



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CEDA Tells Seniors Not to Wait for Cold Weather to Arrive Apply Now for Home Energy Utility Bill Payment Assistance

General enrollment for all income-eligible applicants to begin November 1

CHICAGO – (Sept. 22, 2009) – The Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County, Inc. (CEDA) is encouraging seniors and persons living with disabilities to get assistance with their home energy bills before the cold weather arrives. CEDA wants to ensure that homes occupied by the elderly and disabled are safe and warm in time for winter.

“It’s important that we give priority, careful consideration and focus on serving seniors and people with physical disabilities due to the fragility of their situations,” said CEDA President/CEO Robert L. Wharton. “We don’t want anyone, particularly our seniors, experiencing difficulties with home energy bills during the winter months.”

The priority enrollment period for seniors and the disabled to receive help through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) began September 1. This group is given priority enrollment due to a variety of factors that make them more susceptible to weather-related illnesses.

On October 1, the CEDA LIHEAP Emergency Furnace and Reconnection Assistance Programs will also begin accepting enrollment for applicants with disabilities, persons over the age of 60 and households whose utility service has been disconnected. The LIHEAP Emergency Furnace Program performs work on non-operable or unsafe heating systems and the LIHEAP Reconnection Assistance benefit can help disconnected households get their utility service restored.

General enrollment for all income-eligible applicants begins November 1. Eligible applicants may receive a one-time bill payment toward their gas or propane and electric utility bills. Only one grant per household per program year is awarded.

“We need our seniors and the disabled to take advantage of the priority enrollment period,” said Jennifer Smith, Director of CEDA’s Home Energy Assistance Programs. “When general enrollment begins November 1, our intake sites will see an influx of applicants who need assistance. We would like to have as many senior and disabled households serviced before then.”

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Eligibility for LIHEAP is based upon gross income for the 30 days prior to the date of application. The amount of payment is determined by income (150% of the federal poverty level), household size, fuel type and geographic location. In addition, any eligible household that is disconnected from their utility or who is at or below 25 percent on a delivered fuel and cannot get a delivery of their own may qualify for re-connection assistance.

CEDA is the state's largest facilitator of LIHEAP, a federal-and-state-funded program, and regularly works in conjunction with ComEd on other programs to provide energy relief to low-income families.

For more information on LIHEAP eligibility or to find a local intake center contact CEDA at (800) 571-CEDA (2332) or visit www.cedaorg.net.

CEDA is one of the nation's largest non-profit organizations that serves more than 375,000 individuals annually and operates over 40 programs throughout Cook County in the areas of education, housing, economic development, family and children services, health and nutrition, and several others.

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