

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Human Services Extends Emergency Assistance Program, Help with Home Energy Crisis Funding and School Meals Available

Harrisburg, PA –Department of Human Services (DHS) today announced a one-month extension of the temporary Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) and reminded Pennsylvanians of other assistance programs that remain available as the commonwealth reopens and Pennsylvanians recover from economic challenges caused by COVID-19.

“We know these times are extremely challenging, but you do not have to go through this period alone. If you need help feeding your children, cooling your home, or affording other necessities, DHS is here for you,” said DHS Secretary Teresa Miller. “There is no shame in asking for help when we need it. DHS will be here to support Pennsylvanians through this public health crisis now and in the weeks and months to follow, and I encourage any Pennsylvanians in need of assistance to apply for these programs.”

Pennsylvanians who have experienced a change in income or job loss, regardless of its relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, can apply for benefits online at any time at www.compass.state.pa.us. Those who prefer to submit paper applications can mail documents to their [local County Assistance Office \(CAO\)](#) or leave documents in a CAO’s secure drop box, if available. CAOs remain closed to the public, but mail and drop boxes are being monitored so applications can be processed.

DHS administers Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

DHS has also received approval to administer three benefits created specifically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They are:

Emergency Assistance Program

The Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) helps low-income families who have lost wages and are experiencing financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program uses existing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds and is open to families with a child under the age of 18 or a woman who is currently pregnant. Families who qualify for EAP will be eligible for a one-time payment to assist them in meeting basic needs and to help them secure more stable financial footing in the future.

In order to qualify, families must have at least one person in the household who was employed as of March 11, 2020 and experienced an hour or wage reduction of at least 50 percent for two weeks or more, or who lost employment entirely due to the public

health crisis. Eligible families can possess resources, such as money in checking/savings, of no more than \$1,000 as well.

Qualifying families are issued a one-time grant equal to two months of TANF benefits. The average monthly TANF grant for a family of three is \$403, so a qualifying family of three receiving the average would receive a one-time grant of \$806 through the program. Information on monthly grants by household size and county is available online [here](#). Funds will be issued through an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card.

Funds remain available and this program has been extended; applications are due by July 12. Families should be prepared to submit all necessary documentation with their application to expedite processing and avoid having to apply again. Applications are accepted at any time, and previously rejected applications can be resubmitted. More information about EAP, including income limits, is available [here](#).

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Recovery Crisis

LIHEAP provides assistance for home energy bills, helping ensure continuity of utility and other energy services for low-income Pennsylvanians. LIHEAP normally runs from November through March, but the Recovery Crisis program can help with Pennsylvanians' current energy costs, including critical air conditioning during the summer months. Assistance is available for both renters and homeowners.

The LIHEAP Recovery Crisis Program will offer a crisis benefit and a supplemental payment for households that previously received a crisis payment made directly to utility companies or fuel providers to help offset costs for home utilities.

LIHEAP Recovery Crisis benefits may be available if a household:

1. Has their main or secondary energy source completely shut-off;
2. Is notified that their utility service will be shut off in the next 60 days;
3. Has broken energy equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced; or,
4. Is in danger of being without fuel in 15 days or less.
5. Owes funds to a utility provider that would constitute a service termination if not for the Public Utility Commission's moratorium on terminations.

LIHEAP Recovery Crisis program will run through August 31, 2020, or until all budgeted funding is expended. More information about the LIHEAP Recovery Crisis Program, including income limits, can be found [here](#).

Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer

The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program is a temporary program designed to bridge the gap left by schools closing and help families who may have strained resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program allows for DHS, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to provide a P-EBT benefit to households with children who have lost access to free or reduced-price school meals

through the National School Lunch Program due to pandemic-related school closures. P-EBT benefits are automatically issued to National School Lunch Program-qualifying families and will be received as EBT cards.

Benefits are provided to all eligible children whether or not they currently receive SNAP benefits. A family's benefit is determined based on the federal reimbursement rate for the daily rate of free school breakfasts and lunches, or approximately \$5.70 per child. This benefit is calculated with a pre-determined number of days based on when the child became eligible for the National School Lunch Program. While families do not apply directly for P-EBT, families who have experienced a job loss or change in income can still apply for the National School Lunch Program for the 2019-2020 school year through June 12.

Additional questions about Pennsylvania's P-EBT, including further eligibility determinations, can be found [here](#).

Applications for EAP, LIHEAP Recovery Crisis, and the National School Lunch Program can be made online at www.compass.state.pa.us. Pennsylvanians do not need to know their own eligibility in order to apply for these programs.

Visit pa.gov for a "[Responding to COVID-19](#)" guide or the Pennsylvania Department of Health's dedicated [Coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.

Guidance to DHS providers related to COVID-19 is available [here](#).