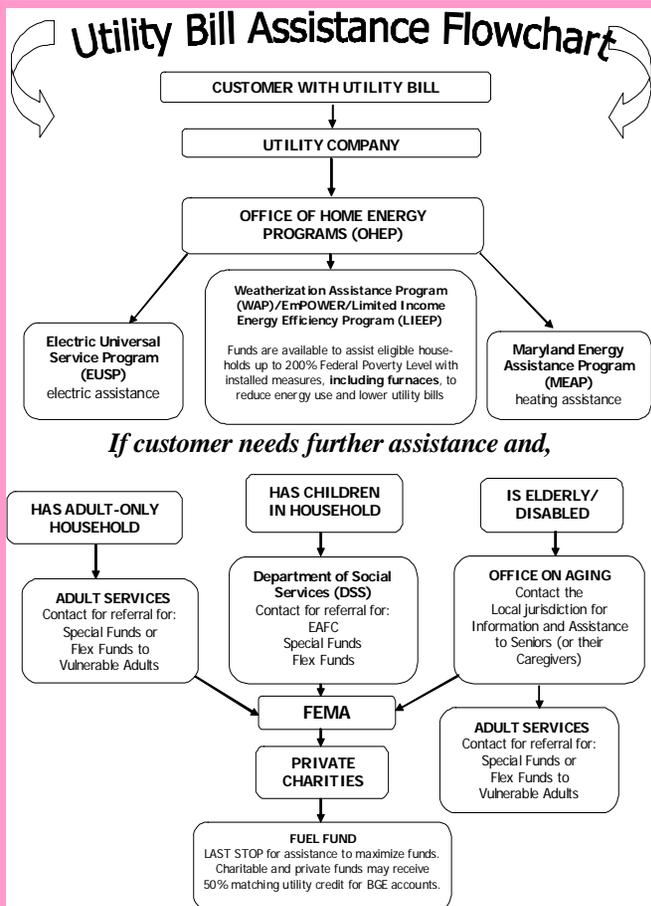


Energy Assistance Program Descriptions



Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) - EUSP is a program that helps low-income electricity customers pay their electricity bills. The program is available to households that meet the OHEP income requirements. The program includes bill payment assistance and arrearage assistance of up to \$2,000 once every seven years when applicable. EUSP bill payment assistance requires customers to enroll in Budget Billing. The annual EUSP bill payment is then applied through the electric company's Budget Billing program.

OHEP will maintain the existing waiver to the Arrearage Program requirement that allows any applicant who received \$300 or less within seven-years to apply for additional arrearage funds.

In addition, OHEP will add an additional waiver for 'vulnerable households' who received \$800 or less within the past 7 years. Vulnerable households will be defined as having a member of the household that is over 65 years of age or under two years of age, and members who are medical fragile. The PSC medical certification form (found in this packet) can be used as proof of medical eligibility.

Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) – MEAP is an energy assistance program that helps low-income households with their heating bills, and at times, with their cooling bills. The program is available to households that meet the OHEP income requirements and heat with electricity, gas, oil, propane, wood, or other sources. Grant amounts vary depending on household size, household income, and heating source.

Utility Service Protection Program (USPP) -The USPP program is designed to protect households from utility service terminations during the winter. The program, established by the Public Service Commission (PSC), is available to MEAP recipients. USPP provides assistance, such as reconnection fee and security deposit waivers, to off-service customers. A customer must enroll in the company's Budget Billing program and apply the MEAP grant to the heating company bill.

Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFC) –EAFC is an emergency grant program that may be accessed once every 24 months. The grant may be used for household emergencies, including utility bills. It is available to families with one or more children under the age of 21, who are related to (and reside with) the applicant. A person does not have to be receiving any state assistance to apply for an emergency grant. However, he or she must document individual circumstances.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds --Each year, FEMA (the Federal agency responsible for providing disaster relief) distributes certain emergency funds to the state. These funds are available in certain local jurisdictions throughout the State of Maryland, and may be used for utility emergencies.

Flex Funds – Flex Funds may be available for households in order to maintain or reunify children with their families. These monies are available for a variety of needs, but the goods and services purchased must be related to the child's or family's needs. These funds may also be available for vulnerable adults in households without children depending on the situation and need.

Fuel Funds - Local Fuel Funds are charities that offer financial assistance to limited-income individuals with a utility bill crisis. This includes individuals that have had their service terminated or have received a turn-off notice. Generally, all Fuel Funds use the MEAP/EUSP income guidelines for eligibility and require applicants to exhaust all other funding sources. Most, if not all, Fuel Funds partner with the local utility companies. The local Fuel Fund will determine the maximum dollar amount they can provide to each applicant. Fuel Fund assistance is only available once in a 12-month period and applicants will need to complete an energy education course to receive assistance the following year. Many local Fuel Funds require monies to be applied to the primary heating source of the applicant (gas, electric, oil, propane, kerosene, wood, etc.). Check with your local Fuel Fund for application and program rules.

Welfare Avoidance Grant (WAG) -A WAG grant provides cash assistance to avoid the need for TCA and/or other benefits. Payment is made on behalf of a family with children for immediate and limited work-related needs. This is not an entitlement program. Funding is limited and can only be used for needs directly related to obtaining or maintaining employment such as vehicle repairs and job-related equipment. Persons who receive a WAG cannot receive TCA benefits for a specified time period

Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Renter's and Homeowner's Tax Credit (EITC, CTC, RTC, or HTC) – The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a special federal tax credit for limited income workers. If qualified for the federal EITC, you may be entitled to a Maryland EITC on your state return equal to 50 percent of the federal EITC, as well as a local earned income tax credit. A person may be eligible for a tax credit even if he or she does not owe any taxes. However, a tax return must be filed. The Child Tax Credit is a federal special tax credit for limited income families. A person may be eligible for this tax credit of at least \$600 per child even if he or she does not owe any taxes. However, a tax return must be filed. The Renter's Tax Credit (RTC) is a Maryland tax credit offered to limited income renters. Renters who are 60 or over, or 100% disabled, may qualify if their rent amount exceeds the amount set based on their income. Renters under 60 may qualify if they meet the household size income limits as well as other program criteria. For more information about the program and qualification criteria visit <http://www.dat.state.md.us/sdatweb/rtc.html>. This tax credit is available to Maryland homeowners whose property taxes exceed a fixed percentage of their incomes. The program is available to qualified homeowners regardless of age. Visit <http://www.dat.state.md.us/sdatweb/htc.html> for more information about the program.