



**For Immediate Release:**  
March 25, 2020

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## Ohio Updates Application Process for Energy Assistance Programs in response to COVID-19

The Ohio Development Services Agency (Development) and HARCATUS Tri-County CAO are working to help keep Ohioans safe during this time of emergency. Recently, Governor Mike DeWine declared a state of emergency regarding COVID-19, and Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton, M.D., MPH has issued orders to limit social interactions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Effective immediately, Ohioans who are enrolling in the Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP) for the first time, applying for Home Energy Assistance Winter Crisis Program, or have limited income, are no longer required to visit a local Energy Assistance Provider in order to complete an application.

All households will have their applications completed over the telephone.

What this means for households with currently scheduled appointments:

- Your original appointment date/time is still valid however instead of coming into the office, you will be contacted via telephone by a HARCATUS Family Support Center Staff Member to complete your application.
- You will be instructed on how to submit the required documentation during your telephone appointment.
- If the telephone number you provided when originally scheduling your appointment is no longer valid, and/or if you did not provide a telephone number, please contact our Appointment Hotline immediately at 1-855-806-9650 to update your telephone number.
- You may begin your application online by visiting the website: [www.development.ohio.gov](http://www.development.ohio.gov) however your application will still need to be completed through your telephone appointment.

What this means for households who need to schedule new appointments:

- Please call our Appointment Hotline immediately at 1-855-806-9650 to schedule date/time for your telephone appointment.

Our walk-in policy has been temporarily canceled until concerns over COVID-19 have passed.

Ohioans can visit [www.energyhelp.ohio.gov](http://www.energyhelp.ohio.gov) to start their application and upload the required documents prior to their appointment.

“Working with our local providers, we have been providing Ohio families with the support they need to manage their energy bills, and now this support is even more important,” said Lydia Mihalik, Director of the Ohio Development Services Agency. “The online application, in a normal scenario, makes it

easier to apply and reduces the length of an in-person appointment, but now it is providing a bridge to assistance during an incredibly difficult time.”

Development will also extend the Winter Crisis Program (WCP) until May 1, 2020 to align with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio’s extended Winter Reconnect Order and the regular Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) will be extended until June 1, 2020.

Development’s Interactive Voice Response phone lines will not be available, however Ohioans may continue to call (800) 282-0880 and select option 2, to be transferred to their local Energy Assistance Provider.

The Home Energy Assistance Winter Crisis Program helps income-eligible Ohioans pay their heating bills and can assist with fuel tank placement, fuel tank testing and furnace repair. Ohioans must have a gross income at or below 175% of the federal poverty guidelines to qualify for WCP and HEAP assistance. For a family of four the annual income must be at or below \$45,062.50. Ohioans must have a gross income at or below 150% of the federal poverty guidelines to qualify for PIPP. For a family of four the annual income must be at or below \$38,625.00.

Ohioans that have a regulated utility and have been issued a disconnect notice are eligible for a one-time WCP benefit if they have not already received a WCP or regular HEAP benefit.

For more information about the features of the Winter Crisis Program locally and what is needed to apply, contact HARCATUS at 1-855-806-9650. Additional information can also be found at [www.energyhelp.ohio.gov](http://www.energyhelp.ohio.gov) or by calling (800) 282-0880.

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