended from time to time.
- ZZ. “MaineHousing” means the Maine State Housing Authority.
- AAA. “Manufactured/Mobile Home” means a residence that is constructed at a manufacturing facility on a permanent chassis (i.e. the wheel assembly necessary to transport the residence is removable, but the steel undercarriage remains intact as a necessary structural component) and is transportable in one or more sections, which in traveling mode is 12 body feet or more in width and as erected on site is 600 or more square feet.
- BBB. “Modular” means a residence that is constructed at a manufacturing facility, but not constructed on a permanent chassis, and is transportable in one or more sections on an independent chassis such as a truck or train.
- CCC. “Native American Tribal Organization” means the Penobscot Indian Nation, the Passamaquoddy Indian Tribe, and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians as defined in the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act, [30 M.R.S.A. §6201 et seq.](#), and the Aroostook Band of Micmacs as defined in the Micmac Settlement Act, [30 M.R.S.A. §7201](#) et seq.
- DDD. “Non-occupying Co-owner” means a person who shares a legal ownership interest in the Dwelling Unit occupied by the Applicant Household. The Non-occupying Co-owner does not reside in the Dwelling Unit being considered for CHIP services.

- EEE. “Notice of Termination of Subgrantee” means a written statement notifying the Subgrantee of the cause and effective date of its termination.
- FFF. “Open Enrollment” means period of time a vendor can request and/or file an application to participate as a contracted Vendor.
- GGG. “Overpayment” means any HEAP benefits paid to, or on behalf of, any Applicant or Household that exceeds the amount the Applicant or Household was eligible to receive.
- HHH. “Person with a Disability” means a person who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person’s major life activities; (2) has a physical or mental impairment that significantly impairs physical or mental health, which means having an actual or expected duration of more than 6 months and impairing health to a significant extent as compared to what is ordinarily experienced in the general population; (3) has a physical or mental impairment that requires special education, vocational rehabilitation or related services; (4) has without regard to severity unless otherwise indicated, absent, artificial or replacement limbs, hands, feet or vital organs; alcoholism; amyotrophic lateral sclerosis; autism, bipolar disorder; blindness or abnormal vision loss; cancer; cerebral palsy; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; Crohn’s disease; cystic fibrosis; deafness or abnormal hearing loss; diabetes; substantial disfigurement; drug addiction; emotional illness; epilepsy; heart disease; HIV or AIDS; kidney or renal diseases; lupus; major depressive disorder; mastectomy; mental retardation; multiple sclerosis; muscular dystrophy; paralysis; Parkinson’s disease; pervasive development disorders; rheumatoid arthritis; schizophrenia; speech impairment, and acquired brain injury; (5) has a record of any of the physical or mental impairments described in the foregoing clauses (1) through (4); or (6) is regarded as having or is likely to develop any of the physical or mental impairments described in the foregoing clauses (1) through (4). The existence of a physical or mental disability is determined without regard to the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures such as medication, auxiliary aids or prosthetic devices.

A physical or mental disability or impairment does not include pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual behavior disorders, compulsive gambling, kleptomania, pyromania, tobacco smoking, or any condition covered under [5 M.R.S.A. §4553, sub-§9-C](#). It does not include psychoactive substance use disorders resulting from current illegal use of drugs, although this may not be construed to exclude a person who has successfully completed a supervised drug rehabilitation program and is no longer engaging in the illegal use of drugs or has otherwise been rehabilitated successfully and is no longer engaging in such use; is participating in a supervised rehabilitation program and is no longer engaging in such use; is erroneously regarded as engaging in such use, but is not engaging in such use; or in the context of a reasonable accommodation in employment is seeking treatment or has successfully completed treatment.

- III. “Price Protection Plan” means an agreement between Vendor and a customer to purchase Home Energy at an agreed upon price.
- JJJ. “Primary Applicant” means a person who signs the completed Application.
- KKK. “Priority Applicant” means a Household with a direct energy cost as well as a member in a household who is (i) 60 years of age or older, or (ii) has a disability, or (iii) 72 months (6 years) or younger.
- LLL. “Programs” means Fuel Assistance, ECIP, CHIP, and HEAP Weatherization.
- MMM. “Program Year” means the period of time beginning October 1 and ending September 30.

- NNN. “Rental Unit” means a Dwelling Unit that is rented.
- OOO. “Reporting Vendor” means a Vendor who is contractually obligated to report the Home Energy deliveries the Vendor has made on behalf of an Eligible Household.
- PPP. “Retail Cash Price” means the posted price a Vendor charges for Home Energy per gallon.
- QQQ. “Roomer” means a person who qualifies as a separate Household and pursuant to a rental agreement rents no more than two rooms in a Dwelling Unit occupied as separate living quarters and who may, depending upon the rental agreement, be granted privileges to use, but not reside in, other rooms located in the same Dwelling Unit. A Roomer cannot be related by birth, marriage or adoption to any member of the lessor’s Household.
- RRR. “Service Area” means the geographic area, as defined by MaineHousing, within which the Subgrantee operates and administers the Programs.
- SSS. “Social Security Benefits” means social security income benefits pursuant to Title II of the United States Social Security Act of 1935 and supplemental security income benefits pursuant Title XVI of the United States Social Security Act of 1935, as amended, [42 U.S.C. §1381 et seq.](#), and State supplemental income benefits provided pursuant to [22 M.R.S.A. §3201 et seq.](#), all as may be amended from time to time.
- TTT. “State” means the State of Maine.
- UUU. “Subgrantee” means a public or private nonprofit agency, or municipality, selected by MaineHousing to administer the Programs.
- VVV. “Subsidized Housing” means Households whose rent is based on their income or the subsidy pays for any portion of their mortgage. Housing in which a tax credit or federal/state loan is applied to reduce debt burden on the property is not considered Subsidized Housing. A resident of a residential housing facility including without limitation group homes, homeless shelters, and residential care facilities or a Tenant who pays below market rent or no rent due to the landlord receiving a federal or state subsidy for rent is living in Subsidized Housing.
- WWW. “Supplemental Benefits” means the benefits that are funded with supplemental HEAP funds (beyond the original grant award).
- XXX. “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)” means the nutrition assistance program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture. The goals of SNAP are to improve participants’ food security and their access to a healthy diet.
- YYY. “TANF” means payments under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program as defined in [22 M.R.S.A., Chapter 1053-B, § 3762 et seq.](#), as same be amended from time to time.
- ZZZ. “TANF Supplemental Benefits” means the benefits that are funded with TANF funds pursuant to [22 M.R.S.A., Chapter 1053-B, § 3769-E.](#)
- AAAA. “Tenant” means an Applicant who resides in a Rental Unit or Apartment.
- BBBB. “Vendor” means an energy supplier that has entered into a Vendor Agreement with MaineHousing to provide Home Energy to Eligible Households.

CCCC. “Vendor Agreement” means a signed agreement between MaineHousing and a Vendor that contains terms and conditions by which the Vendor will provide Home Energy to Eligible Households.

DDDD. “Vendor Voucher Report” means the document sent to the Vendor that lists Eligible Households’ Benefits, including each Primary Applicant’s name, address, phone number, Benefit amount, Home Energy type, account information, and Subgrantee.

EEEE. “Watch List” means the MaineHousing list of Vendors that will not receive payment in advance for Eligible Households’ Benefits. In the event MaineHousing determines, in its sole judgment, based on Vendor’s actions or omissions or other information obtained by MaineHousing directly or from any third party, that such actions, omissions or other information raise issues concerning Vendor’s continued ability to make Home Energy deliveries or otherwise comply with the terms of the Vendor Agreement, or that Vendor’s performance is out of compliance with the requirements of the Vendor Agreement, MaineHousing may, in its sole discretion, place Vendor on this list.

FFFF. “Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)” means the program enabled and funded by the federal Energy Conservation in Existing Buildings Act of 1976, as same may be amended from time to time. Its purpose is to increase the energy efficiency of dwellings owned or occupied by low-income persons, reduce their total residential energy expenditures, and improve their health and safety.

GGGG. “Weatherization Materials” shall have the same meaning as set forth in Part A of the Energy Conservation in Existing Buildings Act of 1976, [42 U.S.C. §§6861, 6862\(9\)](#), as same may be amended from time to time.

2. Application.

- A. An Applicant may have only one certified eligible Application per Program Year.
- B. An Applicant may resubmit a new Application if the Household’s Application has either been denied or withdrawn any time prior to the issuance of a Benefit.
- C. The Application will be processed in accordance with the requirements of this Section:
 1. The Subgrantee will begin taking Applications as prescribed by MaineHousing each Program Year.
 2. A Subgrantee will continue taking Applications until the last working day of May of the Program Year or upon the exhaustion of HEAP funds, whichever occurs sooner.
 3. The Subgrantee must use forms provided or approved by MaineHousing to administer the Programs. Additional forms may be used by the Subgrantee provided the forms have been reviewed and approved by MaineHousing. Forms will be submitted for review and approval annually prior to the commencement of taking applications each Program Year.
 4. The Subgrantee will make a reasonable and good-faith effort during the first ninety (90) days it takes Applications to interview, process, and serve new and returning Priority Applicants who have a Direct Energy Cost.

5. The Subgrantee will make a reasonable and good-faith effort to conduct outreach activities and process applications for any Household that has wood as its primary Home Energy source within the first ninety (90) days of taking Applications for the Program Year.
6. At Applicant's request, and as otherwise appropriate, the Subgrantee must make reasonable accommodations for a Person with a Disability.
7. Any Applicant may apply via telephone. The telephone Application process includes completing the Application over the telephone with the Subgrantee administering the Programs in the Service Area in which the Household resides; the Subgrantee sends the completed Application and other appropriate documents to the Primary Applicant for review, signature, and date.
8. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) can be a barrier to accessing important benefits or services, understanding and exercising important rights, complying with applicable responsibilities, or understanding other information provided by the HEAP program. In order to address this concern Subgrantees must comply with MaineHousing's Language Assistance Plan.
9. Application must be made with the Subgrantee administering the Programs in the Service Area in which the Household resides. In the event an Application is received by a Subgrantee for a Household residing in a Service Area other than the Subgrantee's designated Service Area, the Subgrantee shall notify the Primary Applicant of the error and forward the Application and supporting documentation to the applicable Subgrantee.
10. Primary Applicant is responsible for providing all information necessary to establish the eligibility of a Household. The Subgrantee must verify the income and identity of the Applicant(s) as prescribed by HEAP Handbook.

The Subgrantee shall verify Primary Applicant's identity by requesting a government-issued, photo identification card. One of the following is acceptable to establish the identity of the Primary Applicant:

- a. Driver's license;
 - b. State issued ID card;
 - c. Passport or passport card;
 - d. U.S. Military ID; or
 - e. SNAP electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card with photo.
11. All Applicant(s) two years of age or older must provide proof of their Social Security Number (SSN). One of the following documents is acceptable provided it contains all nine digits of the Applicant's SSN and the Applicant's full name:
 - 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 number ending with the suffix “A”;
- e. Valid unexpired U.S. Military documents such as DD Form 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 (wage and tax statement).

If the Household includes a child under the age of 24 months old who has not received a SSN, the Application is processed. However, the Primary Applicant must provide the child’s SSN for subsequent Program Year Applications, after the child reaches the age of 24 months old.

If a Household member is not a U.S. citizen, Applicant must provide a Social Security card issued by the Social Security Administration or 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, and documentation of Applicant’s status as a qualified alien pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, [8 USC §1641](#), such as a legal permanent resident, a refugee, an asylee, an individual paroled into the U.S. for a period of at least one (1) year, an individual whose deportation has been withheld, or an individual granted conditional entry.

12. As part of the application process all Applicants 18 years of age or older must sign a release to grant permission to share their personal information, as follows:
 - a. Maine Department of Health and Human Services, the Maine Department of Labor, and the Social Security Administration to share information with the Subgrantee or MaineHousing regarding information relevant to the Application about the Applicant at each of those agencies, including the benefits received from each of those agencies.
 - b. Subgrantee and MaineHousing to provide information to and obtain information from the agencies listed above or others as needed to determine and confirm eligibility for MaineHousing programs and other programs administered by the Subgrantee.
 - c. Subgrantee and MaineHousing to disclose Applicant information for the determination of eligibility for programs administered by State, federal, and local agencies.

D. The information on an Application may be considered conflicting if it is inconsistent with verbal information provided by an Applicant, with other information on the Application, with prior Program Year Applications, or with information received from a third party.

1. No information received from a third party, other than a government agency, will be used to determine eligibility, unless it is verified by an independent, reliable source.

2. In the case where an Applicant's eligibility is in question because of conflicting information received from a third party, the Subgrantee or MaineHousing shall allow the Primary Applicant an opportunity to amend the current Application or reaffirm the information on it. Primary Applicant may also withdraw Application at any time (prior to payment of Benefit). A new Application (rather than amended) would be required should an Applicant pursue assistance after withdrawal.
 3. If the Primary Applicant elects not to amend the Application, eligibility shall be based on information contained in the Application and documentation provided by the Primary Applicant, documentation provided by a government agency, or information verified by other sources.
 4. If verified information results in the Household being ineligible or determines the existence of Errors and Program Abuse or willful misrepresentation, the Application may be subject to denial or termination of Benefits.
- E. The Subgrantee must certify or deny an Application within thirty (30) business days from the Date of Application.

1. Written notification of eligibility will be sent to the Primary Applicant within (10) ten calendar days of the decision or when funding is available, whichever is later. The benefit notification shall:
 - a. State the Benefit amount;
 - b. State the date the Benefit or a Credit Notification was sent to the Vendor;
 - c. State the approved Home Energy type;
 - d. State the manner by which the Primary Applicant can request an appeal, if applicable.
2. Written notification of denial must be sent to the Primary Applicant within (3) three business days whether funding is available or not. The denial notification shall:
 - a. State the facts surrounding the decision;
 - b. State the reason(s) for the decision;
 - c. State the manner by which the Applicant can request an appeal.

A denial for missing information will be rescinded if the required information is received by the Subgrantee within (15) fifteen business days from the date of the denial notification.

3. Eligibility.

- A. Except as may be expressly provided for elsewhere in this Rule, eligibility shall be determined on the basis of information submitted by the Primary Applicant as of the Date of Application. MaineHousing and Subgrantees reserve the right to ask for additional or clarifying information from Primary Applicant, Applicant(s), or third parties to determine eligibility.

- B. A Household may be eligible for Supplemental Benefits or TANF Supplemental Benefits if available.
- C. MaineHousing uses the federal Poverty Income Guidelines and State Median Income Guidelines as reported annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. MaineHousing reserves the right to manage the Programs within those guidelines when determining benefits. MaineHousing will determine eligibility criteria based on the availability of federal funding for the Programs during each Program Year.
- D. Households in which at least one member receives TANF or SNAP assistance will have Categorical Income Eligibility for HEAP. Households providing documentation of receiving TANF or SNAP assistance on Application Create Date- Non Online or Application Intake Date may have their HEAP Benefit determined at a pre-established percentage of the federal poverty level, or using actual vetted income if provided by Maine DHHS. If documentation of receiving TANF or SNAP assistance is not provided by the Applicant, the Applicant must provide income documentation as outlined in Section G.
- E. Dwelling Unit Eligibility.
1. The Dwelling Unit must have a functioning Heating System. If the dwelling does not have a functioning Heating System, the Subgrantee may certify the Application for CHIP only provided the Application is complete and all applicable documentation has been provided.
 2. If the dwelling is not permanently connected to or serviced by standard utilities such as electricity and water, the Subgrantee will obtain additional documentation to substantiate the Household occupies the dwelling as its primary residence on a full-time/year-round basis.
 3. Applicants residing in Subsidized Housing with heat included in their rent may be eligible for Fuel Assistance if the Household pays a portion of their rent or utility costs. MaineHousing will issue a Benefit in an amount to maximize benefits under SNAP.
 4. An Applicant who is self-employed and uses part of their Dwelling Unit for business may apply for the Programs. Benefits 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. Applicants who reside in hotels and motels may be eligible for Fuel Assistance if the Household provides documentation that the hotel/motel has been their permanent residence 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, Household may not be eligible for the entire Benefit depending on Date of Application and Home Energy use during current Program Year.
 7. A Household is not eligible for Programs when the Household resides 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.

F. Household Eligibility.

1. A Household is eligible for a Benefit if, on the Date of Application:
 - a. it is a full-time resident of the State and resides, intends to reside, or has resided in a Dwelling full-time for at least four (4) months during a Heating Season and;
 - b. it has a Direct Energy Cost or Indirect Determinable Energy Cost.

2. Pursuant to definition of Household, Eligible Household Members may also include:
 - a. aliens who have obtained the status of an alien lawfully admitted for temporary residence under Section 210 of the Immigration and Nationality Act by approval of an application and are categorized as Special Agricultural Workers (SAW) who perform seasonal agricultural work during a specified period of time;
 - b. an alien who has obtained the status of an alien lawfully admitted for temporary residence under Section 245A of the Immigration and Nationality Act by approval of an application and who is aged, blind and/or disabled as defined in Section 1605 of the Social Security Act ([Public Law 74-271](#)) or Cuban or Haitian aliens as defined in [Public Law 96-422](#), Section 501 (e). Applicants are considered eligible if they have a Social Security card issued by the Social Security Administration, Green Card or show permanent Residents (I-551 Alien Registration Card, Passport, I-688B Employment authorization card, I-766 Employment Authorization Document, I-94 with R-1 or R-2 status designation). I-94 documents with no status designated only show permission to enter the U.S. but do not establish residency;
 - c. Eligible minor children residing with ineligible non-citizens;
 - d. a member of the Household who is away from the home part of the time is included as a Household member and their income must be included on the Application;
 - e. 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 this Rule.

3. A full-time college student, up to age 23 years old, or more than 23 years of age if permanently and totally disabled, who is a dependent of the Household may be excluded from the Household if the Primary Applicant chooses, as long as the college student is not the Primary Applicant. If excluded from the Household, his or her income would not be counted. The Applicant must provide proof of student status and enrollment at a university, vocational college, business college, or other accredited institution for twelve (12) credit hours or more per semester.

4. If otherwise eligible, Roomers and Boarders are eligible for a Benefit to the extent such Applicants prove that the rental arrangement giving rise to their Roomer or 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 or Boarder pursuant to the terms and conditions of the rental agreement for the entire sixty (60) day period. Roomers and Boarders cannot comeingle

funds or share expenses with lessor's Household.

- G. Income Eligibility is based on documented Household Income or Categorical Income Eligibility. Household Income is determined and verified in accordance with the information provided on the Application and verified as part of eligibility determination process.
1. Household Income received during the one (1) month or 30-day period preceding the Application Create Date- Non Online or Application Intake Date. Primary Applicants must provide pay stubs, or a statement from all current or former employer(s), documenting Household Income received during the one (1) month or 30-day income period prior to the Application Create Date- Non Online or Application Intake Date.
 2. Household Income includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Wages, salaries, and bonuses before any taxes or deductions;
 - b. Self-employment income. Households with self-employment income must use a current year's tax return if filed. If the Household has not filed a current year's tax return then the tax return for the previous year may be used. When supported by a tax return, 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. If the Applicant has not filed a tax return for the current or previous year, the Applicant may complete a self-employed income statement/worksheet accounting for the last twelve (12) months of income. Supporting documentation must be provided to substantiate the information on the statement/worksheet. Deductions or expenses related to self-employment income shall not be factored in to the amounts counted as income unless the Applicant provided the complete tax return from the current or prior year;
 - c. Social Security Retirement (SS), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Benefits;
 - d. Unemployment and worker's compensation and/or strike benefits from union funds;
 - e. Spousal support or alimony received by an Applicant, or mortgage/rent payments in lieu of or in addition to payments;
 - f. Court ordered or voluntary child support payments received by an Applicant, or mortgage/rent payments in lieu of or in addition to support payments;
 - g. Military allotments (pay);
 - h. Veteran's Benefits;
 - i. Other support from an absent family member or someone not living in the Household excluding loans;
 - j. Income of person living in the Household who is a non-qualified alien and 18 years of age or older;

- k. Government employee pensions, private pensions, and regular annuity payments;
 - l. Income from dividends, rents, royalties, estates, trusts, and interest. Interest income under \$200.00 must be included as income, but does not need to be supported by documentation;
 - m. Net rental income, including funds received from Roomers and Boarders;
 - n. Winnings from any source of gambling or gaming is considered income including, but not limited to private gambling, lottery, horse racing, bingo, etc.;
 - o. Jury duty fees.
3. Exemptions from Household Income include:
- a. Assets drawn down from financial institutions;
 - b. Foster care payments;
 - c. Adoption assistance;
 - d. In-kind payments to an Applicant in lieu of payment for work, including the imputed value of rent received in lieu of wages or items received in barter for rent;
 - e. Capital gains (except for business purposes);
 - f. Income from the sale of a primary residence, personal car, or other personal property;
 - g. Tax refunds;
 - h. One-time insurance payments;
 - i. One-time compensation for injury;
 - j. Non-cash income such as General Assistance voucher payments, the bonus value of food and fuel produced and consumed on farms, and the imputed value of rent from owner-occupied farm housing;
 - k. Bank loans, reverse mortgages, and home equity loans;
 - l. Reimbursement for expenses incurred in connection with employment;
 - m. Reimbursement for medical expenses;
 - n. Any funds received for education from grants, loans and scholarships, and work study;
 - o. Retroactive payments and overpayment adjustments from an entitlement program for a time period outside of the period being considered for HEAP eligibility (i.e. worker's comp, Social Security Benefits, etc.);
 - p. Income earned by an Applicant who is a full time high school student, unless they are the Primary Applicant;

- q. Income earned by a full-time college student who is not counted as a Household member pursuant to Section E.3 of this Rule;
- r. Combat zone pay to the military;
- s. Credit card loans/advances;
- t. All income used to fulfill a Social Security Administration Program to Achieve Self-Sufficiency (PASS);
- u. Federal payments or benefits excluded by law as set forth below:
 1. Payments received under Title II of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 1902, [42 U.S.C. 4636](#)).
 2. Payments of land settlement judgments distributed to or held in trust for members of certain Indian Tribes under Public Laws [92-254](#), [93-134](#), [93-531](#), [94-114](#); [94-540](#), [97-458](#), [98-64](#), [98-123](#) and [98-124](#).
 3. Funds available or distributed pursuant to [Public Law 96-420](#), the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act of 1980 ([25 U.S.C. 1721 et. seq.](#)) to members of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation and the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians.
 4. The value of the allotment provided a household under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ([7 U.S.C.A. 51](#)).
 5. The value of assistance to children as excluded under the National School Lunch Act ([42 U.S.C. 1760\(e\)](#)) and under the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 ([42 U.S.C. 1780\(b\)](#)).
 6. The value of commodities distributed under the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Act of 1983 ([Public Law. 98-8](#), [7 U.S.C. 612c](#)).
 7. Allowances, earnings and payments to individuals participating in programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act <https://www.congress.gov/113/bills/hr803/BILLS-113hr803enr.pdf>
 8. Program benefits received under the Older Americans Act of 1965 ([42 U.S.C. sub-section 3020\(a\)\(b\)](#)) as wages under the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).
 9. Payments to volunteers under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 ([Public Law 93-113](#), [42 U.S.C. 5044](#)).
 10. The value of any assistance paid with respect to a dwelling unit under the United States Housing Act of 1937, the National Housing Act, Section 101 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965, or Title V of the Housing Act of 1949.

11. The tax-exempt portions of payments made pursuant to the provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act ([Public Law 92-203, 43 U.S.C. 1620\(a\)](#)).
 12. Payments for supportive services or reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses made to individual volunteers serving as foster grandparents, senior health aides, or senior companions, and to persons serving in the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) and Active Corps of Executives (ACE) and any other programs under Titles II and III, pursuant to Section 418 of [Public Law 93-113](#).
 13. Any wages, allowances or reimbursement for transportation and attendant care costs, unless accepted on a case-by-case basis, when received by an eligible handicapped individual employed in a project under Title VI of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by Title II of [Public Law No. 95-602](#).
 14. All student financial assistance including the following programs funded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act as amended:
 - a. Pell Grants;
 - b. Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants;
 - c. Grants to States for State Student Incentives;
 - d. Special Programs for Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds;
 - e. Special Programs for Students Whose Families are Engaged in Migrant and Seasonal Farm work;
 - f. Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program;
 - g. Assistance to Institutions of Higher Education;
 - h. Veterans Education Outreach Program;
 - i. Special Child Care Services for Disadvantaged College Students.
 - j. Payments to veterans for Aid and Attendance benefits.
4. For any Applicant who pays court ordered child support, the Subgrantee will deduct paid and documented child support payments made during the income period from the Applicant's gross income.
- H. For any Household found ineligible due to being over income, the Subgrantee will deduct paid and documented medical expenses not reimbursed for the 12-month period prior to the HEAP Application Create Date- Non Online or Application Intake Date from the gross income in an amount only enough to make Household eligible. Medical expenses may include medical and dental insurance premiums and transportation to medical appointments. Subgrantees will use Internal Revenue Service Publication 502, as same may be amended from time to time, to identify

eligible medical and dental expenses.

I. Primary Applicants may be required to refund any Overpayment. A Household's Eligibility to receive benefits from Programs is contingent on the resolution of any Overpayment.

1. MaineHousing will recoup all outstanding Overpayments from any current or future Benefits until the Overpayment is paid in full. MaineHousing will recoup 50% of a Household's current Program Year's Benefit and 50% of a Household's future Program Years' Benefits until the Overpayment has been paid in full.
2. The Household will be eligible for ECIP if they have entered into and are in compliance with the terms of a repayment agreement with MaineHousing to resolve the Overpayment or the Overpayment has been paid in full.
3. The Household will not be eligible to receive benefits under the Weatherization Assistance Program, CHIP, or Heat Pump Program until the Overpayment is paid in full.

4. Benefit Determination.

- A. Benefits are determined to ensure that Eligible Households with the lowest income and the highest Energy Cost in relation to income, taking into account family size, will receive a higher Benefit.
- B. The availability of a Benefit will be based on HEAP funding availability.
- C. Tenants residing in Subsidized Housing with heat included in their rent, who pay a portion of their rent or utility costs, are only eligible to receive a Benefit in an amount to maximize benefits under SNAP.
- D. MaineHousing, or the Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, will assign a number of points to an Eligible Household that correlates to their Energy Costs. The number of points will be adjusted by an assigned percentage that correlates to the Eligible Household's poverty level. The adjusted number of points will then be multiplied by a dollar value based on the amount of the federal HEAP grant received and the number of Eligible Households served in the previous Program Year, the average Energy Cost for an Eligible Household in the previous Program Year, any anticipated increase or decrease in the federal HEAP grant to be received in the current Program Year, and any anticipated increase or decrease in average Benefits or the number of Eligible Households.

MaineHousing will announce the actual dollar value of DHLC points no later than the fifteen (15) calendar days following receipt of the federal HEAP grant award.

1. The number of points assigned to an Eligible Household will be determined pursuant to the following:

Calculated or Reported Energy Cost	Points
\$.01-\$400	5
\$401-\$800	10
\$801-\$1200	15
\$1201-\$1600	20
\$1601-\$2000	25

\$2001-\$2500	30
\$2501 and over	35
Calculated or Reported Energy Cost falling between brackets will be rounded to the next higher or lower dollar amount, as appropriate. For example: \$400.01-\$400.49 will be rounded to \$400; \$400.50-\$400.99 will be rounded to \$401.	

Poverty Level as Calculated under the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIG)	Percentage of Points
0%-25%	130%
26%-50%	120%
51%-75%	110%
76%-100%	100%
101%-125%	90%
126%-150%	80%
>than 150% FPIG but not exceeding the maximum of the greater of 150% FPIG or 60% state median income	70%
Calculated poverty level amounts falling between brackets will be rounded to the next higher or lower amount. For example: income at 75.1% will be rounded to 75%; income at 100.6% will be rounded to 101%.	

All final point results that are fractional will be rounded up to the nearest whole number.

2. Calculating Energy Costs. Energy Costs are calculated by the DHLC method.
 - a. Design Heat Load Calculation. DHLC shall be used to estimate the Energy Costs for Eligible Households. Under the DHLC, the number of rooms occupied by the Eligible Household shall be multiplied by the number of BTUs needed to heat an average sized room in a Dwelling Unit. That product will then be multiplied by the number of square feet of an average sized room in a Dwelling Unit. Next, that second product will be multiplied by the number of heating degree days of the Service Area in which the Eligible Household's Dwelling Unit is located. That third product is then divided by one million BTUs. The quotient is then multiplied by the cost of the Eligible Household's requested Home Energy type per one million BTUs. That fourth product is then divided by the efficiency rate of the requested Home Energy type to arrive at the Eligible Household's estimated amount of energy consumption. The cost per one million BTUs and efficiency rate of the Applicant's Home Energy type will be periodically established by MaineHousing.

The DHLC is based on the following factors:

1. The total number of rooms in the Dwelling Unit as listed on the Application. Hallways, bathrooms, and closets are not counted in the total number of rooms;
2. An assumed standard room size for the Dwelling Unit type. Standard room sizes and BTUs required to heat a Dwelling Unit vary by Dwelling Unit type because average room size and surface area exposure to the elements vary by Dwelling Unit type. The standard room sizes and BTUs used for each Dwelling Unit type are as follows:

Dwelling Unit Type	Standard Room Size	BTUs
Stick-built/Modular	144 square feet	14.3
Manufactured Home/mobile home	100 square feet	13
Apartment	120 square feet	8.3

3. The heating degree days for the Service Area. Heating degree days are updated annually using data reported by National Weather Stations in Maine.
4. The estimated BTUs required to heat the Dwelling Unit;
5. Average cost per one million BTU. MaineHousing determines the average costs per one million BTU annually. Oil, kerosene, and propane costs are obtained by averaging the costs reported by the Governor’s Energy Office (GEO). Average costs for all other fuel types are based on a representative survey of Vendors’ pricing.
6. The efficiency rate for the requested Home Energy type listed on the Application. The Energy Cost per one million BTU and efficiency rate are based on the requested Home Energy type specified on the Eligible Household’s Application.

Home Energy Type	Efficiency Rate
Oil	65%
Kerosene	65%
Propane	65%
Natural Gas	65%
Biodiesel	65%
Electric	100%
Firewood	50%
Corn	60%
Wood Pellets	80%
Bio-bricks	80%

7. For Tenants in Subsidized Housing with a Direct Energy Cost, the annual utility allowance for heating, as provided by property manager on the Subsidized Housing form, must be deducted from the estimated Energy Cost in order to determine the Eligible Household’s heat burden.
8. If after annual utility allowances for heating are deducted from annual Household Energy Cost reported by the Vendor on the Annual Consumption report, the Household has a calculated energy cost of less than or equal to zero (0), the Household is only eligible to receive a Benefit in an amount to maximize benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

5. Payment of Benefits.

- A. A Primary Applicant shall select a Vendor that will deliver Home Energy to the Eligible Household. Payment of Benefits will be made directly to the Vendor by a method prescribed by MaineHousing.
 - 1. For payment prior to delivery, MaineHousing, or a Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, will pay a Benefit to the Vendor or within ten (10) business days of the date the Application is certified eligible or when HEAP grant funds are available, whichever is later.
 - 2. For payment post-delivery, MaineHousing, or a Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, will provide a Credit Notification Report within ten (10) business days of the date the Application is certified eligible or when HEAP grant funds are available, whichever is later. MaineHousing will make payment for HEAP Benefits after the Vendor makes delivery as authorized by MaineHousing.

In the case of wood Vendors, MaineHousing, or a Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, will make payment for a Benefit by direct check to the Primary Applicant.

- B. If there is no Vendor that serves the area in which the Eligible Household resides then MaineHousing, or the Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, may pay Benefits directly to the Primary Applicant. The Primary Applicant will be required to sign an Attestation as part of their Application, attesting that the Benefit they receive will be used for its intended purpose.
- C. Payment of Benefits will be made directly to Primary Applicants who receive their Benefit for firewood. Payment of Benefits may be made directly to Tenants with an Indirect Determinable Energy Cost.

6. TANF Supplemental Benefits.

- A. Except as may be expressly provided for elsewhere in this Rule, the use and administration of TANF Supplemental Benefits is subject to the standards for HEAP Benefits set forth in this Rule.
- B. Eligibility. A Household may be eligible for a TANF Supplemental Benefit if its Application for HEAP has been certified eligible in the current Program Year and if on the Date of Application:
 - 1. it included at least one member who was under the age of eighteen (18); and
 - 2. it did not reside in Subsidized Housing with heat included.
- C. Benefit Determination. The TANF Supplemental Benefit per Eligible Household per Program Year shall be determined each Program Year by MaineHousing based on the projected number of Households eligible for TANF Supplemental Benefits and available funding.
- D. Payment of Benefits. TANF Supplemental Benefits will be sent directly to Vendors in the same manner as regular HEAP Benefits as outlined in Section 5 above.

7. Benefit Returns and Transfer:

- A. Program benefits may not be sold, released or otherwise conveyed, with or without consideration, by the Eligible Household or the Vendor without written authorization from MaineHousing. MaineHousing will only authorize such conveyances when circumstances arise that prevent the Eligible Household from using the Benefit and MaineHousing determines such conveyance is in the best interest of the Eligible Household and is consistent with the intent of the HEAP Act.

- B. Program benefits may be available for reissue or transfer during the Program Year of issue and up until April 30th of the Program Year immediately following when:
1. All Applicant(s) move in State but continue with same Vendor.
 2. All Applicant(s) move in State and change Home Energy vendors.
 3. Household changes Vendor.
 4. All Applicant(s) move in State from a Dwelling Unit with Direct Energy Cost to a Dwelling Unit with heat included in their rent (not including Subsidized Housing).
 5. All Applicant(s) move in State to Subsidized Housing with Direct Energy Cost.
 6. Household changes Home Energy type.
 7. Primary Applicant has deceased and there are surviving Applicants remaining in the Household (unless surviving Applicant moves in State to a Household that has received a Benefit in the current Program Year).
- C. Household may be required to provide in writing the following in order to receive a Benefit reissue or transfer:
1. Primary Applicant's name.
 2. Previous address.
 3. Current address.
 4. Current phone number.
 5. Current rental agreement or current property tax bill, whichever is relevant.
 6. Current electric/utility company name and account number.
 7. Name on the electric/utility company account.
 8. Primary Heating System and Home Energy type.
 9. Fuel tank location.
 10. Current Home Energy Vendor name, address, and account number.
 11. Primary Applicant's signature and date submitted.

If for any reason the requested documentation is not provided, the reissuance or transfer of Benefits may be delayed and/or Benefits may be forfeited.

- D. Benefits may not be eligible for reissue or transfer when:
1. It is determined that Primary Applicant committed Errors and Program Abuse when completing the Application.

2. It is determined that there was an Overpayment.
3. Primary Applicant's permanent residence changes to a nursing home or long term care facility and there are no surviving Applicants remaining in the Household.
4. All Applicant(s) move to Subsidized Housing with heat included.
5. Primary Applicant moves in State into a Household that has been determined eligible for a Benefit in the current Program Year.
6. The Benefit was issued before the previous or current Program Year.
7. The Benefit was issued the previous Program Year and was not used on or before April 30th of the Program Year immediately following.
8. All Applicant(s) move to an ineligible Dwelling Unit.
9. Primary Applicant has deceased and there are no surviving Applicants remaining in the Household.
10. All Applicants move out of State.

If the Household subsequently moves to an eligible Dwelling Unit, the Benefit may be eligible for reissue provided the Benefit was for the previous or current Program Year.

- E. In the event Vendor receives a Benefit return form requesting the return of Benefits paid to Vendor on behalf of Eligible Households, Vendor shall return such Benefits to MaineHousing within fifteen (15) business days of date of Benefit return form. Once the funds are received, MaineHousing will process the reissue or transfer as appropriate within fifteen (15) calendar days.

8. Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP).

- A. A Household may be eligible for ECIP if a Household member's health and safety is threatened by an Energy Crisis situation and the Household does not have the financial means to avert the Energy Crisis. The Subgrantee will determine whether the Household is experiencing an Energy Crisis on the Date of Application. An Eligible Household is income eligible for ECIP.

1. To determine if Household is in Energy Crisis:
 - a. Reading of 1/4 tank or less on a standard 275 gallon heating oil tank;
 - b. Reading of 25% or less on a propane tank;
 - c. 7-day or less supply for other delivered Home Energy types.
2. To determine an Energy Crisis with respect to utility terminations:
 - a. Household has received a disconnection notice; and
 - b. Household has exhausted its ability to negotiate and pay the terms of a reasonable

payment arrangement.

B. Allowable expenditures must be related to averting an Energy Crisis and may include:

1. Home Energy deliveries provided the Eligible Household has exhausted any remaining Benefits previously issued to a Vendor on behalf of the Eligible Household;
2. Delivery charges associated with fuel deliveries made against an ECIP benefit to avert an energy crisis situation.
3. Surcharges, reconnection charges, or penalties related to a final utility disconnect notice. Utility costs must be directly related to the operation of the Heating System;
4. Heating System repair, including restart fees;
5. Purchase of space heaters;
6. Temporary relocation provided the Eligible Household is experiencing a Life Threatening Crisis that cannot be averted within 18 hours by one of the above measures;

C. Unallowable Expenditures:

1. ECIP funds cannot be used if the Household has any other Heating System that is safe, operable and is capable of heating the dwelling adequately during severe cold weather, and has a supply of product for that Heating System.
2. ECIP funds cannot be used to pay for surcharges, reconnection charges, or penalties related to a final utility disconnect when that utility is not required for the operation of the primary Heating System.
3. ECIP funds cannot be used to pay for Home Energy deliveries or Heating System repairs if the Applicant resides in Subsidized Housing with heat included or a Rental Unit with heat included.
4. An 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.

D. 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.

E. ECIP will be administered pursuant to HEAP:

1. ECIP timeframe is November 1 through the following April 30 or upon the exhaustion of funds, whichever occurs sooner;
2. Conditioned on the availability of ECIP funds, some form of assistance that will resolve the Energy Crisis, if Household is eligible to receive such benefits, will be provided

within 48 hours after Household has been certified eligible for ECIP;

3. Conditioned on the availability of ECIP funds, some form of assistance that will resolve the Energy Crisis, if Household is eligible to receive such benefits and is in a Life Threatening Crisis situation, will be provided within 18 hours after a Household has been certified eligible for ECIP.

F. The Subgrantee will provide the Primary Applicant written notice of ECIP denial within three (3) business days.

G. ECIP Payment to Vendors.

1. Except in the case of wood Vendors, MaineHousing, or a Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, will make payment for ECIP after the Vendor makes delivery as authorized by MaineHousing/Subgrantee. The Vendor must return a completed purchase order and a delivery ticket to MaineHousing/Subgrantee. The Vendor must also submit an invoice if the total amount on the delivery ticket is greater than the ECIP purchase order amount or the delivery ticket does not account for all the charges that were approved on the purchase order. Receipt of the purchase order must be entered into the MaineHousing database. Contingent on database entry, MaineHousing will make payment within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the completed purchase order, a delivery ticket, and invoice (if applicable).
2. In the case of wood Vendors, MaineHousing, or a Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, will make payment for ECIP after the Vendor makes delivery as authorized by MaineHousing/Subgrantee. The Vendor must return a completed purchase order, including Applicant and Vendor signatures, to MaineHousing/Subgrantee. Receipt of the purchase order must be entered into the MaineHousing database. Contingent on database entry, MaineHousing/Subgrantee will make payment within ten (10) business days of the signed purchase order receipt date.

9. Central Heating Improvement Program (CHIP).

A. Eligibility. A Household may be eligible for CHIP if the Household:

1. is eligible for HEAP Fuel Assistance benefits;
2. has an eligible Application that was certified within the preceding twelve (12) months; and
3. does not have a more recent Application that has been certified-denied.

B. Subgrantees shall provide CHIP services based on the following priority order:

1. Eligible Households experiencing an Energy Crisis caused by Heating System malfunction or failure.
2. Non-wood Heating Systems that cannot achieve a minimum steady state efficiency of 70% (as determined by a CTE).

3. Preventative CTE and minor repairs on a non-emergency basis (owner-occupied dwelling units only). Date of the last CTE by a licensed technician must be more than twelve (12) months prior to the initiation of services date.

Eligible Households shall be served on a first-come, first-served basis with respect to each level of priority except when the Subgrantee is providing weatherization services to a Dwelling Unit. In this case, CHIP activities to Eligible Households that enable the Subgrantee to leverage funds may be served first.

- C. Subgrantees shall administer and operate CHIP in their Service Areas unless otherwise determined by MaineHousing. Administration of CHIP will be conditioned on the availability of HEAP funds.
- D. Heating System Replacement. Household may be eligible for assistance to replace a Heating System if the Household is eligible for Benefits pursuant to this Rule. The amount of assistance shall take into account the Applicant Household's and Non-occupying Co-owner's Countable Assets.
 1. The Applicant Household will be required to contribute toward the cost of replacing the Heating System if the Applicant Household has Countable Assets in excess of \$5,000, or \$50,000 if a member of the Applicant Household is 60 years of age or older. The same guidelines apply to Non-occupying Co-owner's Countable Assets.

The overall purpose of these asset limitations is to encourage a Household's contribution to meeting their needs, when possible, and at the same time recognize that household assets represent needed income and insurance against financial calamities, and that it is prudent to retain these assets to some extent.
 2. An Applicant Household's contribution shall be determined by subtracting \$5,000 or \$50,000 (whichever is applicable) from its total Countable Assets. That difference will then be multiplied by the Applicant Household's percentage of ownership. A Non-occupying Co-owner's contribution shall be similarly calculated. The maximum CHIP benefit amount shall be determined by subtracting the sum of the Applicant Household's and Non-occupying Co-owner's contributions from the total replacement costs.
- E. Rental Units Occupied By An Eligible Household: A life-time maximum benefit of \$600 for an Eligible Household. The maximum allowed in a non-owner occupied multi-family building is the lesser of \$600 times the number of Heating Systems that provide heat to Eligible Households or \$2,400.
- F. Life Estates and Life Leases: If an Eligible Household member holds a life estate or life lease interest in and occupies the Dwelling Unit, the Dwelling Unit may be eligible if:
 1. the document conferring the Applicant's rights of the life estate or life lease states that the Eligible Household member is responsible for maintaining the Dwelling Unit, or is silent as to who is responsible for maintenance; or
 2. the Dwelling Unit is owned by an Eligible Household.
- G. Proof of Ownership. The Subgrantee shall verify ownership of all Dwelling Units and Rental Units

prior to performing any work. Proof of ownership may include current property tax bill, statement from the local tax assessor, town clerk or similar municipal official, or documentation from electronic registry.

Life estates and life leases require a copy of the document conferring the Applicant's rights.

The Subgrantee must obtain the written permission of the owner of the Rental Unit prior to performing any work on the Heating System unless the Tenant has exercised his or her right under 14 M.R.S.A. Section 6026 to make certain repairs.

H. A Dwelling Unit will not be eligible under CHIP if:

1. Dwelling Unit is a Rental Unit that has received prior CHIP services to the life-time maximum benefit;
2. Dwelling Unit has been designated for acquisition or clearance by a federal, state, or local program or order;
3. Dwelling Unit has been designated for foreclosure;
4. Dwelling Unit is for sale;
5. Dwelling Unit is vacant;
6. Dwelling Unit is uninhabitable as determined by a local municipality, State Agency, MaineHousing, or a Community Action Agency;
7. Dwelling Unit is in poor structural condition making the installation of CHIP services impractical, impossible, or ineffective;
8. Dwelling Unit is in such poor structural condition that the proposed CHIP services would have a longer life expectancy than the Dwelling Unit;
9. Dwelling Unit has been damaged by fire, flood or an act of God and repair of the damage is covered by insurance;
10. There are obvious discrepancies found between the information supplied on the Application and observed conditions during the CHIP process. The Subgrantee must resolve any discrepancies before work can continue;
11. Subgrantee determines the Applicant failed to properly maintain a Heating System that was previously replaced under CHIP.
12. Eligible Households who apply for CHIP services for more than one Dwelling Unit will be subject to additional review to ensure the requested services are consistent with the intent of the program.

I. CHIP Allowable Uses:

1. Cleaning, tuning, and evaluating oil or gas systems;

2. Cleaning, evaluating, and servicing solid fuel systems;
3. Replacing oil or gas burners;
4. Replacing cracked heat exchangers;
5. Replacing oil, gas, electric or solid fuel Heating Systems;
6. Sealing and insulating Heating System pipes or ducts in unconditioned spaces;
7. Installing electrical or mechanical Heating System ignition systems;
8. Replacing or relocating thermostats and anticipator adjustment;
9. Baffling of the combustion chamber;
10. Optimizing the firing rate;
11. Cleaning of the chimney;
12. Smoke Alarms;
13. Fire extinguishers;
14. Carbon Monoxide detectors;
15. Gas detectors;
16. Oil tanks;
17. Oil tank gauges;

18. Temporary relocation provided the Eligible Household is experiencing a Life Threatening Crisis that cannot be adequately addressed through ECIP measures;
19. Other measures necessary to bring Heating Systems into compliance with applicable State and local codes and Maine Fuel Board requirements; and
20. Other measures necessary to correct any Heating System problems that pose an immediate threat to the health and safety of the Eligible Household.

J. CHIP Unallowable Uses:

1. Reimbursement or payment for purchases made by or costs incurred by an Applicant.
2. Replacement of a Heating System if the Dwelling Unit received a prior Heating System replacement funded by CHIP unless the Heating System is near the end of or beyond its estimated useful life as defined by https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/EUL_FOR_CNA_E_TOOL.PDF

- K. Fuel Switching. As a general guideline, the practice of fuel switching is not allowed. However, if the Subgrantee determines that the switching of a fuel source is warranted, then a written waiver request must be submitted to MaineHousing for review and consideration (on a case-by-case basis) prior to the installation.
- L. Subgrantee must perform a final inspection on all CHIP services for heating system replacement jobs. Inspections will include an evaluation to determine:
1. Compliance with applicable codes;
 2. That all work performed was authorized by the Subgrantee; and
 3. The combustion efficiency level of the Heating System where technically feasible.
- M. Specific Procurement Requirements. Prior to the performance of CHIP services, the Subgrantee shall follow the procedures below:
1. Procurement less than or equal to \$10,000. Procurement of services, including materials, equipment and services from specialized trades, such as electricians, plumbers, masons and oil burner repair people shall be performed in accordance with the following procedures.
 - a. Solicit by phone, email, vendor website, catalog, or price list, or similar means one price quote for the required materials, equipment and services.
 - b. Determine if the quoted price is reasonable based on one or more factors identified by Subgrantee, such as recent purchases of, or research on, goods or services of the same kind or related knowledge or expertise; otherwise, solicit two price quotes by similar means.
 - c. Copies of all procurement records, including basis for the contractor selection and factors used to determine if the quoted price is reasonable, must be retained in the Subgrantee files.
 2. Procurement over \$10,000. Procurement of services, including materials, equipment and services from specialized trades, such as electricians, plumbers, masons and oil burner repair people shall be performed in accordance with the following procedures.
 - a. Perform a price survey for the required materials, equipment and services.
 - b. Make every reasonable attempt to receive price quotations or bids from at least three (3) reputable Contractors and fully document the bid process and all bids received on a survey sheet.
 - c. Purchase the materials, equipment or services from the Contractor whose bid or proposal is the lowest, taking into consideration the Contractor's performance record and other relevant factors. Fully document the selection process.
 - d. Copies of all procurement records, including basis for contractor selection must be retained in the Subgrantee files.
 3. The Subgrantee must prepare an Invitation to Bid or a Request for Proposal, which:
 - a. Identifies all requirements which prospective bidders must fulfill, including the

due dates for bids; and

- b. Identifies all factors which the Subgrantees will consider in evaluating and awarding bids.
4. The Invitation to Bid or Request for Proposal must be mailed, faxed or emailed to no less than three (3) prospective contractors who may reasonably be expected to submit a bid.
 5. All bids must be received by the Subgrantee contact person via mail, fax or e-mail prior to a specified time for a bid opening at a specified time and location. All bids received must be kept in a secure location prior to all bids being received and tabulated. In addition, all correspondence relating to the procurement action must be retained in the bid files.
 6. Sole Source Procurement. Subgrantee may solicit a proposal from only one source for one of the following reasons.
 - a. Sole source procurement may be used in the following instances:
 1. Emergency or Urgent Need. An emergency situation or other urgent need exists and only one known source can provide the required goods or services within the time needed. Emergency or urgent situations include, but are not limited to, natural disasters or a Life Threatening Crisis.
 2. Uniqueness. The item or service is available from only one source, based on a reasonable, good faith review of the market for the type of item or service needed.
 3. Inadequate Competitive Proposals. After evaluation of all proposals submitted in a competitive procurement, all proposals are determined to be inadequate.
 - b. Subgrantee shall submit a written statement justifying the use and approval of all sole source procurements, in excess of \$10,000 to MaineHousing for its consideration prior to the installation of services.
 - c. Subgrantee will retain a copy of the solicitation and the proposal received in response, a record of the approval by MaineHousing in Subgrantee's records.

10. HEAP Weatherization.

- A. The purpose of HEAP Weatherization is to reduce Eligible Households' need for Fuel Assistance, particularly those with the lowest Household Incomes that pay a high proportion of Household Income for Home Energy and those that include Priority Applicants.
- B. Using HEAP Weatherization in conjunction with U.S Department of Energy (DOE) funds: If the requirements in this Rule conflict with those required by [10 CFR Part 440](#), DOE requirements shall have precedence, with the exception to variations listed and approved in the LIHEAP State Model Plan Weatherization Assistance Section. HEAP Weatherization funds may only be used to weatherize Dwelling Units occupied by Eligible Households.
- C. Weatherization measures must be installed in accordance with the Maine Weatherization Standards, as may be amended from time to time.

- D. Eligibility. A Household may be eligible for HEAP Weatherization if the Household:
1. is eligible for Benefits pursuant to this Rule;
 2. has an Application certified-eligible within the twelve (12) months preceding the date of the Subgrantee's energy audit of the Dwelling Unit; and
 3. does not have a more recent Application that has been certified-denied.

- E. Proof of Ownership. The Subgrantee shall verify ownership of all Dwelling Units and Rental Units prior to performing any work. Proof of ownership may include current property tax bill, statement from the local tax assessor, town clerk or similar municipal official, or documentation from electronic registry.

Life estates and leases require a copy of the document conferring the Applicant's rights.

The Subgrantee must obtain the written permission of the owner of the Rental Unit prior to performing any work.

- F. A Dwelling Unit will not be eligible under HEAP Weatherization if:
1. Dwelling Unit received weatherization services under HEAP Weatherization or another MaineHousing program within fifteen (15) years of the date of Application.
 2. Dwelling Unit has been designated for acquisition or clearance by a federal, state, or local program or order;
 3. Dwelling Unit has been designated for foreclosure;
 4. Dwelling Unit is for sale;
 5. Dwelling Unit is vacant;
 6. Dwelling Unit is uninhabitable as determined by a local municipality, State Agency, MaineHousing, or a Community Action Agency ;
 7. Dwelling Unit is in poor structural condition making the installation of HEAP Weatherization services impractical, impossible, or ineffective;
 8. Dwelling Unit is in such poor structural condition that the proposed HEAP Weatherization services would have a longer life expectancy than the Dwelling Unit;
 9. Dwelling Unit has been damaged by fire, flood or an act of God and repair of the damage is covered by insurance;
 10. There are obvious discrepancies found between the information supplied on the Application and observed conditions during the HEAP Weatherization process. The Subgrantee must resolve any discrepancies before work can continue.

- G. Allowable Uses:

1. Weatherization needs assessments/audits;
2. Air sealing and insulation;
3. Storm windows;
4. Heating System modifications/repairs;
5. Heating System replacements;
6. Heating System cleaning, tuning, and evaluating;
7. Compact fluorescent light bulbs and LED light bulbs;
8. Energy related roof repairs;
9. Major appliance repairs/replacements, including water heaters, up to two appliances, with one being a water heater;
10. Incidental Repairs;
11. Health and safety measures;
12. Replacement windows and doors are allowable only under exceptional circumstances and only after all other reasonable repair options have been considered and rejected.

H. Fuel Switching: As a general guideline, the practice of fuel switching when replacing Heating Systems is not allowed. However, if the Subgrantee determines that the switching of a fuel source is warranted, then a written waiver request should be submitted to MaineHousing for review and consideration (on a case-by-case basis) prior to the installation.

I. Work on an eligible Dwelling Unit previously weatherized under a MaineHousing program may be reopened if:

1. the reopening occurs within six (6) months of completion of the original weatherization service; and
2. The reopening is required because the previous service is the proximate cause of an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants; or
3. The quality of weatherization material or its installation is deemed deficient by MaineHousing.

J. Subgrantees shall administer and operate HEAP Weatherization in their Service Areas, unless otherwise authorized by MaineHousing. Administration of HEAP Weatherization will be conditioned on the availability of HEAP funds.

K. For the purposes of HEAP Weatherization, Subgrantees must conduct a public bid process to secure weatherization contractors at least annually as prescribed by MaineHousing.

11. Heat Pump Program.

- A. Subgrantees shall administer and operate HEAP Heat Pump Program in their Service Areas, unless otherwise authorized by MaineHousing. Administration of HEAP Heat Pump Program will be conditioned on the availability of HEAP funds.
- B. The purpose of the Heat Pump Program is to help reduce Eligible Households' overall home energy costs.
- C. Eligibility. A Household may be eligible for the Heat Pump Program if the Household:
 - 1. is eligible for Benefits pursuant to this Rule;
 - 2. has an Application certified-eligible within the twelve (12) months preceding the date of the Subgrantee's energy audit of the Dwelling Unit;
 - 3. does not have a more recent Application that has been certified-denied; and
 - 4. has a working primary heating system.
- D. Proof of Ownership. Ownership of all Dwelling Units shall be verified prior to any work being performed. Proof of ownership may include current property tax bill, statement from the local tax assessor, town clerk or similar municipal official, or documentation from electronic registry.

Life estates and leases require a copy of the document conferring the Applicant's rights.
- E. A Dwelling Unit will not be eligible under the Heat Pump Program if:
 - 1. Dwelling Unit already is equipped with a heat pump;
 - 2. Dwelling Unit has been designated for acquisition or clearance by a federal, state, or local program or order;
 - 3. Dwelling Unit has been designated for foreclosure;
 - 4. Dwelling Unit is for sale;
 - 5. Dwelling Unit is vacant;
 - 6. Dwelling Unit is uninhabitable as determined by a local municipality, State Agency, MaineHousing, or a Community Action Agency ;
 - 7. Dwelling Unit is in poor structural condition making the installation of a heat pump impractical, impossible, or ineffective;
 - 8. Dwelling Unit is in such poor structural condition that the proposed Heat Pump Program services would have a longer life expectancy than the Dwelling Unit;
 - 9. There are obvious discrepancies found between the information supplied on the Application and observed conditions during the HEAP Weatherization process. The Subgrantee must resolve any discrepancies before work can continue.

F. Allowable Uses:

1. Installation of a Heat Pump; and
2. Installation of electric subpanel for heat pump if needed.

12. Administration of the Program.

- A. MaineHousing will prepare and submit to the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services an annual State Plan for HEAP in conformity with the provisions of the HEAP Act. MaineHousing will notice a public hearing for the purpose of taking comments on the State Plan and will also prepare a transcript of such comments.
- B. HEAP Handbook. The HEAP Handbook is an operations manual for the administration of the Programs. This Rule shall control in the event of any inconsistency between the HEAP Handbook and this Rule.
- C. General. To the extent practicable, MaineHousing will contract with Subgrantees for the purpose of administering the Programs and may require the Subgrantee to provide benefits in connection therewith, including Supplemental Benefits if such benefits become available during the Program Year, to Eligible Households. MaineHousing may, in its discretion, provide benefits in connection with the Programs and make prepayments, installment payments and advances with or without interest in connection therewith, including without limitation, payment of direct benefits to Eligible Households or Vendors, or may contract with other entities, such as municipalities, to administer the Programs and provide benefits.
- D. Conflict of Interest. No employee, officer, board member, agent, consultant or other representative of Subgrantee, Vendor, or Contractor who exercises or has exercised any function or responsibility with respect to Programs' activities or who is in a position to participate in a decision-making process or gain inside information with regard to these activities, may obtain a financial interest or benefit from Programs' activities or have an interest in any contract, subcontract or agreement regarding the Programs' activities, or the proceeds there under, which benefits him or her or any person with whom he or she has business or family ties. Subgrantees, Vendors, and Contractors shall notify MaineHousing of any potential conflict of interest.
- E. Confidentiality. Subgrantees, Vendors, Contractors, and their employees and agents shall keep confidential:

Applicant or beneficiary information obtained in the administration of the Programs, including without limitation, an individual's name, address and phone number, household income, assets or other financial information, and benefits received ("Confidential Information").

Subgrantees, Vendors, Contractors, and their employees and agents shall safeguard and protect from disclosure at all times Confidential Information including, without limitation, taking the following steps:

1. Put measures in place to prevent the loss, theft, misappropriation or inadvertent disclosure of Confidential Information.
2. Encrypt all Confidential Information contained on computers, laptops, and other electronic devices and media used in whole or in part, in the operation or administration of the Programs.
3. Send e-mail or e-mail attachments containing Confidential Information only if encrypted

or only through a secure e-mail server.

4. Make their employees, officers, agents, contractors, sub-contractors and other representatives who operate or administer any of the Programs or otherwise provide services under the Programs aware that the responsibility to safeguard and protect Confidential Information applies at all times, whether or not they are at a work location during normal business hours.
 5. Limit disclosure to persons with a direct need to know.
- F. MaineHousing will conduct program and fiscal monitoring of Subgrantees and Vendors to ensure compliance with Federal, State, and MaineHousing rules and regulations in a manner consistent with applicable State law, as may be amended from time to time, and the HEAP Act.

13. Subgrantees.

- A. Service Areas. MaineHousing will select at least one Subgrantee to administer the Programs in each Service Area.
- B. Selection of Subgrantees. Subgrantees will be selected annually based on the following criteria:
 1. Experience with providing Fuel Assistance or similar programs to low-income persons;
 2. Current capacity to administer a timely and effective Fuel Assistance program for the intended Service Area;
 3. Demonstrated capacity to adequately serve low-income persons residing in their Service Areas;
 4. The availability of other qualified entities to service a particular area;
 5. The geographic area customarily serviced by the potential Subgrantee;
 6. Cost efficiency in administering a Fuel Assistance program;
 7. The ability to enhance accessibility to other low-income programs administered by the Subgrantee;
 8. Acceptable schedule for taking Applications; and
 9. The ability to perform outreach activities and serve homebound recipients.

Subgrantees shall make annual, written applications to MaineHousing that address each of the criteria listed above. Subgrantee applications must be received no later than June 1 of each year.

- C. Allocation to Each Subgrantee. MaineHousing will determine the annual allocation of HEAP funds to each Subgrantee, the amount of which annual allocation shall not include any amount of HEAP funds allocated to MaineHousing to pay Benefits in the event MaineHousing elects to provide Benefits directly. MaineHousing may base any allocation determination on the number of Applications certified eligible in the Service Areas in the previous Program Year.

- D. Subgrantee Administrative and Program Expenses. Subgrantees shall be permitted administrative and program expenses necessary to carry out their responsibilities under this Rule and the Programs. Such expenses will be allowed in a manner consistent with the provisions of the HEAP Act and must be reasonable in amount as determined by MaineHousing following its review of the Subgrantee work plans and budgets. Allowable administrative and program expenses for each of the Programs are listed below. Other expenses may be allowed if authorized by MaineHousing before the expenses are incurred.

Fuel Assistance and ECIP	Expense Category
Salary and fringe benefit costs for the actual time an individual performs intake, processing, or eligibility determination functions associated with an active Application	Program
Salary and fringe benefit costs for the actual time an individual participates in administering Fuel Assistance or ECIP and is not performing functions associated with an active Application	Program
Salary and fringe benefits and other related and reasonable costs for specific HEAP and ECIP training and professional development of individuals performing intake, application processing, eligibility determination, and administration of HEAP fuel assistance and ECIP	Program
Space costs/rent, telephone, copier/printing, office supplies, postage, transportation/travel, data processing/computer costs, equipment repairs and maintenance, equipment purchase/lease, and consultants/professional services associated with the above referenced activities.	Program
Indirect costs	Administrative
Salary and fringe benefits and other related and reasonable costs for specific HEAP and ECIP training and professional development for individuals whose salary and fringe benefits are budgeted directly to Administrative Costs or for whom salary and fringe are included in the agency's Indirect Rate	Administrative
Salary and fringe costs, space costs, rent, telephone, copying, printing, office supplies, postage, transportation, travel, data processing, computer costs, equipment repairs and maintenance, equipment purchase or lease, consultant fees and professional services associated with the administration of HEAP not included in the agency's Indirect Rate or allowable from program funding	Administrative
HEAP Weatherization, CHIP, and Heat Pump Program	Expense Category
Material/labor costs for Heating system repairs/replacements and measures installed as part of weatherization	Program

Either salary and fringe benefit costs for the actual time staff participates in administering HEAP Weatherization, CHIP, Heat Pump Program or a program management fee established by MaineHousing.	Program
Space costs/rent, telephone, copier/printing, office supplies, postage, transportation/travel, equipment purchase/lease, liability insurance, pollution occurrence insurance, and consultants/professional services.	Program
Indirect costs	Administrative
Assurance 16 Services	Expense Category
Salary and fringe benefit costs for staff providing direct services and the direct administrative costs associated with providing the services, such as the costs for supplies, equipment, travel, postage, utilities, rental and maintenance of office space	Program
Indirect costs	Administrative

- E. Assurance 16 Activities. Subgrantees may submit annual proposals, for MaineHousing’s consideration, describing their planned activities and expenses associated with providing services to Applicants pursuant to Assurance 16 of the HEAP Act. Administration of Assurance 16 Activities will be conditioned on the availability of HEAP funds.
- F. Subgrantee’s Responsibilities. The responsibilities of the Subgrantee include, but are not limited to, the following and as further defined in the annual Subgrant Agreement:
1. To conduct client outreach in a manner consistent with the HEAP Act and as prescribed in this Rule.
 2. To accept and verify Applications from Primary Applicants in a manner consistent with provisions of the HEAP Act and as prescribed in this Rule.
 3. To determine Household eligibility in a manner consistent with provisions of the HEAP Act and as prescribed in this Rule.
 4. To pay benefits, if required by MaineHousing, to or on behalf of Eligible Households in a manner consistent with provisions of the HEAP Act and as prescribed in this Rule.
 5. To provide documentation and assistance as needed for MaineHousing to conduct informal reviews and fair hearings.
 6. To pay Supplemental Benefits, if required by MaineHousing, if such benefits become available during the Program Year.
 7. To use MaineHousing database software and equipment.
 8. To address no-heat emergencies.

9. To cost effectively administer and operate the Programs.
10. To prioritize Eligible Households for HEAP Weatherization services in accordance with the HEAT Enterprise software.
11. To coordinate services between Programs.
12. To submit to MaineHousing production schedules for the Programs.
13. To submit to MaineHousing work plans and budgets, monthly status reports and any other such reports or information required in connection with the Programs.
14. To submit to MaineHousing billing information, including zero billings, for open contracts by 20th of each month.
15. To use forms provided or approved by MaineHousing to administer the Programs.
16. To protect personally identifiable information.
17. At Applicant's request, to make reasonable accommodations for a Person with a Disability.
18. To ensure that procurement of materials and services is conducted in a manner to provide open and free competition and to avoid any appearance of impropriety, the Subgrantee shall be bound by general federal procurement principles at [45 CFR §§ 75.327](#) to 75.335 and property management principles at [45 CFR §§ 75.316](#) to 75.323..

G. Recordkeeping, Reporting and Accounting. Subgrantee shall comply with the following requirements:

1. Subgrantee shall maintain comprehensive and accurate documentation, payroll reports, financial statements, and other records in connection with its administration of the Programs, including at a minimum, the amount and disposition of the Programs' funds received by the Subgrantee and the total cost necessary to administer the Programs. Subgrantee shall keep such records separate and identifiable from the records of Subgrantee's other business and activities. MaineHousing and its representatives shall have the right to examine such records at reasonable times upon reasonable notice by MaineHousing. Subgrantee shall furnish copies of any such records requested by MaineHousing. All records must be retained by the Subgrantee for a minimum of three (3) years from the end of relevant contract period. In cases of litigation, other claims, audits, or other disputes the Subgrantee will retain all relevant records for at least one (1) year after the final disposition thereof.
2. Subgrantee shall comply with all reporting requirements of MaineHousing. Subgrantee shall submit to MaineHousing an annual budget prior to each Program Year. Within ninety (90) calendar days after the close of the Subgrantee's fiscal year, Subgrantee shall furnish to MaineHousing an annual financial statement of Subgrantee, prepared by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with audit requirements at 45 CFR Part 75, Subpart F.

H. Funds for administrative expenses for the Program Year and supplemental funding received, if any,

may be spent only between October 1 and the following September 30 of the applicable Program Year, unless otherwise authorized by MaineHousing.

I. Noncompliance.

1. MaineHousing shall have the right to terminate the Subgrantee Agreement in its sole discretion if it determines the Subgrantee has failed to perform one or more of its obligations to include malfeasance or misappropriation of funds. A written Notice of Termination of Subgrantee will set forth the specific violation.
2. For non-compliance other than those which MaineHousing determines are subject to immediate termination, a deficiency notice will be sent to the Subgrantee in the event it fails to comply with any provision of this Rule, the Subgrantee Agreement, the Program Handbook, and the provisions of other applicable law. The Notice will set forth the specific violation and allow a reasonable time period for response by the Subgrantee. Upon review and consideration of any responses, MaineHousing will notify the Subgrantee in writing of any action to be taken and may establish a reasonable time period within which remedial action must be taken. Failure of Subgrantee to comply will result in a Notice of Termination of Subgrantee stating the cause and effective date of its termination.
3. MaineHousing shall have the right to suspend in whole or in part the Subgrantee's performance of one or more services provided under the Agreement whenever MaineHousing determines such suspension is in MaineHousing's best interest.
4. MaineHousing may bar a Subgrantee's participation in programs administered by MaineHousing for its malfeasance or misfeasance with respect to the administration or operation of any of the Programs.

14. Native American Tribal Organizations.

- A. Direct Allocation to Native American Tribal Organizations. Native American Tribal Organizations may receive a direct allocation of HEAP funds from the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to the HEAP Act. The amount of the direct allocation is determined by the percentage of Maine's total annual LIHEAP award that MaineHousing indicates will be awarded to Maine's Native American Tribal Organizations. In its determination MaineHousing will consider the number of Eligible Households during the previous Program Year that include an Applicant who is a member of the Native American Tribal Organization, when that information is available.
- B. Agreements with Native American Tribal Organizations. When a Native American Tribal Organization receives a direct allocation of Fuel Assistance and ECIP, MaineHousing will enter into an agreement with the Native American Tribal Organization that, at a minimum, provides for the coordination of services and administration of the Fuel Assistance and ECIP by the Native American Tribal Organization and Subgrantees to prevent duplication of services.

15. Vendors.

- A. Vendor Eligibility. A vendor interested in becoming a Vendor must demonstrate the capacity and stability of its business to MaineHousing's satisfaction. The vendor must supply a credit report and a business plan. The vendor must be in business for one year prior to becoming a Vendor.

MaineHousing reserves the right to exclude a vendor for the following, not limited to:

1. Any bankruptcies or judgments;
2. Owners and/or officers of vendor were previously owner/officer of terminated Vendor;
3. Failure to comply with Close-Out requirements.

B. Enrollment.

1. Open Enrollment for new vendors: vendors may enter into a Vendor Agreement during the time period as prescribed by MaineHousing. If the vendor does not submit accurate and complete documentation the vendor may not be allowed to participate in the current Program Year.
2. Re-Enrollment for Vendors: Vendors who have a current Program Year contract may enroll as prescribed by MaineHousing. Continued participation is contingent upon performance and compliance with terms of Vendor Agreement.

C. MaineHousing, at its discretion, may terminate any Vendor:

1. That does not comply with the terms and conditions of the Vendor Agreement;
2. That fails to provide documentation and cooperate with any audit/investigation and/or the return of unused Benefits as determined by any audit/investigation. In addition, MaineHousing may undertake any of the following:
 - a. Bar the Vendor from future participation;
 - b. Refer the case to State or federal officials for criminal prosecution or civil action; and
 - c. Pursue other remedies as determined by MaineHousing.

D. Vendors must comply with State law concerning consumer home heating rights, which is described in Office of the Maine Attorney General Consumer Law Guide Chapter 19.

E. Vendor may not consider an Eligible Household's outstanding indebtedness to Vendor in calculating the Retail Cash Price applicable to a delivery of Home Energy to that Eligible Household.

F. Return of Payments.

1. In the event Vendor receives a Benefit Return form requesting the return of Benefits paid to Vendor on behalf of Eligible Households, Vendor shall return such Benefits to MaineHousing, or Subgrantee as allowed by MaineHousing, within fifteen (15) business days of date of Benefit Return form.
2. In the event Vendor becomes aware of any of the events listed below affecting an Eligible Household, Vendor shall within fifteen (15) business days of the date that Vendor becomes aware of any such event, submit to MaineHousing a completed Benefit Return form and return any remaining Benefits paid to Vendor on behalf of the

affected Eligible Household, unless the remaining Benefits are less than \$25.

Vendor may aggregate any remaining Benefits with a balance less than \$25 and return the balance to MaineHousing when the Annual Consumption Report is submitted. All related recordkeeping must clearly show all remaining benefit balances.

- a. The death of an individual who was the sole member of an Eligible Household;
 - b. The institutionalization of an individual who was the sole member of an Eligible Household;
 - c. Vendor's receipt of a written notice from an Eligible Household that it no longer desires to receive Home Energy deliveries from Vendor;
 - d. An Eligible Household has not received deliveries of Home Energy for twelve (12) consecutive months;
 - e. An Eligible Household has moved out of Vendor's Service Area;
 - f. An Eligible Household has moved out of State;
 - g. Vendor has been paid an excessive Benefit on behalf of the Eligible Household.
3. Vendor shall return to MaineHousing all unused Benefits in its possession or custody, whether directly or indirectly, within fifteen (15) business days of the termination of the Vendor Agreement.
 4. With respect to each return of Benefits, the Vendor agrees to provide in writing: the name and address of the Vendor; the name and address of the Eligible Household; the Eligible Household's account number; the Benefit amount being returned; and a concise explanation for the return of funds. In addition Vendor must include a detailed account history showing delivery activity and payment activity from twelve (12) months prior to the date the Benefit was received by Vendor to the current date. Vendor must also provide any other information required by MaineHousing related thereto.
 5. Vendors may refund credit balances to Eligible Households only to the extent that such credit balances can be documented and demonstrated to be the Eligible Household's funds and not Fuel Assistance funds.
- G. As part of the Annual Consumption Report process, Vendors must review Eligible Household accounts and identify any remaining Benefits that were issued in or prior to the preceding Program Year. All such unused Benefits must be returned to MaineHousing no later than June 30.
- H. Use of Benefits.
1. Program benefits may not be sold, released or otherwise conveyed, with or without consideration, by the Eligible Household or the Vendor without written authorization from MaineHousing. MaineHousing will only authorize such conveyances when circumstances arise that prevent the Eligible Household from using the benefit and MaineHousing determines such conveyance is in the best interest of the Eligible Household and is consistent with the intent of the HEAP Act.
 2. Benefits cannot be used to pay Incidental Costs.

3. Unless otherwise authorized by MaineHousing, the Vendor may only deliver the product stated on the Vendor Voucher Report, the Credit Notification Report , or the purchase order for wood or ECIP.
 4. Vendor may deliver the entire Benefit if the Household has placed an order (for partial Benefit) or if the Household is on automatic delivery unless:
 - a. The Household advises the Vendor all Applicants are moving;
 - b. The Household advises the Vendor that Household's Heating System has mechanical difficulties;
 - c. The Household's Home Energy storage tanks are either being replaced or do not meet code.
- I. In the case of electricity and natural gas Vendors, the Vendor may apply HEAP Benefit funds received for the account of the Eligible Household to past due charges for Home Energy deliveries to the Eligible Household, with the oldest charges being paid first. HEAP Benefits cannot be applied to Incidental Costs.
- J. Vendor Watch List. In the event MaineHousing determines, in its sole judgment based on Vendor's actions or omissions or other information obtained by MaineHousing directly or from any third party, that such actions, omissions or other information raises issues concerning Vendor's continued ability to make Home Energy deliveries or otherwise comply with the terms of the Vendor Agreement, or that Vendor's performance is out of compliance with the requirements of the Vendor Agreement, MaineHousing may place, in its sole discretion, Vendor on a Watch List.
- K. Prohibited Discrimination. The Vendor is prohibited from discriminating against any Eligible Household regarding the extension of credit to purchase Home Energy or other services, the price of Home Energy or other services, or the terms or conditions of the delivery of Home Energy or other services solely on the basis of its being an Eligible Household.

16. Errors and Program Abuse.

A. Reports of Errors and Program Abuse:

1. Subgrantees must report in writing to MaineHousing suspected Errors and Program Abuse related to Programs.
2. Any individual may report to MaineHousing suspected Errors and Program Abuse related to Programs:
 - a. By telephone at 1-800-452-4668 or (207) 626-4600
 - b. In writing to MaineHousing, ATTN: HEAP Errors and Program Abuse, 26 Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330
 - c. By e-mail to LIHEAPcompliance@mainehousing.org;

The report must include the name of the person being reported, their county of residence, and details of the suspected Errors and Program Abuse.

- B. MaineHousing will investigate all reported Errors and Program Abuse. If there is documented information to indicate Errors and Program Abuse, MaineHousing may notify the Applicant and provide them an opportunity to respond. Based on the response, MaineHousing will determine what, if any, appropriate action should be taken.
- C. Once Errors and Program Abuse is confirmed or if an Applicant fails to respond to inquiries regarding suspected Errors and Program Abuse, an Overpayment will be calculated and communicated to the Applicant. In addition to the Overpayment, the communication will include: 1) the facts surrounding the decision, 2) the reason for the decision, and 3) the manner by which the Applicant can request an appeal. MaineHousing may investigate the previous three (3) Program Years from the Date of Discovery. The Overpayment may include any or all of those three (3) years.
- D. When calculating an Overpayment MaineHousing will use the HEAP Handbook in effect for the applicable years the Overpayment occurred.
- E. An Applicant may request a fair hearing to dispute an Overpayment. The Applicant must submit to MaineHousing a written request for a fair hearing no later than thirty (30) calendar days from the postmark date of the first notification from MaineHousing of suspected Errors and Program Abuse. All requests for fair hearing shall follow the Rule as set forth in Section 15.
- F. MaineHousing will pursue recouping of Overpayments by any and all of the following:
 - 1. Applicant may pay MaineHousing the full amount an Overpayment.
 - 2. Applicant may enter into a payment arrangement. Minimum monthly payment allowed will be set at \$5.00 a month.
 - 3. Despite the existence of a repayment agreement, MaineHousing will recoup any current and future Benefits to offset against an Overpayment balance. MaineHousing will recoup 50% of a Household's current Program Year's Benefit and 50% of a Household's future Program Years' Benefits until the Overpayment has been paid in full.
 - 4. MaineHousing will recoup Benefits on account with the Applicant's Vendor to offset against an Overpayment balance.
- G. When Applicant fails to repay Overpayment, the case may be referred to other parties for additional action.
- H. MaineHousing may close an Overpayment for any of the following reasons:
 - 1. Overpayment has been paid in full.
 - 2. The overpayment is determined to be invalid based on a fair hearing decision or a court decision.
 - 3. All adult persons(s) responsible for Overpayment are deceased.

17. Appeal.

- A. The benefit notification shall:
1. State the Benefit amount;
 2. State the date the Benefit was sent to the Vendor;
 3. State the approved Home Energy type;
 4. State the manner by which the Applicant can request an informal review, if applicable;
 5. State the manner by which the Applicant can request an appeal, if applicable.
- B. The denial notification shall:
1. State the facts surrounding the decision;
 2. State the reason(s) for the decision;
 3. State the manner by which the Applicant can request an appeal, if applicable.
- C. The Applicant must submit a written appeal request for an informal review no later than:
1. Thirty (30) calendar days from the postmarked date of the denial notification;
 2. Thirty (30) calendar days from the postmarked date of the benefit notification;
 3. Ninety (90) calendar days from the Date of Application, if the Application has not been approved or denied; or
 4. Ninety (90) calendar days from the postmarked date of the request for refund of an Overpayment.
- D. Written requests for appeal may be mailed to MaineHousing, 26 Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330; or emailed to LIHEAPcompliance@mainehousing.org.
- E. Informal Review. Informal reviews are intended to provide a minimum hearing requirement and need not be as elaborate as the fair hearing. An Applicant may request, in writing, an informal review for any dispute other than a dispute regarding TANF Supplemental Benefits.

The informal review will be conducted by a person other than the one who made or approved the decision under review or a subordinate of this person. MaineHousing will review the file, conduct necessary research, and give the Applicant an opportunity to present written or oral objections to the decision under review. In rendering a decision MaineHousing will evaluate the accuracy of the calculations, the level of documentation provided by the Applicant, and the accuracy of the decision. MaineHousing will communicate the results of the research/review to the Applicant.

F. Fair Hearing.

Pursuant to the HEAP Act, [42 USC §8624\(b\)\(13\)](#), MaineHousing will provide an Applicant an opportunity for a fair administrative hearing if the Applicant's claim for assistance has been denied or not acted upon with reasonable promptness. MaineHousing will also provide an Applicant an opportunity for a fair administrative hearing if the Applicant disputes the amount of their Benefit or if the Applicant is required to refund an Overpayment.

1. Fair hearings shall be conducted in accordance with the Maine Administrative Procedures Act, Title 5, Chapter 375 by the Director of MaineHousing (or his/her designee) or such other contractor selected by MaineHousing. The parties may receive a transcript of the hearing upon payment of the reasonable cost for the production thereof.
2. Within thirty (30) calendar days of the hearing's conclusion the hearing officer will prepare a recommended hearing decision. Copies of the recommended decision will be provided to the appellant.
3. A final decision and order will be made by the Director of MaineHousing in writing within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the hearing officer's recommendation. In the event the Director of MaineHousing presides over a hearing, she/he shall render his/her decision and order within sixty (60) calendar days of the hearing's conclusion or sixty (60) calendar days of the recommended decision. The Director's decision and order shall include findings of fact sufficient to apprise the parties of its basis. A copy of the decision and order will be provided promptly to each party to the proceeding or his representative of record. Written notice of the party's right to appeal the decision and other relevant information will be provided to the parties at the time of the decision and order. The decision and order will be implemented by the Subgrantee no later than ten (10) calendar days after receipt if it is in the Appellant's favor and otherwise forty-five (45) calendar days unless stayed on appeal.

G. TANF Supplemental Benefits are not subject to appeal.

18. Additional Provisions.

- A. Other Laws. If this Rule conflicts with any provision of applicable federal or State law, including without limitation the Act and the HEAP Act, such federal or State law shall control.
- B. Additional Requirements. This Rule does not preclude such additional or alternative requirements as may be necessary to comply with the Act and the HEAP Act.
- C. Pool of Eligible Households. This Rule establishes a pool of eligible applicants but does not preclude additional reasonable criteria and does not confer any automatic right or entitlement on any person or entity eligible hereunder.
- D. Availability of Funds. Assistance provided under the Programs described in this Rule is conditioned on the availability of HEAP funds.
- E. Waivers. Upon determination for good cause, the Director of MaineHousing, or the Director's designee, may, subject to statutory limitations, waive any provision of this Rule. Each waiver shall be in writing and shall be supported by documentation of the pertinent facts and grounds for the waiver.
- F. Final Action. The Director of MaineHousing, individually or by exercise of the delegation powers contained in the Act, shall make all decisions and take all action necessary to implement this Rule. Such action of the Director shall constitute final agency action.

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 30-A MRSA §§4722(1)(W), 4741(1) and (15), and 4991 et seq.; 42 U.S.C.A. §§8621, et seq.

BASIS STATEMENT: This replacement rule repeals and replaces in its entirety the current Home Energy Assistance Program Rule. The rule establishes standards for administering fuel assistance, emergency fuel assistance, TANF Supplemental Benefits, weatherization, heat pumps, and heating system repair and replacement funds to income eligible households in the State of Maine. This replacement rule: establishes new annual end date for taking HEAP applications; provides clarity that providing Program services is contingent upon availability of HEAP funding; establishes the Design Heat Load Calculation as the sole method of determining a Benefit; allows Benefit levels to be determined using the Home Energy type requested by the Primary Applicant; and provides Payments of Benefits directly to Primary Applicants who receive their Benefit for firewood. Other changes correct errors or provide clarification to the previous version of the rule.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Process:

Notice of Agency Rule-Making Proposal (MAPA-3) was submitted to the Secretary of State for publication in the May 3, 2023 edition of the appropriate newspapers. Additionally, MaineHousing send the proposed rule to Interested Parties on May 3, 2023, and published the proposed rule on its website on May 3, 2023. MaineHousing held a public hearing on May 23, 2023. The comment period was held open until June 2, 2023 at 5:00 PM.

Summary of Comments and Responses to Comments:

Testimony from Joe Ryan, Executive Director of AIO Food & Energy Assistance:

Mr. Ryan shared about the services AIO provides in the Rockland area and that energy insecurity has devastating effects on people who struggle financially. He shared concerns about the LIHEAP application process being difficult; that some people have issues completing the application process; and that some individuals may not complete the process due to it being challenging.

Mr. Ryan had three specific requests: 1.) for an online application and related process to be created; 2.) for CAP (Community Action Programs) provider compensation to be dependent on the speed of assistance delivery and customer service quality; and 3.) to consider allocation of a portion of LIHEAP funds to be donated to non-profit community agencies that provide heating assistance.

MaineHousing's Response: MaineHousing launched an initial version of an online HEAP application portal in November 2022, which allows people to start a HEAP application; notifies the applicable Community Action Agency (CAAs) of the request; and CAAs then contact online applicants and schedule an appointment to complete the application process. Over 2,400 individuals used the online application portal in PY2023 to start the HEAP application process. MaineHousing is in the midst of a request for proposal (RFP) process for a new HEAP software system. One of the system features that is included in the RFP is for full online application functionality. MaineHousing's timeline is to have the new system in place for the start of PY2025 HEAP. MaineHousing and the Community Action Agency network continuously work to make improvements to the application process, including timeliness of taking and processing applications. MaineHousing is not making any changes in the Chapter 24- HEAP Rule based on the testimony from Mr. Ryan.

Testimony from Lynn Lugdon, Penquis Community Action Program, Former CAA Energy Council Chair:

Ms. Lugdon shared that it is helpful to start taking applications for HEAP earlier in the year and that the plan to start taking application for PY2024 on July 17, 2023 is fantastic. She said she is also happy with the change to take applications until the last working day of May or until exhaustion of HEAP funds, whichever occurs sooner, and that she hopes that the program will start right back up in July. Ms. Lugdon supports the proposal not to use the consumption based model to determine HEAP benefits, and said that using the

Design Heat Load Calculation method only to determine HEAP benefits would make it much easier for HEAP vendors, the CAP agencies, and clients.

Ms. Lugdon shared that the Energy Council is going to ask for a site to be set up for frequently asked questions, that she understands this worked well with the rent relief program, so they are hoping to get something set up in the same way. She said that a true online application is needed, that the current online application is mainly for requests for services. She said that having an online application where clients can download documentation would be helpful and to have online signatures too.

Ms. Lugdon said that sometimes, people are getting booked out up to three months in advance for their application appointments, but emphasized that starting November 1, that emergency funds are available and that if someone contacts their agency with an emergency fuel situation after November 1, they work to get them in to complete their application.

MaineHousing's Response: MaineHousing will have additional discussion with the CAA Energy Council regarding their request for a HEAP frequently asked question section to be set up and available online, and will explore the feasibility of moving forward with this request. MaineHousing is in the midst of a request for proposal (RFP) process for a new HEAP software system. One of the system features that is included in the RFP is for full online application functionality, including a feature so that applicants can upload documentation. MaineHousing's timeline is to have the new system in place for the start of PY2025 HEAP. MaineHousing is not making any changes in the Chapter 24- HEAP Rule based on the testimony from Ms. Lugdon.

Testimony from William Crandall, Western Maine Community Action, Incoming CAA Housing Council Chair:

Mr. Crandall said he knows that all the CAP agencies definitely would, as much as possible, take care of any emergency that they are aware of. He said that this year, we had numbers (of applicants and people served) that haven't been seen in decades, or at least a decade of time. He said that we are looking at a real effort by our team network across the state, and that with the infrastructure in place that the CAP agencies did a really good job taking on the excess units. He said that there is always room for improvement, that MaineHousing is always looking for improvement as well, and thanked MaineHousing for their help throughout the year.

MaineHousing's Response: MaineHousing values and appreciates the partnership and work between MaineHousing and the Community Action Agencies. MaineHousing is not making any changes in the Chapter 24- HEAP Rule based on the testimony from Mr. Crandall.

Written Input from Carmen Wilkinson:

Ms. Wilkinson submitted follow-up input via email during the public comment period. She said that having HEAP benefits issued as direct checks to clients who receive their benefit for firewood is not a good idea. She said the benefits should be issued directly to the firewood supplier. She asked how it would be verified that benefits issued directly to clients were used for the intended purpose.

MaineHousing's Response: Approximately 1,200+ HEAP eligible households have their benefit go towards firewood annually. There are currently less than forty participating HEAP wood vendors that serve the entire state. Some HEAP clients that use firewood pay higher prices from participating HEAP vendors due to the delivery fees associated with the distance from the vendor to the client's home. There have been times when HEAP wood vendors run out of the wood type (seasoned, green, length) selected by the HEAP beneficiary. In

some of these instances, clients must choose a different product due to supply. We appreciate the willingness of the HEAP wood vendors who are able to assist HEAP client and recognize that the above supply issues do not impact all vendors. However, by providing HEAP benefits directly to clients who use firewood, it provides the flexibility to obtain their preferred wood type from a wider selection of vendors, helping ensure they can get the best pricing available in their area. MaineHousing has implemented a process to help monitor the use of direct benefits with the clients chosen wood vendor as well as the intended impact to the program. MaineHousing is not making any changes in the Chapter 24- HEAP Rule based on the testimony from Ms. Wilkinson.

Written Input from Russell Black, State Senator:

State Senator Black submitted written comments. Senator Black shared his concerns with the proposed change that would have HEAP benefits for firewood issued directly to customers, instead of being sent to vendors. His issue with the change is that there is no guarantee that the benefits will be used to purchase firewood. He said he wants to make sure that the benefits are going to be used for what they are supposed to be used for and that the current system in place, where funds go directly to the vendor is the best possible way to make sure this happens. He said that if there is going to be rule change, there needs to be a system put in place that the customer submits who they purchased the wood from and how much they paid for it. Senator Black also said that some type of penalty needs to be in place if there is any other use of the funds from HEAP than purchasing firewood.

MaineHousing's Response: Approximately 1,200+ HEAP eligible households have their benefit go towards firewood annually. There are currently less than forty participating HEAP wood vendors that serve the entire state. Some HEAP clients that use firewood pay higher prices from participating HEAP vendors due to the delivery fees associated with the distance from the vendor to the client's home. There have been times when HEAP wood vendors run out of the wood type (seasoned, green, length) selected by the HEAP beneficiary. In some of these instances, clients must choose a different product due to supply. We appreciate the willingness of the HEAP wood vendors who are able to assist HEAP client and recognize that the above supply issues do not impact all vendors. However, by providing HEAP benefits directly to clients who use firewood, it provides the flexibility to obtain their preferred wood type from a wider selection of vendors, helping ensure they can get the best pricing available in their area. MaineHousing has implemented a process to help monitor the use of direct benefits with the clients chosen wood vendor as well as the intended impact to the program. MaineHousing is not making any changes in the Chapter 24- HEAP Rule based on the testimony from Senator Black.

Written Input from Mike Heath, Participating HEAP Firewood Vendor:

Mr. Heath shared verbal input via telephone with Troy Fullmer, Manager of HEAP, during the public comment period. Mr. Heath shared that he sees direct checks for benefits to HEAP clients who use firewood as an issue. He said that issuing benefits as direct checks with no verification that clients spend it on wood is a problem.

MaineHousing's Response: Approximately 1,200+ HEAP eligible households have their benefit go towards firewood annually. There are currently less than forty participating HEAP wood vendors that serve the entire state. Some HEAP clients that use firewood pay higher prices from participating HEAP vendors due to the delivery fees associated with the distance from the vendor to the client's home. There have been times when HEAP wood vendors run out of the wood type (seasoned, green, length) selected by the HEAP beneficiary. In

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Written Input from Kelley Hashey, HEAP Beneficiary:

Ms. Hashey shared concerns about challenges and the amount of time it takes to complete the HEAP application process. Her concerns were regarding the length and complexity of the application and application process; the amount of documentation required; and what she shared was an extended amount of time to complete the application process. Ms. Hashey proposes that consumers are involved with all LIHEAP policies.

MaineHousing’s Response: MaineHousing and the CAAs are committed to quality improvement and have made several changes in the application process over the past several years to make the process more efficient for applicants. In March 2019, MaineHousing engaged with a consulting firm to work with MaineHousing and CAAs to identify areas in the application process that could be leaned out. Since that time, several recommendations that resulted from the work with the consultant have been implemented as part of improving the process and experience for applicants. In April and May 2022, MaineHousing engaged with a consulting firm to host several consumer focus groups. Comments and concerns received from participants, vendors, state and local leaders and the public are considered when make improvements to the program each year. Ms. Hashey’s input will be shared with the Community Action Agency with which she applies for HEAP. MaineHousing is not making any changes in the Chapter 24- HEAP Rule based on the testimony from Ms. Hashey.

FISCAL IMPACT NOTE: The replacement HEAP Rule will not impose any cost on municipalities or counties for implementation or compliance.

EFFECTIVE DATE: JULY 3, 2023