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PEORIA CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, INC.

people helping people

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Energy Assistance Updates

The State of Illinois' Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Energy Assistance has made some changes to the 2015-2016 Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Two Priority Groups have been established under the 2016 Low Income Home Energy Assistance State Plan.

PCCEO's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program began with Priority Group I (households with a person who is elderly and/or has a disability) on October 1, 2015. Seniors and disabled households who are without energy service can apply at this time also!! Maximum benefit for Reconnect Assistance is \$750.00.

Priority Group II which will be served beginning November

1, 2015 includes households with families with children age 5 or under (includes all children who are not yet 6 years old, that is up to 5 years and 364 days old) and disconnected households. Families with children and disconnected households who are without energy service can be served at this time.

Appointments will be made at Carver Community Center, 710 W. Third Street in Peoria for those meeting October's priority requirements, on Thursday, October 1 beginning at 8:30am. Appointments can also be made by calling 309-671-3900 beginning at 8:30am.

Eligible household must meet the above guidelines, as well as income guidelines. Applicants should present proof of income

for the last 30 days, the most current utility bill, and social security cards for everyone in the household.

December 1, LIHEAP will accept applications for all income-eligible households. For more information, contact PCCEO at (309) 671-3900.

PCCEO Staff also assisted Ameren Illinois in awarding one time grants to income eligible households in September. A total of \$50,000 was given to households on a first come first served basis.

Ameren Illinois hosted two such events in the entire state. Peoria County was chosen as one of the locations for assistance due to the 61605 zip code being one of the areas in Illinois that is struggling the most.

Additional Information On Energy Assistance

PCCEO is calling for the full restoration of the state Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) by Nov. 1 and for the governor to authorize spending the money in the LIHEAP fund.

As of now, the state LIHEAP funds haven't been authorized for spending and the state will not have adequate federal funds to serve the eligible population that was served with the state funding last year. If the state LIHEAP program is not restored, more than 2,000 families in Peoria County won't be able to get assistance.

"It is unacceptable that vulnerable Illinois residents have had to wait until October for help. This delay means that families with children under the age of 6 will have to wait until November for utility assistance, while other eligible Illinoisans wait until December," said McFarland A. Bragg, President/CEO of PCCEO. "Given the harsh winters we experience in Illinois, this will be way too late for many families that rely on LIHEAP to survive. This is a serious health and safety concern for our most vulnerable neighbors."

The budget impasse has meant that our community action agency has not been able to help 1,267 of families who were on the Percentage of Income Payment Plan, which is designed to help low-income families budget for their expenses by ensuring that their utility payments are 6 percent of their household incomes.

Since the moratorium on shut offs ended in April, there are many residents who have lost their utilities entirely and have had to wait until federal funds become available in October to have their utilities restored. This means there are households that have been without utilities for the last six months.

Illinois law requires regulated utilities to charge their customers a small fee to fund state LIHEAP. The money the utilities collect is intended only for LIHEAP. The utilities have continued to assess the meter surcharge intended for the program and are remitting the collected funds to the State of Illinois. "It is unacceptable for the money Illinois residents have contributed through their utility bills to the state LIHEAP fund to be held hostage during this budget impasse. The Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA) is asking the governor to support the legislature's appropriation of state LIHEAP funds so that we can serve our most vulnerable residents by supplementing the federal funds" said Dalitso Sulamoyo, President and CEO of IACAA.

"These state LIHEAP funds are not part of the General Revenue Fund. These funds are now idly sitting in an account when they could be used to help low-income Illinoisans get their utilities restored," said Sulamoyo.



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Administration

Central Illinois Catering
Emergency Services
Energy Assistance
Human Resources
Media Services
Weatherization

(309) 671-3900

Foster Grandparents

(309) 671-3950

Peoria Area Food Bank

(309) 671-3906

OKPARA Leasing (Affordable Housing)

(309) 673-1508

Early Head Start

Administration

(309) 495-5254

Pierson Hills

(309) 839-2106

Valeska Hinton

(309) 282-0222

Harrison

(309) 672-6522 ext. 6851

HEAD START CENTERS

Webster

(309) 671-3960

Trewyn

(309) 671-3958

Manual

(309) 672-6600

Sterling

(309) 672-6557

Urban League

(309) 673-7474