



News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

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ERIE COUNTY HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OPENS MONDAY

Department of Social Services Encourages Residents to Apply Online

First Day for Applications is November 2

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Applications for Home Energy Assistance Program (“HEAP”) regular benefits will be accepted beginning Monday, November 2, 2020. This year, in light of the virus-related risks related to public gatherings, the Erie County Department of Social Services (“DSS”) is strongly encouraging applicants to apply online or to utilize other remote channels to apply. As in previous years, interested applicants are encouraged to apply sooner rather than later.

“No family or individual should be forced to live in an unheated home during the winter months, and HEAP assistance is available to prevent that hardship,” **said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz**. “There are many ways to apply and now is the time to do it, so I encourage all residents who need the assistance to register as soon as possible.”

“HEAP opening day is always busy. In light of COVID-19-related safety concerns, we are urging residents with heat service currently on and without a shut off notice to file HEAP applications online at www.mybenefits.ny.gov, by emailing heap hotline@erie.gov to request an application, or by calling the HEAP Phone Center at 716-858-7644,” **said Karen Rybicki, DSS First Deputy Commissioner**. “As in previous years, outreach events have been scheduled to assist Erie County residents with completing HEAP applications.”

A calendar detailing 2020-21 [outreach events](#) can be found on the Erie County Social Services website. In a change from prior years, outreach events will be held virtually to reduce the risk of virus transmission. To schedule an outreach event for your group or organization, email heapoutreach@erie.gov.

HEAP is a federally funded energy program, intended to assist low income households in meeting home energy needs and decreasing energy costs. Regular benefits are available to households paying separately for heat and to households whose heat is included in their rental amount. Last season, over 106,000 HEAP benefits were authorized to Erie County households.

Regular HEAP eligibility and benefits are based on income, household size, primary heating source and the presence of a vulnerable household member who is under age 6, is age 60 or older, or is permanently disabled. An eligible household may receive one regular HEAP benefit per program year. HEAP benefit amounts range from \$21 to \$741. Households currently receiving Temporary Assistance and/or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP”) benefits may qualify for an automatic basic HEAP benefit and may not be required to file a separate application. Households may ascertain whether an application is required by calling the HEAP Hotline at 858-7644.

In order to qualify for a regular HEAP benefit, the members of the household must be citizens of the United States or qualified aliens with gross monthly income at or below the amount per household size listed in the table below:

2020-2021 HEAP Benefit Gross Monthly Income Guidelines:

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Maximum Gross Monthly Income</u>
1	\$2,610
2	\$3,413
3	\$4,216
4	\$5,019
5	\$5,822
6	\$6,625
7	\$6,775
8	\$6,926

The Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement benefit component, available to help eligible low-income homeowners repair or replace furnaces, boilers and other direct heating equipment necessary to keep the home's primary heating source functional, opened on October 1, 2020. Applications for HEAP Emergency Benefits for households who have received a disconnect notice will be accepted beginning January 4, 2021.

For more information:

On the Erie County Department of Social Services, visit <http://www.erie.gov/socialservices/>

On the Erie County Department of Social Services Home Energy Assistance Program, visit <http://www.erie.gov/heap/>

Information on how to apply for HEAP [benefits](#) is also available.

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