HEAP WINTER CRISIS PROGRAM (WCP)

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel
"Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate"
www.occ.ohio.gov



The Winter Crisis Program (WCP) is a federally funded program administered by the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services, Office of Community Support Services. The program (also known as Emergency HEAP or E-HEAP) provides financial assistance once per winter heating season to income-eligible households.

The WCP is available for customers served by utility companies regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), as well as local cooperatives, municipal utilities and bulk fuel. Eligible households that have been disconnected, have a shut-off notice, need to establish new service, need to pay to transfer service, have a Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP Plus) default, need to enroll in PIPP Plus, or have 25 percent or less of bulk fuel supply may receive assistance through the program.

Assistance can be used for:

- Electric and natural gas bills
- Supply of bulk fuel
- Propane/fuel tank replacement and testing
- Heating unit repair or replacement

The WCP runs from November 1, 2026, through March 31, 2027. Both homeowners and renters may be eligible for assistance.

Eligibility Guidelines

To qualify for the WCP, the utility bill **must be** in the name of an adult household member. The total household income must be at or below 175 percent of the federal income guidelines for households with up to seven people, and 60 percent of the State Median Income (SMI) for households of eight or more (see charts). Income is based on the last 30 days or the previous 12 months. The total gross household income must be reported for everyone living in the household, except wage or salary income earned by dependent minors under 18 years old.

2026-2027 175% Income Guidelines

Size of household*	12-Month Limit	30-Day Limit
	175%	175%
1	$27,930	$2,295.62
2	$37,870	$3,112.60
3	$47,810	$3,929.59
4	$57,750	$4,746.58
5	$67,690	$5,563.56
6	$77,630	$6,380.55
7	$87,570	$7,197.53

For households with eight or more members, the income levels for 60 percent of the SMI are:

2026-2027 60% State Median Income

Size of household*	12-Month Limit	30-Day Limit
	60%	60%
8	$94,881	$7,798.44
9	$96,946	$7,968.16
10	$99,010	$8,137.81
11	$101,069	$8,307.04
12	$103,132	$8,476.60

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Program Benefits

Customers of PUCO-regulated electric and natural gas utilities may receive a maximum benefit of $175. Customers of non-regulated companies (municipal utilities or cooperatives) may receive a maximum benefit of $750. Bulk fuel customers may receive up to $1200 (kerosene, propane, fuel oil) and $650 for customers heating with wood or coal. There is a separate benefit of up to $1500 for heating unit repair/replacement.

In some cases, the program can be used to repair, replace, and/or install the main heating source for homeowners, including wood burners/pellet stoves. The WCP funds may also be used to pay for bulk fuel tank expenses (testing, placement, rental, and gauges).

How to Apply

The application for the WCP may be started online, but customers must have an appointment with their local Energy Assistance Provider/Community Action Agency (EAP/CAA) to complete the application process. Appointments may be in-person or remote. Locate a local EAP/CAA by visiting www.occ.ohio.gov/utilityassistance or www.energyhelp.ohio.gov.

Customers are required to provide the following documents:

- A list of all household members and proof of income for the last 30 days (or 12 months) for each member over 18 years old. Wages and salaries of dependents under 18 years old are excluded.
- Most recent utility bills (natural gas and/or electric), regardless of account status.
- Proof of U.S. Citizenship or legal residency.
- Birth dates and Social Security numbers for all household members.
- Proof of disability, if applicable.

Customers should verify with the local EAP/CAA what documentation is required to complete the process.

When an appointment for the program is made with a local EAP/CAA, PUCO-regulated utility companies must delay disconnection for 30 days after the appointment. The 30-day delay may be used once per year for a PUCO-regulated natural gas and electric utility.

Additional Information

Once approved for assistance, the local EAP/CAA will authorize payment to the utility or vendor for disconnection prevention, reconnection of service, establishing new service, or for the delivery of bulk fuel.

After receiving assistance, households served by a PUCO-regulated utility that have an outstanding balance must enroll in an extended payment plan ("One-Ninth," "One-Sixth," "One-Third" (Winter Heating Season Plan), or the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP Plus), if eligible. For additional information on payment plans, visit www.occ.ohio.gov/factsheet/payment-plans.

Customers are not eligible for the WCP until any current medical certifications filed with the utility expire. To learn more about a 30-day medical certificate, visit www.occ.ohio.gov/utilityassistance. Additional assistance may be available for customers served by AES Ohio, American Electric Power (AEP Ohio), CenterPoint Energy, Columbia Gas of Ohio, Enbridge Gas (formerly Dominion Energy), Duke Energy, Northeast Ohio Natural Gas, The Illuminating Company, Ohio Edison, or Toledo Edison.

Contact the company directly at the customer service number listed on the utility bill.