Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17, 2020

Missouri expands eligibility and extends summer Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program application deadline

JEFFERSON CITY, MO —

Low-income Missourians now have until October 31, 2020 to apply for the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (https://dss.mo.gov/fsd/energy-assistance/)** (LIHEAP) to get assistance with payments for their summer cooling bills if they are in crisis. The Department of Social Services also increased the income level for Missourians to qualify for help with their summer cooling bills. Missourians who earn up to 150 percent of the federal poverty level, for example a maximum monthly income of $2,666 for a 3-person household or $3,219 for a 4-person household, now may qualify for assistance. In June, $15 million was added to LIHEAP to double the maximum benefit from $300 to $600 and to support a likely increase in the number of low-income Missourians eligible for cooling assistance.

"Undoubtedly, low-income households have experienced hardships over the past months and we are concerned eligible Missourians have not applied for the LIHEAP benefit," said **Jennifer Tidball**, **Acting Director, and Department of Social Services.** "Ensuring more low-income Missourians have enough time to apply for the summer cooling program and easier access to the help they need to remain safe in their home aligns with Missouri's 'Show Me Strong Recovery Plan.' It has never been more important to find ways to go the extra mile to connect these benefits to low-income households during this difficult and stressful time."

DSS recently added the option to apply online for the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (https://dss.mo.gov/fsd/energy-assistance/)** (LIHEAP) to assist the process to get help with energy bill payments. Previously, applicants could only mail, fax, or drop off their paper LIHEAP application form. To be eligible for the summer cooling program, in addition to meeting the income criteria, low-income Missourians must:

- Be responsible for paying home cooling costs,
- Have $3,000 or less in bank accounts, retirement accounts, or investments, and
- Be a U.S. citizen or legally admitted for permanent residence.

As of August 31, 2020, Missouri has provided $8.5 million in summer cooling assistance to over 34,000 households.

An easy way to apply for LIHEAP is for the household to complete and submit one **application form (https://dssmanuals.mo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/EA-1-Application-for-the-Low-Income-Home-Energy-Assistance-Program.pdf)** online. Applicants can also mail or fax the completed

paper application form to the office serving their community listed on last page of the application.

Missourians in need of information on LIHEAP, Food Stamp, Medicaid, Child Care Subsidy, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefit programs can visit **dss.mo.gov (https://dss.mo.gov/)**. Missourians can also apply for those services 24/7 online by visiting **MyDSS.mo.gov (https://mydss.mo.gov/)**, or sending completed applications and verification documents by email to **FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov (mailto:FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov)**, or by fax to 573-526-9400. The **Missouri Services Navigator (https://mo.servicesnavigator.org/s4s/WhereILive/Council?pageId=1&lockla=true)** also has information on over 2,800 programs and services available in the state.

Missourians who have questions can use the **DSS Virtual Assistant (https://info.mo.gov/dss/chatbot/)** to get immediate answers to basic questions that are not specific to an individual's case 24 hours a day or can call 855-FSD-INFO or 855-373-4636 Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The Department of Social Services is committed to the "**Show Me Strong" Recovery Plan (https://showmestrong.mo.gov/)** and serving the needs of Missouri citizens during COVID-19 pandemic. Information regarding the department's response to the pandemic is available online **https://dss.mo.gov/covid-19 (https://dss.mo.gov/covid-19)**.

The mission of the Department of Social Services is to empower Missourians to live safe, healthy, and productive lives. Visit **dss.mo.gov (https://dss.mo.gov/)** to learn more about the Department of Social Services and follow us on **Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/MOSocialServices/)** and **Twitter (https://twitter.com/DSS_Missouri)**.

###

Media Contact

Rebecca Woelfel

Rebecca.Woelfel@dss.mo.gov (mailto:rebecca.woelfel@dss.mo.gov)