

Rutherford County Department of Social Services/Human Services

ENERGY PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded block grant program that is comprised of three different programs - Crisis Intervention Program (CIP), Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Weatherization. There are also non-Federal Crisis Intervention Programs – Duke Energy Progress Share the Light, Piedmont Natural Gas Share the Warmth, Duke Energy Progress NC Settlement Rate, and Wake Electric Round Up

To maximize the success of this program, outreach to county residents through key community partner stakeholders, each county department of social services is required to develop and implement an Energy Program Outreach Plan (EPOP). This plan is a framework to assure that eligible households are made aware of the assistance available through these programs.

The county director and/or his/her designee is required to develop the EPOP, which addresses outreach and application activities related to the Energy Programs. The Outreach Plan is due to North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) by July 31, 2026.

Each county must form an outreach planning committee that creates the opportunity for county level collaboration to discuss and plan how to effectively reach county residents to inform them of the services provided by the energy programs. The committee should meet at least twice yearly; September for outreach planning related to LIEAP and April to review the outcomes related to LIEAP and to plan for outreach activities for summer weather. Energy Assistance Outreach Plan

Answer all questions below. Address CIP, non-Federal CIP, and LIEAP where appropriate:

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Director of Social Services should engage a number of various community partners such as Vendors, Housing Authority, Public Libraries, Public School System/Local Colleges/Head Start,

Legal Services, Meals on Wheels, Media, Public Health/Health Centers, Churches, Food Banks, Councils on Aging/Senior Centers, Community based Indian organizations, Volunteer Programs, Vocational Rehabilitation Offices, and Transportation, services, etc.

1. Provide a list of committee members and their agencies.

Tonya Garrison – Rutherford Senior Center

Molly Roberson – Rutherford County Schools Carver Center (Head Start/Pre/K)

Kami Hall – Harmony Hills Senior Apartments

Jason Masters – Foothills Health District

Laura Lynch – Area Agency on Aging

Dr. Lon Chenoweth – Sandy Run Baptist Association

Rev. Matthew Moore – Green River Baptist Association

Cherry Smith - Yokefellow Service Center

Cynthia Cooper – Chase Corner Ministries

2. Provide potential meeting dates, times, locations, as well as agenda topics.

A planning meeting is tentatively scheduled for **September 11, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.** via Zoom. Agenda items will include review of Energy Program policies, outreach strategies, application methods, promotional materials, community partner engagement, and opportunities to enhance access to services.

A follow-up meeting is tentatively scheduled for **April 16, 2027, at 10:00 a.m.** via Zoom. The committee will evaluate the effectiveness of outreach efforts during the LIEAP season, identify opportunities for improvement, review summer energy assistance needs, and begin planning for the next outreach cycle.

Define how DSS/DHS will work with the committee as well as any other agencies to collaborate regarding the Energy Program and how outreach will be provided to the citizens in your area.

1. What is the process for referring customers? What marketing tools or items will be used (please provide a copy of your previous marketing materials & how you plan to enhance those in the future)?

Community partner agencies will identify potentially eligible households and provide information regarding Energy Programs using eligibility guidelines supplied by Rutherford County DSS. Partners will distribute application packets when appropriate and refer applicants to DSS through multiple application methods. Outreach materials from the previous year are attached and will continue to be updated as needed to improve visibility, accessibility, and public awareness.

2. What strategy does the county have, to continue collaborative efforts with community partners to complete outreach activities to target potential eligible households including individuals and families?

Rutherford County DSS will maintain regular communication with community partners by providing current program information, application dates, policy updates, and designated DSS contact information. Staff are available to provide technical assistance, onsite visits, and outreach presentations to strengthen partnerships and ensure accurate information is shared throughout the community.

3. What additional activities will be conducted to target households with members with children under 5, age 60 and over and disabled?

Special emphasis will be placed on reaching households with children under age five, older adults aged 60 and above, and individuals with disabilities. Targeted outreach materials and program updates will be distributed through agencies serving these populations. DSS staff will also offer educational presentations and onsite outreach opportunities to organizations serving vulnerable households.

Media involvement is vital to the success to outreach activities. How will you county utilize media such as newspapers, social media, radio and television stations to publicize the Energy Programs?

Rutherford County DSS recognizes that effective media outreach is essential to ensuring eligible households are aware of available Energy Programs. Public Service Announcements, press releases, and social media communications will be utilized throughout the year to promote program availability, application periods, eligibility information, and application methods.

1. Provide a list of media outlets that will be used as well as timeframes in which they will be contacted (provide examples of how the county can enhance these efforts):

Media sites will include DSS Facebook, Rutherford County Government Website, and Rutherford County DSS Website.

Radio Stations: WCAB, WAGY, WNCW

Television Stations: YVE, WLOS, WSPA

Newspaper Outlets: The Daily Courier and Rutherford Weekly

Media releases will be issued prior to each Energy Program season and as additional funding, or program changes occur.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

Counties are required to provide application processes for CIP, non-Federal CIP programs, and/or LIEAP. This information must be reported to the NCDHHS annually.

1. Provide hours of operation, location and whether the programs are in house or contracted out. If your agency contracts out to other agencies attach the contract(s).

Applications for Energy are processed in-house by Rutherford County Department of Social Services. Applications are accepted Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. at: 271-A Callahan Koon Road, Spindale, NC 28160

BEST PRACTICES:

Best practices are a method or technique that has been generally accepted as superior to any alternatives because it produces results. Best practices are essential to the program.

1. If your county has gone above and beyond what is listed on this form, please provide this information below:

Rutherford County DSS promotes Energy Programs throughout the year by ensuring all Economic Services staff are informed of program availability, funding changes, and application periods. Staff routinely educate customers applying for other public assistance programs about available Energy Programs, allowing eligible households to access services they may not have otherwise known were available.

2. Any additional comments or activities for CIP, non-Federal CIP, and/or LIEAP:

Continued enhancements to automated eligibility determination, application processing, and benefit issuance systems would improve customer service, reduce processing times, and increase operational efficiency for both county staff and the residents we serve.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Your contact information is essential to the success of the Energy Programs. Please complete the following information:

Name: Ashleigh Dalton – Economic Services Supervisor

Address: 271-A Callahan Koon Rd, Spindale NC 28160

Telephone: 828-287-6377

Email: Ashleigh.dalton@rutherfordcountync.gov

Please indicate which program:

☒ LIEAP

☒ CIP

This plan must be approved by the local Board of Social Services/Human Services Board or local agency governing body prior to submission. Refer to the latest Dear County Director Letter for instructions on how to submit this document to the North Carolina State office.

Board of Social Services/Human Services or governing body Signature

Date

Director's Signature

Date