

PRESS RELEASE

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Home Heating Assistance Available for Those in Need

Macomb, Illinois, October 26, 2009 –Low income households in Hancock, Henderson, McDonough, and Warren counties may be eligible for help in paying home heating bills this winter through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The Western Illinois Regional Council-Community Action Agency (WIRC-CAA) in Macomb administers the program in the four-county area.

Beginning November 2, 2009, assistance for the general, income eligible public will be available. Individuals can call 309-837-2997, or come to the office at 223 South Randolph in Macomb to schedule an appointment. Local outreach sites are also available for filing an application.

Emergency assistance may be available to households disconnected from an energy source needed for heating, or if a delivered-fuel supplier has refused to deliver AND the tank contains ten percent or less. For renters, if utilities are included in the rent, then the rent amount must be greater than 30% of the household's gross monthly income to receive assistance. Households that receive emergency funding must meet a "good faith" requirement within the past 90 days of the application date.

A household may qualify to receive energy assistance if the gross income for all household members for 30 days prior to the application date does not exceed the following levels.

\$1,354 for a one-person household
\$1,821 for a two-person household
\$2,289 for a three-person household
\$2,756 for a four-person household
For each additional household member add \$467.

Persons applying for assistance must provide the following information to document eligibility for the program: proof of gross income for all household members for 30 days prior to application; a complete and current copy of the heating and electric bills or a statement from the energy suppliers (if the household is responsible for paying its own bills); and **social security cards for all household members**. If additional information is needed, the household has 15 days to provide the necessary documentation.

The amount of assistance is determined by the income, household size, type of fuel and whether the household pays its own heating bills, or if the heating cost is included in rent payments. Funding is distributed on a first-come, first-served basis until each county's allocation is depleted.

Assistance payments are made to the energy supplier, or to the household according to the program guidelines. Funding may be applied toward current bills, past-due bills, late charges, and reconnect fees.

A household that resides in public subsidized housing must have a "subject to surcharge" clause in their lease to be eligible for energy assistance. The applicant, however, must have monthly rent costs greater than 30 percent of the household income.

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