

## Frequently Asked Questions About SELF's HEAP Program

### **Q: What is the Winter Crisis Program?**

A: The Home Energy Assistance Program is a federally funded program, controlled by the State of Ohio. The Winter Crisis Program is the largest part of HEAP and operates annually, typically from Nov. 1 to March 31. The Summer Crisis Program is for senior citizens and those for whom air conditioning is a medical necessity. It typically operates in July and August if funds are available.

### **Q: Who qualifies for Winter Crisis help through SELF?**

A: Residents of Butler County who have a total household income that is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line can seek assistance through SELF. HEAP is available in all of Ohio's 88 counties and administered by other Community Action Agencies in other counties.

### **Q: What do you mean by "household income"?**

A: People qualify for HEAP on the basis of their household. They must share information, including income, on everyone who lives in their house. When all the income is added up, qualifications are determined.

### **Q: What does Winter Crisis HEAP pay for?**

A: The program pays for 30 days of the utility service needed in the household (gas and/or electric). Amounts are different for regulated and non-regulated utilities and for different fuel types.

### **Q: What is the difference between a regulated and a non-regulated utility?**

A: Regulated utilities are for-profit companies subject to the rules of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). In Butler County, the regulated utility companies are Duke Energy, Dayton Power & Light and Glenwood Energy. Non-regulated utilities are NOT subject to the rules of the PUCO. Non-regulated utilities typically are not-for-profit entities. Examples in Butler County include the City of Hamilton, Butler Rural and bulk fuel providers.

### **Q: How much does Winter Crisis HEAP pay to regulated utilities?**

A: For the 2011-2012 season, the program pays \$175 for regulated utilities. This amount is set by the State of Ohio and providers like SELF cannot change it.

### **Q: How much does Winter Crisis HEAP pay to non-regulated utilities?**

A: For the 2011-2012 season, the program pays \$450 for non-regulated utilities. This amount is set by the State of Ohio and providers like SELF cannot change it.

### **Q: What is bulk fuel and how much does Winter Crisis HEAP pay for it?**

A: Bulk fuel includes propane, heating oil, coal and wood. For propane and heating oil, HEAP pays \$750 during the 2011-2012 season. For coal and wood, HEAP pays \$350 for the 2011-2012 season.

**Q: My client/friend/spouse just got a notice that their heat is going to be turned off soon, what should I tell them to do?**

A: As soon as they receive a disconnect notice, they should call SELF for an appointment. Appointments book up fast and they need to come in as soon as possible to avoid a gap in service.

**Q: Who do I call for an appointment and what do I need to tell them?**

A: Call 1-513-868-9300 or 1-888-432-7022. You will need to provide your name, address, utility company and account number. The receptionist will tell you what to bring to the appointment.

**Q: My friend got an appointment but it's not until after the notice says she will be disconnected. What can she do?**

A: If she has Duke Energy or DP&L AND when she made her appointment, if she provided her account number, the number will be sent to the utility company. Once the utility company knows she has an appointment, they will suspend the disconnect order. If she did not provide the account number, the disconnect will not be stopped.

**Q: My friend called but didn't have her account number. They told her to call back with it. Does she really have to do that?**

A: Yes. It is the only way to suspend the disconnect. We must have the correct account number. This only works for regulated utilities like Duke and DP&L.

**Q: Do I have to make an appointment?**

A: We strongly encourage appointments because we cannot guarantee that walk-ins will be seen. We see walk-in clients if people do not come to their appointments or as time permits. We cannot guarantee that people will be seen without appointments.

**Q: What do I need to bring to my appointment?**

A: Current utility or bulk fuel bill; Disconnect notice; Social Security Cards (or legal documentation) for all household members; Proof of all household income for last 13 weeks; Birth certificate for primary applicant; Picture I.D. for primary applicant; and, if living in the City of Hamilton, an arrangement form and receipt that copayment was made.

**Q: Why do I have to provide social security cards for my whole family?**

A: This assistance is available to US Citizens and documented aliens only.

**Q: My friend has been disconnected and I want to help her. Will it be easier for her to get help from the Winter Crisis Program if I pay off her balance?**

A: No. A zero balance has no effect on your friend's ability to get assistance. Assistance is based on income, not the balance of the bill. If she visits SELF, there are a number of programs she can enroll in to pay down the balance over time.

**Q: I owe Duke Energy \$1,500. They say I have to pay the whole amount to get reconnected. What can I do?**

A: Once per winter, you can invoke the Winter Reconnect Rule which has been established by the PUCO. Customers need to pay \$175 to have their service restored for 30 days. Depending on the utility and time of day there may be reconnect and after hours fees. However, it is not necessary to pay the entire balance. This can only be used once each winter.

**Q. Can I use the Winter Reconnect Order as a City of Hamilton utility customer?**

A: No. The rule is for regulated utilities only.

**Q: I can keep up with my current bill now, but since I was unemployed for a year, I have a high balance. What can I do?**

A: You might be eligible for PIPP Plus or other programs with Duke Energy.

**Q: What is PIPP Plus?**

A: Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus is for customers of regulated utilities only. Customers who qualify and have both gas and electric pay 6% of their income to each utility (for a total of 12%) or \$10 a month, whichever is greater. Customers who qualify who have all electric service pay 10% of their income or \$10 each month, whichever is greater.

**Q: How do I qualify for PIPP Plus?**

A: Customers must have a total household income of no more than 150% of the Federal Poverty Line and be a customer of a regulated utility company such as Duke Energy.

**Q: I still have a high balance. How does PIPP Plus help me?**

A: Customers who stay current on their PIPP Plus payments receive credit toward their arrearages and current charges so the high balance is paid down over time and no new arrearages accumulate.