1303.1 OVERVIEW

The Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) provides assistance to Maryland’s low-income households to make energy costs more affordable and to help with the prevention of loss and the restoration of home energy service. OHEP provides three separate grants.

A. The Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) provides financial assistance with home heating bills. Payments are made to the fuel supplier and utility company on the customer’s behalf.

B. The Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP) provides financial assistance with electric bills. Eligible customers receive help that pays a portion of the current electric bill. Customers who receive EUSP are placed on a budget billing plan with their utility company.

C. Arrearage Retirement Assistance helps customers with large, past due electric bills. If eligible, customers may receive forgiveness of up to $2,000 towards their past-due bill. Customers must have a past due bill of $300 or greater to be considered eligible. Customers may receive an arrearage grant only once every seven years, with certain exceptions.

1303.2 UTILITY SERVICE PROTECTION PROGRAM (USPP)

A. Customers may apply for the Utility Service Protection Program when applying for MEAP.

B. Mandated by the Public Service Commission (PSC), USPP allows low-income households to have continuous utility service during the winter and provides:
   1. Access to budget billing service (even monthly payments)
   2. Access to an arrearage payment plan for arrearages under $400

C. The main features are:
   1. This year-round, voluntary program is available to MEAP customers using Maryland area gas and/or electric utilities, even if their primary heat source is an unregulated fuel, if:
      a. Their unpaid utility bill is less than $400, and
      b. First time participants may use their MEAP grant to reduce the unpaid balance of $400 or less.

Note: BGE and Delmarva customers may apply MEAP benefits toward their arrearages even if they are repeat USPP households.
2. The monthly USPP budget billing payment for the next 12 months, which may vary according to unexpected increases in usage and/or fuel costs, is calculated by the local utility.

3. Participants must continue to pay their designated monthly amount to prevent an electric or gas service shutoff unless their income falls below 50% of federal poverty guidelines.

   • Such extremely low-income persons need only pay at least the equivalent of $40 per month to prevent utility shutoffs during November through March.

1303.3 Application Requirements:

Customers may apply in person, by mail, or by proxy to the local OHEP agency. Applications may also be submitted online through myDHR. The following information is required for a complete application: with:

1. Copy of Applicant’s photo identification
2. Proof of Residency
3. Copies of Social Security cards for the entire household (including children)
4. Proof of the household’s total Gross income for the last 30 day period
5. A copy of the most recent utility bill, or termination notice (if applicable)
6. A copy of the most recent heating fuel bill or receipt (if applicable)

**Note:** All members of a household applying for MEAP or EUSP must provide proof of a Social Security number. All household members 18 and older must provide proof of income for the 30 day period prior to the date of the application. Keep a copy of the proof in ECMS so that it has to be verified only once.

1303.2 REQUIREMENTS

A. Customers are eligible for MEAP if they are:

1. Maryland residents responsible for heating costs, except:

   a. Subsidized housing residents directly responsible for paying their heating costs are eligible only for the minimum benefit for their fuel type.
b. If heat is included in the rent and the landlord signs a “Landlord Agreement” stating the MEAP grant will be used to reduce the rent and the grant is sent directly to the landlord

2. At or below 175% of the federal poverty level

B. Customers are eligible for EUSP if they:

1. Maintain or wish to obtain an electric bill in their name

2. Agree to accept an even monthly payment plan for their electric bill with their electric company, known as budget billing.

1303.4 COORDINATION WITH OHEP

A. If a customer needs assistance with an energy bill or is facing an energy crisis, the case manager:

1. Refers the customer to the local OHEP office or OHEP case manager in local departments that are the OHEP agency, if an application has not been filed;

2. Calls ahead to the OHEP office or case manager so the customer may be seen as soon as possible; and,

3. Provides the customer with proof of the TCA benefit amount.

B. Determine the application status as follows:

1. Contact the local OHEP office or case manager to verify that a MEAP and/or EUSP grant has been processed and approved. Status updates may also be found online at myohepstatus.org or by calling the DHS Call Center at 1-800-332-6347.

2. If the application has been approved but the grant has not been issued, the OHEP office or case manager may be able to expedite issuance.

3. If the approved MEAP/EUSP grant is not sufficient to resolve the energy crisis, encourage the customer with minor children to apply for Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFC).

C. Refer customers to other agencies when the MEAP grant and local EAFC grant are unavailable or insufficient to resolve an energy crisis.

• Contact the local OHEP office or case manager to determine which programs and non-profit agencies, such as local Fuel Funds, may have the necessary resources.
1303.5 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANTS FOR ENERGY

A. Families with children ineligible for MEAP/EUSP or whose MEAP/EUSP grants are insufficient to meet energy bills may apply to the local department for an emergency energy assistance grant under Emergency Assistance for Families with Children (EAFC)

1. Base EAFC eligibility determination on the procedures outlined in the local department’s EAFC plan.

2. The applicant verifies:
   - OHEP application
   - Available MEAP/EUSP grants were insufficient to resolve the energy crisis.