New York State
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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New York State Announces Expansion of Cooling Assistance Program for Vulnerable Individuals

SHARE

An Additional $9 Million in Cooling Assistance Now Available Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Application Period for All Home Energy Assistance Program Funding Extended Through August

The state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) today announced that an additional $9 million is now available to help low-income New Yorkers who suffer from health issues exacerbated by heat to stay cool this summer amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Cooling assistance through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) provides an air conditioner to eligible households with a family member who suffers a serious medical condition that can be aggravated by extreme heat.

"Many areas of the state have experienced sweltering temperatures, which can pose a life-threatening challenge to our most vulnerable New Yorkers," **OTDA Commissioner Mike Hein said.** "This timely expansion of such a critical program will help thousands of other low-income residents to stay cool and safe in their homes as we approach the hottest days of the season."

Funding for the program has been more than doubled to $15 million this summer, enabling eligibility for the federally funded program to be extended to include families and individuals living in subsidized housing. Previously, families and individuals in subsidized housing were ineligible for this assistance if their heat was included in their rent.

Administered by OTDA, HEAP's cooling assistance program provided $3.3 million to roughly 4,800 households last year. About $18 million in cooling assistance has been distributed to more than 25,000 households throughout New York over the past five years.

So far this year, the cooling assistance program has distributed about $1.37 million to about 2,000 households throughout the state.

In addition to this funding, the deadline for New Yorkers to apply for the HEAP regular and emergency home heating benefit is being extended through the end of August.

Applications for both cooling assistance and emergency HEAP are accepted at local departments of social services in person or by telephone, with funding provided on a first-come, first-served basis. A list of local offices by county can be found at otda.ny.gov/programs/heap/contacts.

Residents outside of New York City may also apply online for regular heating assistance benefits at myBenefits.ny.gov. New York City residents may download an application and obtain program information at access.nyc.gov.

To qualify for these federally funded programs, applicants must meet HEAP eligibility criteria and income guidelines, which vary by household size. For example, a household of four can earn up to $57,564 a year, or $4,797 a month, and still qualify for assistance.

Households that have received the regular benefit and two emergency benefits during this HEAP season can still apply for additional assistance if they face the possibility of having a utility shut off or running out of heating fuel without the available resources to replenish it. Households are ordinarily only eligible to receive one regular and one emergency HEAP benefit each winter. But earlier this year, a second emergency benefit, and then a third were made available to eligible households to meet rising demand.