

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents -----	1
Section 1: Introductions -----	2
Section 2: Resources Available on CAA Web Portal -----	3
Section 3: Native American Tribal Organizations -----	4
Section 4: Definitions-----	6
Section 5: Overarching Principles -----	7
Section 6: Household Composition -----	8
Section 7: Residency -----	11
Section 8: Citizenship, Identity, and Social Security -----	12
Section 9: Home Energy Obligation -----	17
Section 10: Dwelling Unit -----	18
Section 11: Income Guidelines/Deductions -----	21
Section 12: Application Intake -----	22
Section 13: Conflict of Interest -----	23
Section 14: Application Period -----	24
Section 15: Completing the Application -----	25
Section 16: Income -----	29
Section 17: Exemptions from Income -----	34
Section 18: Certification -----	36
Section 19: Low Income Assistance Plan (LIAP) -----	39
Section 20: Denial Reversals -----	40
Section 21: Payment of Benefits -----	41
Section 22: Examples of Application Update Situations -----	45
Section 23: Informal Review and Fair Hearing -----	46
Section 24: TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits -----	48
Appendix A: Information Protection Guidelines -----	50
Appendix B: HEAP Program Year 2026 Waiver -----	53

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Block Grant is a federally funded block grant offered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The HEAP Block Grant provides funding to individual states to assist low-income families with the high cost of their home energy. The grant is administered by the Maine State Housing Authority (MaineHousing).

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) and other subgrantees are under contract with MaineHousing as the local agencies administering HEAP. MaineHousing has entered into such contracts with these partners. A complete list of local service providers can be found on MaineHousing's website at www.mainehousing.org. Applications are accepted in person, online or through a telephone/mail process. CAAs are responsible for determining Household eligibility and for promptly responding to heating-related crises affecting Eligible Households.

The HEAP Rule – Chapter 24 (the “Rule”), State of Maine HEAP State Plan (“State Plan”), and Subgrantee Agreement define the requirements, which must be met to ensure compliance and funding. This HEAP Guide (Guide) is designed to assist in the procedures for operating the program and is to be used in conjunction with the Rule, State Plan, and Subgrantee Agreement. Documents and forms for administering the program can be found online at www.mainehousing.org.

In the event of a deviation from policy as set forth in the Rule (Chapter 24), a HEAP Waiver request must be submitted for consideration prior to certification of the HEAP Application. MaineHousing will only grant waivers of the Rule and/or Guide in very limited circumstances as outlined in the Rule. In such cases, the CAA must submit the request to liheap@mainehousing.org. MaineHousing will provide technical assistance to CAAs, as needed or requested.

SECTION 2: RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON CAA WEB PORTAL

MaineHousing’s “CAA portal” provides Community Action Agencies with online access to program forms, manuals, and other tools needed to administer Fuel Assistance and ECIP. Visit <http://www.mainehousing.org/partners/partner-type/community-agencies/HEAP> to access the following:

1. CAA HEAP Guide;
2. PDF fillable forms for Application Intake and instructions for completing the forms;
3. “How To” documents for select System of Record processes;
4. HEAP Rule – Chapter 24; and
5. HEAP State Plan.

SECTION 3: NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS

MaineHousing has executed memoranda of understanding with Maine's Native American Tribal Organizations (the "Tribes"). The Tribes receive 3.65% of the total HEAP funds allocated to the State of Maine for the administration of HEAP. Each Tribe submits its own LIHEAP State Plan and receives its HEAP funding directly from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A. Tribal Application Process

1. Tribal members living on a reservation apply for and receive HEAP assistance through their tribal organization.
2. A CAA may not process an Application for a Household living on a tribal reservation. Applications for persons living on a tribal reservation must be taken by the applicable Tribe. In the event an Application is taken by a CAA for a Household residing on a tribal reservation, the CAA shall notify the Applicant of the error and forward the Application and supporting documentation to the applicable Tribe.
3. Tribal members who do not live on a tribal reservation may apply for HEAP through the CAA. However, the CAA must contact the applicable tribal organization prior to certification to prevent duplication of services and duplication of payment
4. Both the Tribe and the CAA shall:
 - a. Prepare and exchange lists, throughout the program year, of tribal members they have provided HEAP services to; and
 - b. Will make every effort to refer Households to the Tribe/CAA as necessary to ensure that all Eligible Households are given the opportunity to participate in the Home Energy Assistance Program.

B. Tribal Contacts

Mi'kmaq Nation

7 Northern Road (207) 764-1972
Presque Isle, Maine 04769

Houlton Band of Maliseets

88 Bell Road (207) 532-4273
Littleton, Maine 04730

Indian Township Tribal Government

Passamaquoddy Tribe (207) 796-2301
P.O. Box 301
9 Keibasis Road
Princeton, Maine 04668

Penobscot Nation

Penobscot Nation Tribal Administration (207) 817-7349
12 Wabanaki Way
Indian Island, Maine 04468

Pleasant Point Reservation Passamaquoddy Tribe

P.O. Box 343 (207) 853-2600
15 Elders Way, Suite 201
Pleasant Point, Maine 04667

SECTION 4: DEFINITIONS

Capitalized terms not otherwise defined in this Guide have the same meaning as set forth in the Rule. As used in this Guide, the following terms have the following meanings:

1. “CAA” means a community action agency or other subgrantee selected by MaineHousing to administer the Programs.
2. “DHHS” means the state of Maine Department of Health and Human Services.
3. “Guide” means the HEAP Guide
4. “Heating System” means a permanently installed system that is used to heat the Dwelling Unit. A portable space heater is not considered to be a Heating System.
5. “Primary Heating System” means the Heating System that provides the majority of heat to the Household’s Dwelling.
6. “Rule” means Chapter 24 of the Rules of the Maine State Housing Authority.
7. “Waiver” means a written request to deviate from the HEAP guidelines, as described in the HEAP Rule. The CAA shall submit the Waiver request and supporting documentation justifying the request to MaineHousing for its consideration.

SECTION 5: OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

Except as may be expressly provided for elsewhere in the Rule, eligibility is based on the Household and Dwelling Unit information that is valid on the Application date.

MaineHousing and CAAs reserves the right to ask for additional or clarifying information from the Applicant, Household Member(s), or third parties to determine eligibility.

Household Members age 18 years or older and emancipated minors are required to sign a Permission to Share Personal Information Form annually. This will permit the CAAs and MaineHousing to provide information to and obtain information from DHHS, the Maine Department of Labor, and the Social Security Administration, or other agencies as needed to determine and confirm eligibility, including the amount of benefits received.

SECTION 6: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

1. “Household” means any individual or group of individuals who are living together as one economic unit for whom residential energy is customarily purchased in common or who make undesignated payments for energy in the form of rent as set forth in [42 U.S.C. §8622\(5\)](#), as same may be amended from time to time.
2. For the purposes of HEAP eligibility, persons sharing a Dwelling Unit are considered one Household, except in the cases of a Roomer.
3. The following guidelines are not an all-inclusive list, but are major factors used to determine the persons counted as part of the Household.
4. A Household may consist of:
 - a. A person who lives alone.
 - b. Persons legally obligated for the support of each other, *for example*: husband and wife, parents of minor children, and custodians per court order.
 - c. Persons who share a Dwelling Unit, even if only one person in the Household pays the Household expenses (not to include a Roomer).
 - d. Persons who share a Dwelling Unit and pool their income to pay Household expenses.
 - e. Persons who share a Dwelling Unit and Household expenses such as persons who pay a percentage of the Household expenses individually.
 - f. Minor children, who are qualified aliens, residing with ineligible non-citizens.
5. A person staying in a drug abuse hospital or center, public or private, may be counted as a part of a Household if they are expected to return home within ninety (90) days.
6. A live-in care attendant will be considered part of the Household if the live-in care attendant does not meet the requirements for a Live-in Care Attendant in Section 3 of the Rule.
7. Qualified aliens will be included/counted as members of the Household if they meet the requirements outlined in the Rule and Guide.
8. A person who is away from the home part of the time will be counted as a Household Member and their income will be included in the Household income unless the Applicant can provide proof that the person’s primary residence is a separate Dwelling Unit.
9. Legal dependents or minor children living with parents/guardians who maintain separate residences are counted as Household Members in only one Household. To determine which Household, CAAs may rely on custodial parent/guardian’s declaration of legal custody/guardianship of minor children unless disputed.

Dispute Resolution: If two different Applicants declare the same minor child, only the Household with the appropriate documentation will be allowed to claim the dependent(s) as a member of their Household. The following requirements pertain to only those cases where another party has disputed the declaration:

- a. In cases where a divorce decree or parental/guardianship rights document dictates shared residency, the minor child(ren) will be included in the Household where they are designated to reside the majority of the time.
- b. In cases where a divorce decree or paternal/guardianship rights document dictates shared residency, the minor child will be included in the Household that has the earliest Application Date.
- c. If there is no divorce decree or parental rights document in place, the Applicant must provide additional documentation to verify the validity of the information being provided. Additional documentation may include, but is not limited to, verification of where the child(ren) are enrolled in school; physician's statement verifying residence on record; day care provider statements, etc. This information should be in writing or specific notes made in the System of Record stating the verification source and information given.
- d. If a Benefit has been paid and the other parent/guardian subsequently challenges the declaration, the CAA will investigate. If the initial declaration was not accurate, the appropriate party will be required to repay funds to MaineHousing.

NOTE: Claiming minor children on a tax return does not constitute primary residency.

10. A full-time college student, up to age 23, or more than 23 years of age if permanently or totally disabled, who is a dependent of the Household may be excluded from the Household if the Applicant chooses as long as the college student is not the Applicant. If excluded from the Household, an excluded college student would not be entered into the system of record and the income would not be counted.

The CAA must enter a case note documenting the Applicant's decision to exclude a college student.

11. No person may be counted as part of a Household if that person:

- a. Is a Roomer.
- b. Has previously served as part of another Household in the current Program Year.
- c. Is an unqualified alien.
- d. Resides in one of the following facilities:
 - i. A state or federally supported institution, *for example*: state psychiatric facility or federal and state prisons.

- ii. A long-term nursing home, boarding home, foster care facility, emergency shelter, or military base housing.
 - iii. A substance abuse hospital or center, public or private, and the person is not expected to return to the Dwelling Unit within ninety (90) days.
 - e. Live-in Care Attendant. A live-in care attendant will not be counted if all the following are true:
 - i. Does not contribute financially to the household
 - ii. Would not be living in the unit except to provide the necessary supportive services; and
 - iii. Provided needed health/supportive services to a member of the Household as documented by a qualified professional.
12. CAAs should not deter or deny eligible Applicants who reside with ineligible individuals from applying for Benefits. An Applicant does not need to be an eligible member of a Household but should be of legal age to apply on behalf of those members of the Household who are eligible. Accordingly, an Applicant can be either an eligible Household Member (able to receive Benefits) or an ineligible Household Member (unable to receive Benefits but applying for the eligible Household Members).
- a. All Household Members must be entered into the System of Record. When entering Household Members that will be uncounted into the Family section, the social security number or alien ID number must be indicated as “No identification number” in the Identification Type field.
 - b. The income of all Household Members, regardless of eligibility, must be documented and entered into the System of Record.

13. Deceased Applicants

- a. If a Household member dies prior to certification, CAA may remove the deceased individual, supporting documents, and any associated income from the Application.
- b. If the Applicant of a single person Household dies prior to certification, the Application must be Certified for Benefit – Denied “Other”.

SECTION 7: RESIDENCY

The intent of HEAP is to assist people who are Maine residents and who reside, intend to reside, or have resided in a Dwelling Unit as their primary residence on a full-time/year-round basis. On the Application Date, all Household Members must be full-time residents of the State and reside in the Dwelling Unit for which they will receive benefits during the Program Year's Heating Season and have a Direct Energy Cost or Indirect Determinable Energy Cost.

Sub-grantees should ask if the Applicant is currently residing in this Dwelling Unit and if they intend to reside in Maine.

NOTE: If the Applicant provides inconsistent information or makes questionable statements, the intake/outreach worker shall ask the Applicant to provide documentation to substantiate residency. Examples of documentation may include, but are not limited to, additional utility bills, and a lease agreement (current/previous).

SECTION 8: CITIZENSHIP, IDENTITY, AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The Applicant and each additional Household Member must be one of the following: (1) a U.S. Citizen; (2) a U.S. Non-Citizen National; or (3) a Qualified Alien. If the Applicant or any Household Member does not meet this requirement they must be excluded from the total number of Household Members when calculating a Benefit. All documentation must be valid. Expired or absent documentation is not acceptable.

U.S. Citizenship or U.S. Non-Citizen National status may be verified using ONE of the following documents:

- a. U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport Card
- b. Real ID issued by any U.S. State
- c. Certificate of Naturalization (N-550/N-570)
- d. Certificate of Citizenship (N-560/N-561)
- e. U.S. Birth Certificate *Please note there is a Waiver for PY 2026 for Certificate of Live Birth in certain instances. This Waiver can be found in Appendix B.
- f. Document from federally recognized Indian Tribe that includes your name and the name of the federally recognized Indian Tribe that issued the document, and shows your membership, enrollment, or affiliation with the tribe. Documents that can be provided:
 - i. A Tribal enrollment card;
 - ii. A Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood;
 - iii. A Tribal census document;
 - iv. Documents on Tribal letterhead signed by a Tribal official

If the documentation listed above is unavailable for an Applicant or any Household Member, then Subgrantee may accept ONE document from each of the two lists (List A & List B) below to show U.S. Citizenship or U.S. Non-Citizen National status.

List A	List B
Social Security Card and Citizenship Attestation Form	Driver's license issued by a U.S. State or Territory
Consular Report of Birth Abroad (DS-1350)	Identification card issued by the Federal, state or local government
Certification of Birth Abroad (FS-545)	School identification card
U.S. Citizen Identification Card (I-197)	U.S. Military card or draft record or Military dependent's identification card
Northern Marianna Card (I-873)	U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner card

Military record showing a U.S. place of birth	Voter Registration Card
U.S. medical record from a clinic, hospital, physician, midwife or institution showing a U.S. place of birth	Two other documents that prove your identity, like employer identification cards, high school or college diploma, marriage certificates, divorce decrees, property deeds or titles
U.S. life, health or other insurance record showing U.S. place of birth	
Religious record showing U.S. place of birth recorded in the U.S.	
School record showing the child's name and U.S. place of birth	
Federal or state census record showing U.S. citizenship or U.S. place of birth	
Final adoption decree or Record of Birth After Adoption showing the person's name and U.S. place of birth	
Certificate or Record of Birth showing the person's name, date of birth, and U.S. place of birth	
Documentation of a foreign-born adopted child who received automatic U.S. Citizenship (IR3 or IH3)	

Qualified Alien status may be verified using ONE of the following documents:	
<i>Alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence:</i>	Permanent Resident Card, "Green Card" (I-551); OR Unexpired Temporary I-551 stamp in foreign passport or on INS Form I-94
<i>Asylee</i>	INS Form I-94 annotated with stamp showing grant of asylum under section 208 of the INA; INS Form I-688B (Employment Authorization Card) annotated "274a.12(a)(5)"; INS Form I-766 (Employment) Authorization Document annotated "A5" Grant letter from the Asylum Office or INS; OR Order of an immigration judge granting asylum
<i>Refugee</i>	INS Form I-94 annotated with stamp showing admission under § 207 of the INA; INS Form I-688B (Employment Authorization Card) annotated "274a.12(a)(3)";

	INS Form I-766 (Employment Authorization Document) annotated “A3”; OR INS Form I-571 (Refugee Travel Document)
<i>Alien Paroled into the U.S. for at least one year</i>	INS Form I-94 with stamp showing admission for at least one year under section 212(d)(5) of the INA. (Cannot aggregate period of admission for less than one year to meet the one-year requirement)
<i>Alien whose deportation or removal was withheld</i>	INS Form I-688B (Employment Authorization Card) annotated “274a.12(a)(10)”; INS Form I-766 (Employment Authorization Document) annotated “A10”; OR Order from an immigration judge showing deportation withheld under § 243(h) of the INA as in effect prior to April 1, 1997, or removal withheld under § 241(b)(3) of the INA
<i>Alien Granted Conditional Entry</i>	INS Form I-94 with stamp showing admission under § 203(a)(7) of the INA; INS Form I-688B (Employment Authorization Card) annotated “274a.12(a)(3)”; INS Form I-766 (Employment Authorization Document) annotated “A3”
<i>Cuban/ Haitian Entrant</i>	INS Form I-551 (Alien Registration Receipt Card, commonly known as a “green card”) with the code CU6, CU7, or CH6; Unexpired temporary I-551 stamp in foreign passport or on *INS Form I-94 with the code CU6 or CU7; OR Ins Form -94 with stamp showing parole as “Cuba/Haitian Entrant” under Section 212(d)(5) of the INA

1. The Applicant must also verify their identity. All documentation must be valid. Expired or absent documentation is not acceptable. If the documentation provided by the Applicant to verify citizenship or legal status bears a photograph of the Applicant, this will be acceptable to verify identity. Otherwise, ONE of the following documents will be acceptable:

Driver’s license	SNAP electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card with photo
State issued ID card	U.S. Military ID
U.S. Passport or U.S. Passport card	

If the documentation listed above is unavailable for the Applicant the Subgrantee may allow the Applicant to verify identity by providing TWO of the following documents:

Adoption Decree	Birth Certificate	Divorce Decree
Employer Identification Card	Foreign School Record that contains a photograph	High School or College Diploma
Marriage Certificate	Notice from a Public Benefits Agency (i.e. Notice of Decision from DHHS, Social Security Benefit Award Letter, MaineCare Award Letter)	Property Deed or Title Document
Social Security Card	Union or Worker's Center Identification Card	Voter Registration Card

If the Applicant cannot verify their identity they are not eligible for a Benefit. If the Applicant is applying on behalf of other eligible Household Members, at least one of the eligible Household Members must provide the required identity documentation.

2. All Household Members two years of age or older must provide proof of their Social Security Number (SSN). One of the following documents is acceptable provided it contains all nine digits of the Applicant's SSN and the Household Member's full name:

Bank tax form	Medicare card with number ending with the suffix "A"
Non SSA-1099 tax form	Social Security Card issued by the Social Security Administration
SSA 1099 tax form	Valid unexpired U.S. Military documents such as DD Form 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty issued by the U.S. Department of Defense
W-2 (wage and tax statement)	

If the documentation listed above is unavailable for any Household Member the Subgrantee may allow the Household Member to provide one of the following documents:

Two recent paystubs (within the last sixty (60) days) showing Household Member's full SSN	Most recent (within the last two years) full Federal Tax Return showing Household member's full SSN and confirmation of filing
A Notice of Decision issued by a Public Benefits Agency that shows the Household Member's full SSN	An Income Withholding Order/Notice for Support showing Household Member's full SSN
A recent (within the last year) Social Security Administration letter or notice showing Household Member's full SSN	

If the Household includes a child under the age of 24 months old who has not received an SSN, the Application is processed. However, the Applicant must provide the child's SSN for subsequent Program Year Applications, after the child reaches the age of 24 months old.

If the Household includes a foster child, an official statement from DHHS confirming the nine-digit social security number of the foster child is acceptable documentation. This can be used in combination with other documentation for citizenship.

SECTION 9: HOME ENERGY OBLIGATION

- A. A Household may be eligible for Benefit if it has a Direct Energy Cost or Indirect Determinable Energy Cost.
 - 1. **Direct Energy Cost** – A household must have an obligation or responsibility to pay its Home Energy bill. Such Obligation is reflected through an active account with a utility or fuel Vendor, a current energy bill, and evidence that a Household Member pays the Vendor directly.
 - 2. **Indirect Energy Cost** – Households whose rent includes heat have an indirect obligation for Home Energy costs.
- B. Households residing in Subsidized Housing with heat included in their rent may be eligible if the Household pays an out-of-pocket expense for a portion of their rent or utility costs. The maximum Benefit for Households residing in Subsidized Housing with heat included is \$21.00 per program year.
 - 1. If the subsidy pays 100% of the rent and utility costs, the Household does not have a Direct or Indirect Determinable Energy Cost; and therefore, would not be HEAP eligible.
 - 2. Applications in which the Applicant indicates that the rent is Subsidized with Heat and Electricity included will be allowed to attest to this by signing the Application if they are unable to provide a lease or current electric bill.

SECTION 10: DWELLING UNIT

“Dwelling Unit” means an occupied residential housing structure with one or more rooms that was originally constructed and designed as a permanent living quarters for one or more persons, when permanently connected to the required utilities (including plumbing, electricity and Heating Systems) and contains bathroom and kitchen facilities specific to that unit. A Dwelling Unit has its own private entrance from the outside or off an enclosed hallway leading from the outside that does not pass through or offer open access to any other unit within the structure. A Dwelling Unit does not include a camper, trailer, semitrailer, truck camper, motor home, boat, railroad car, bus, yurt or other structure designed to provide temporary living quarters.

1. If the Dwelling Unit is not permanently connected to or serviced by the required utilities the CAA must obtain additional documentation to substantiate the Household occupies the Dwelling Unit as its primary residence on a full-time/year-round basis.
2. The Dwelling Unit must have a functioning Heating System. If there is no working Heating System the Household’s Application cannot be certified-eligible for Fuel Assistance, and they are not eligible to receive a Fuel Assistance Benefit. The CAA should explore other program resources to assist the Household.
 - a. If everything else about the Application is complete, all applicable documentation has been provided, and the Household is determined income eligible, the Application can be Certified Eligible – Denied for “CHIP Only”.
 - b. If the lack of a functioning Heating System is due to utility disconnection, the Household is not eligible to receive a Fuel Assistance Benefit. If the CAA determines that the Household meets all other HEAP-eligibility requirements (except for having a working Heating System), the CAA should:
 - i. Explore the use of private funds, if available, to restore utility service or repair/replace Heating System
 - ii. If the Application is taken during ECIP timeframe, CAA may explore using ECIP funds for the utility disconnect.
 - c. If the CAA becomes aware that a fuel tank does not meet code, the CAA should document the situation in the Case Notes section of the System of Record, email liheap@mainehousing.org and inform the CAA’s CHIP Department. CAAs should not process a Benefit Return to request funds be issued to a different Vendor that will deliver to a tank with code issues.

A. Group Homes

Individuals residing in a group home where they have their own room but share a bathroom and/or kitchen facilities may be eligible if they are responsible for Home Energy costs through their rent. Determine if they pay a reduced rent amount due to the receipt of federal or state subsidy.

- a. If the subsidy reduces the rent amount and heat is included, they would be categorized as residing in Subsidized Housing with heat included. Therefore, they may be eligible for a \$21.00 Benefit.
- b. If the federal or state subsidy is exclusively for supportive services, they would be categorized as a Roomer. Therefore, they may be eligible for a regular/full Benefit.
- c. If there is no subsidy, they would be categorized as a Roomer. Therefore, they may be eligible for a regular/full Benefit.

B. Roomers

Roomers are eligible for a Benefit if the Applicant proves that the arrangement giving rise to their Roomer status was in existence for at least sixty (60) days prior. At a minimum, such proof shall include verification that a reasonable market rate rent amount was paid by the Roomer pursuant to the terms and conditions of the rental agreement for the entire sixty (60) day period. Roomer cannot commingle funds or share expenses with lessor's Household. All utilities must be included in the rental agreement.

NOTE: Roomers cannot be related by birth, marriage or adoption to any member of the lessor's Household.

C. Motels/Hotels

Individuals residing in a motel or hotel may be eligible for a Benefit provided it is documented that they live in the motel or hotel; and that the terms and conditions of the contract agreement have been in effect for at least sixty (60) days. Designate the Ownership Type as Roomer in the System of Record.

D. Business Use

An individual who is self-employed and uses part of their Dwelling Unit for business may apply for the program.

E. Household Relocates

If a Household's Application has been certified eligible, but all Household Members move to Subsidized Housing with heat included or a ineligible Dwelling Unit prior to the Benefit being paid, the Household may not be eligible for the entire Benefit depending on the date the Household relocated and Home Energy use during the current Program Year. In such cases, please notify MaineHousing.

F. Housesitting

An individual who is housesitting is not eligible for HEAP. In the event the Applicant is living in a home and can provide documentation that they have a direct energy burden and is occupying the Dwelling during the Heating Season, the Applicant may be eligible with MaineHousing approval.

SECTION 11: INCOME GUIDELIENS/DEDUCTIONS

Income is the cornerstone for HEAP eligibility. Household income must be documented and verified before an Application can be certified eligible. Household income is determined and verified in accordance with the information provided on the Application and/or verified as part of the eligibility determination process.

The income guidelines for Fuel Assistance, the Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP), Energy Self-Sufficiency, Weatherization services and the Central Heating Improvement Program (CHIP) are based on the greater of 150% of the federal poverty Guidelines or 60% of State Median Income.

Medical Deductions

- a. If a Household is ineligible due to being over income, the CAA will deduct eligible medical expenses from the Household's gross income in an amount only enough to make the Household income eligible. A medical expense will be considered eligible if:
 - i. It was not reimbursed by insurance or other organizations;
 - ii. A Household member made the payment within the income verification period; and
 - iii. It is allowable under IRS Publication 502 (ex. Hospital and doctor bills, medical and dental insurance premiums, prescriptions, and the cost of transportation to and from medical appointments). For more information, refer to <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p502.pdf>.
- b. Per IRS Publication 502, medical marijuana cannot be counted as medical deduction:
Controlled Substances – You cannot include in medical expenses amounts you pay for controlled substances (such as marijuana, laetrile, etc.), even if such substances are legalized by state law. Such substances are not legal under federal law and cannot be included in medical expenses.

SECTION 12: APPLICATION INTAKE

1. Applications must be taken by the CAA administering the Programs in the Service Area in which the Household resides. In the event an Application is taken by a CAA for a Household not within their Service Area, the CAA shall notify the Applicant of the error and forward the Application and supporting documentation to the applicable CAA. CAA must notify MaineHousing to determine next steps.
2. The Application must include **legible** copies of all documentation.
3. Online Applications must be printed and uploaded into the Files section of ECOS when the online Application is accepted by the CAA and the Intake worker is assigned. Please refer to the “Online Application How To”.
4. If Intake determines that the address, fuel type or Vendor have changed since the prior year, CAA must process a Change of Address, Change of Product or Benefit Return (Change of Vendor).

A signed Application for the current program year may be used in place of an Application Update Form as both include all details needed to process a Change of Address, Change of Product or Benefit Return (Change of Vendor).

SECTION 13: CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

A. Overview

1. The CAA is expected to be attentive to and disclose potential conflicts of interest when employees, temporary staff, volunteers, contractors, or HEAP Vendors are beneficiaries (or prospective beneficiaries of services or Benefits funded by HEAP). The aforementioned relationships are examples and do not represent an all-inclusive list of situations that could give rise to perceived partiality, an appearance of a conflict of interest, or an actual conflict of interest in connection with program services or Benefits.
2. The Application file must contain Case Notes documenting the names and relationships of the parties involved.

B. Monthly Reporting

1. CAA management must upload a report to MaineHousing's ShareFile Conflict of Interest subfolder, on or no later than the twentieth of each month (or first working day following the twentieth day if the twentieth day falls on a weekend or a holiday).
2. The report shall be cumulative and inclusive of those who received Benefits funded by HEAP during the contract period and will be compared to the Conflict of Interest Forms submitted for review by the sub-grantee. The report shall identify the following:
 - a. Person's name;
 - b. Person's job title or description of their affiliation with the CAA or MaineHousing; and
 - c. Program(s) involved and grant year (*i.e.*, HEAP Application or ECIP request on a previously certified Application).

SECTION 14: APPLICATION PERIOD

1. For the 2025/2026 Program Year, CAAs will begin taking Applications on **August 1, 2025** and will continue taking Applications through the **last working day of May 2026** or until otherwise prescribed by MaineHousing, whichever occurs sooner.
2. An individual may submit a new Application if the Household's Application was denied or withdrawn prior to the issuance of a Benefit. The new Application Date must be on or before **the last working day of May 2026** or the earlier date prescribed by MaineHousing.

SECTION 15: COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

All questions on the Application must be asked, and the responses documented and/or entered into the System of Record. If the Applicant cannot provide the required information, a Reminder Form, which clearly states the documentation needed to determine eligibility, must be given to the Applicant and a copy must be retained in the Application file. The signed Application and required documentation must be received by the CAA within thirty (30) business days from the interview with the Subgrantee.

If the Applicant does not return the signed Application within the prescribed period, the Application will be voided. If the Applicant returns the signed Application after the thirty (30) business days, the Subgrantee may reopen the Application at any time during the current application period. Subgrantee should not provide the Applicant with an additional copy of the Application after the thirty (30) business day period has expired. If the Applicant no longer has a copy of the Application, the Household will need to reapply.

A. Documentation and Information Requirements

The following guidance is not all-inclusive but offers clarification of the major information and documentation required.

1. HEAP Application

The HEAP Application in the System of Record is divided into eleven sections: (1) Summary (2) Application Members (3) Dwelling (4) Heating/Cooling Systems (5) Utility Billing Data (6) Income (7) Eligibility (8) Files (9) Case Notes (10) Benefit History and (11) Application History.

2. Applicant and Family Information

- a. Always enter the **Applicant first** and the other Household Members.
- b. Applicant must be 18 years of age or older or an emancipated minor.

3. POA or Guardian

- a. If a guardian or Power of Attorney Completes the Application, the CAA must obtain a copy of the court ordered guardianship documents or the notarized Power of Attorney documents for the file.
 - i. Durable (Financial) Power of Attorney would be acceptable to complete a HEAP Application.
 - ii. General (Financial) Power of Attorney *may* be acceptable to complete a HEAP Application depending on the language detailed in the document.
 - iii. Medical Power of Attorney documentation cannot be accepted to complete a HEAP Application.

- b. The CAA must ask the guardian or POA to provide a government-issued photo ID to verify their identity. The CAA must verify that the guardianship or POA documentation matches the government ID.
- c. The CAA must obtain a signed Permission to Release Information Form to provide information to any non-Household Member per the request of the Applicant. The POA or Guardian does not automatically have the authority to obtain this information.

B. Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties (LIHTC) and Affordable Housing Units

LIHTC Properties differ from subsidized housing units in that the amount of the tenant's rent is not directly related to their income. While the tenants must meet income guidelines, the amount the tenant pays is fixed, based on a percentage of the Median Area Income.

C. Utility Information

1. Households that are responsible for utilities **must** provide a copy of the most recent utility bill, regardless of whether or not the bill is in the Household Member's name. If the Household is responsible for the utility cost, but the bill is not in the Household Member's name, the CAA must clarify the reason and document in Case Notes.
2. Service address on utility bill should match the service address in the System of Record. If there is any discrepancy, CAA **must** clarify the situation and add a Case Note in the System of Record.

NOTE: If bill is marked as "final bill" additional clarifying questions must be asked.

D. Dwelling Not Permanently Connected to or Serviced by Utility

If the Dwelling Unit is not permanently connected to or serviced by the required utilities (*i.e.*, water and electricity) the CAA must obtain documentation to substantiate the Household occupies the Dwelling Unit as its primary residence on a full-time/year-round basis.

The following guidelines pertain to Dwellings that are not permanently connected to the required utilities, or if the required utilities have been disconnected, or are non-functioning.

1. The CAA needs to understand the Household's housing/Dwelling situation and fully document the Application file and the System of Record accordingly. The System of Record and the Application file must include documentation and Case Notes describing the situation. The following provides guidance on how to validate the legitimacy of the Dwelling Unit and determine eligibility Benefits.
2. The CAA may need to obtain more information depending on the situation or if the

information provided is inconsistent or requires further clarification.

- a. Tax bill and information from the town office, rental agreement, or Landlord Affidavit,
 - i. What is the Dwelling type? Is it a Camper? Is it a seasonal camp?
 - ii. Does the tax bill or rental agreement indicate there is a Dwelling/building on the property?
 - iii. Additional information from the town office about the situation.
- b. How is the Dwelling being heated?
 - i. Home Energy Vendor transaction reports showing Home Energy use/deliveries/purchases for previous twelve (12) months.
 - ii. Does usage seem reasonable and indicate that the Household has used/is using the Dwelling as their primary residence on a full-time/year-round basis?
- c. What if any utilities are in service (*i.e.*, electricity, natural gas, and water/sewer)?
 - i. Copies of utility bills that show usage history for prior and current heating season.
 - ii. Does usage seem reasonable and indicate that the Household has used/is using the Dwelling as their primary residence on a full-time/year-round basis?
- d. Pictures of home, generator, or solar energy sources may be needed only if items 1 and 2 above cannot be obtained or do not fully substantiate the legitimacy of the Dwelling.

NOTE: If there are indications of potential fraud/misrepresentation, the CAA is expected to exercise due diligence to ensure the legitimacy of the Dwelling.

E. Heating Systems

1. If a Household resides in Subsidized Housing, the primary Heating System listed must match the system for which the Household receives the utility allowance.

F. Requested Fuel Type

1. Based on identified working Heating Systems, the Applicant selects fuel type for which they want their benefit to be determined on and benefit issued to. If Household has a kerosene Heating System (outside tank), oil cannot be a requested fuel type.

G. Signatures

1. Before the Applicant signs the Application:

- a. Review the completed Application with the Applicant.
 - b. Make sure they read (or read to them) the entire Application to ensure the information is correct. If sending the Application for signature, the entire Application must be provided to the Applicant.
 - c. If changes are made to any signed documents during the face-to-face Application process, have the Applicant verify the changes(s) and initial/date each change.
2. The outreach or Intake worker must specify the Application Date.

SECTION 16: INCOME

HEAP is an income-based program; therefore, it is important to ensure all sources of income and support have been captured and entered properly in the Application software system. Income figures must match what is shown on related income documentation and cannot be rounded with the exception of adding COLA to benefits paid by the Social Security Administration which will always round down to the nearest dollar

1. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to provide documentation of all Household income.
 - a. If the Applicant is unable to provide adequate proof of income, the CAA will assist the Applicant(s) in understanding the documentation that is required.
 - b. Lack of proof may cause the Application to be denied.

Categorical Eligibility

1. Household Members who are included on a Maine Department of Health and Human Services (“Maine DHHS”) Notice for Decision for TANF or SNAP assistance will be considered Categorically Income Eligible for HEAP, as the Household Members’ incomes have already been vetted. Household Members who are not included on the Notice of Decision must provide income documentation as outlined in the Rule and HEAP Guide.
 - a. Household Members who are considered Categorically Income Eligible must provide income amounts but are not required to provide other income documentation.
 - b. If all members of a Household have Categorical Income Eligibility the Household may have their income determined at a pre-established percentage (0-25% of federal poverty level (FPL) for TANF, and 101-125% of FPL for SNAP) or using actual vetted income if provided by Maine DHHS.
 - c. Household Members who are not included on the Notice of Decision are not considered Categorically Income Eligible and must provide income documentation as outlined in the Rule and HEAP Guide.
 - d. If documentation of receiving TANF or SNAP assistance is not provided by the Applicant, the Applicant must provide documentation as outlined in this section.
 - e. If documentation of receiving TANF or SNAP assistance is not provided by the Applicant and the Application is certified eligible using the Household’s actual vetted income, the Household cannot then submit the missing TANF or SNAP documentation for the Application to be updated in order to receive a higher benefit.
 - f. If Household does not provide proof of TANF or SNAP assistance or income documentation, the Application will be denied, and the Applicant will have 15 business days to submit the missing documentation.

Countable Income

A. Gross Wages, Salaries, Commissions and Bonuses Before any Taxes or Deductions

1. Any income received by an Applicant age 18 years or under who is NOT a full-time high school student, must be counted as part of the total Household income.
2. One of the following must be included in the Application file:
 - a. Copy of the most recent paystubs prior to the Date of Application as follows:
 - i. Monthly: most recent monthly payment statement
 - ii. Bi-Weekly: two most recent paystubs
 - iii. Weekly: four most recent paystubs
 - iv. Daily: 28 days of most recent paystubs
 - b. Copy of first and last paystubs for the income verification period showing YTD amounts; or
 - c. Signed letter from Applicant's employer confirming the gross wages received during the income verification period.

B. Self-Employment Income

1. **Documented by a Federal Tax Return (including rental income):**
 - a. When documented by a federal tax return and the applicable schedules, self-employment income is defined as the total of net income (including net rental income) plus the total net gain from sales of capital goods or equipment.
 - b. Self-employed Applicants must provide a federal tax return (Form 1040) and Schedule 1 for the most recent calendar year. Most recent is defined as a tax return that was filed by April 15 of the current year. When the Application date is between January 1 and April 15, 2026, the 2024 tax return would be acceptable only if the Applicant has not filed their 2025 tax return. The tax return must be signed and have been submitted to the IRS. Electronically filed returns must be accompanied by Form 8879 (IRS e-file Signature Authorization) to demonstrate that the return was submitted to the IRS.
 - c. If the tax form shows a loss (negative amount) zero income will be used. Negative amounts cannot be used to reduce overall Household income.
 - d. If a person has two or more businesses and one business shows a profit and another shows a loss, use the amount of the profit and use zero in place of the loss. The loss cannot be deducted from the overall profit.

Example:	
Business A has a total profit of:	\$32,000
Business B has a loss of:	-\$12,000
Countable income for HEAP:	\$32,000

2. Documented by a Self-Employment Worksheet

- a. If an Applicant has not filed a tax return for the most recent calendar year as identified above, the Applicant must complete a Self-Employment Worksheet **and** provide supporting documentation.

3. Odd Jobs

- a. Income received from doing odd jobs is considered self-employment income. Odd job income may be self-attested on the Application or documented on the Self-Employment Worksheet. Miscellaneous tasks completed by an Applicant such as mowing lawns, raking leaves, babysitting, cleaning, and shoveling snow are considered odd jobs.

C. Contract Income

Copy of the contract to show payment schedule. Income must be entered into the HEAP System of Record to reflect the amount received at the frequency shown on the contract. Contract Income includes teacher contracts.

D. Payment from Mortgage or Sales Contract

Copy of the contract to show payment schedule. Income must be entered into the HEAP System of Record to reflect the amount received at the frequency shown on the contract.

E. Unemployment Insurance and Workers' Compensation Benefits

If an Applicant receives unemployment benefits, the Applicant must provide the CAA with a Department of Labor benefit verification statement. Instructions for Applicants who need to obtain a DOL benefit history/transcript are available at <http://www.maine.gov/reemployme>. Income must be entered into the HEAP System of Record to reflect the amount received at the frequency shown on the benefit verification statement.

F. Strike Pay

Check stubs or statements from the union.

G. Benefits paid by the Social Security Administration: Social Security Retirement (SS), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI)

The CAA must use the most recent award letter from the Social Security Administration.

H. Retirement and Pensions

Use the gross amount shown on the check stub. Not all pensions and retirement checks are gross. Applicant must provide a copy of the check stub or verification of gross income from the provider. A statement from a financial institution showing direct deposit is not adequate documentation. CAA is required to obtain retirement or pension verification, regardless of frequency of receipt. For example, the Applicant has a quarterly disbursement, the income received should be entered, as received, into the System of Record.

I. Cash Gifts

Cash support received by the Household is included as income.

J. Rental Income

Rental income is categorized as self-employment income. Either the Income Tax Form 1040 and Schedule 1, or the Self-Employment Worksheet will be used to document rental income. If the Applicant is using the Self-Employment Worksheet to document rental income, the gross amount of rental income received must be counted, no deductions are allowed.

K. Alimony or Mortgage/Rent Payments (in lieu of or in addition to support payments)

Alimony income is a self-attestation.

L. Child Support or Mortgage/Rent Payments (in lieu of or in addition to support payments)

Calculate the amount received by the Household and determine the frequency of the support. Child support income is a self-attestation.

M. Interest, Dividends, Estates, Trusts and Royalties

1. Interest income generated by savings accounts, CDs, and other investments that pay some form of interest. All interest earned must be counted as income based on the frequency of earnings. Accounts can earn interest annually, quarterly, or monthly.
2. Interest from the direct sale of property pursuant to which the Applicant(s) receives a regular direct payment from the buyer must be counted as income. The Applicant(s) must provide a copy of the agreement/contract.
3. Income from dividends, estates, trusts and royalties.

N. Veterans Administration (VA) Benefits

Benefit payment check stubs or a statement from the Veterans Administration are required.

SECTION 17: EXEMPTIONS FROM HOUSEHOLD INCOME

In determining a Household's eligibility for HEAP, certain types of income are to be excluded. The information below provides a quick review of income exemptions.

NOTE: See Section 3(C) of the Rule for a complete list of income exemptions, including federal payments and benefits excluded by law.

1. Adoption assistance. Financial assistance and medical coverage granted to an adoptive family to offset the short and long-term costs of adopting an eligible child
2. Assets drawn down from financial institutions provided the source of funds is not countable income. If the source of funds is countable income that was received during the income verification period, the amount withdrawn would be included in Household income
3. All income used to fulfill a Social Security Administration Program to Achieve Self-Sufficiency (PASS)
4. Any funds received for education from grants, loans, scholarships, and work study
5. Bank loans, private loans, reverse mortgages, home equity loans
6. Capital gains (except for business purposes)
7. Combat zone pay to the military
8. Credit card loans/advances
9. Federal payments or benefits excluded by law as set forth in Section 3.C.u. of the Rule.
10. Foster Care payments. Types of Foster Care: Family Foster Care, Special Rate Foster Care, Family Shelter Care, Relative Foster Care, and Independent Living Program
11. Income earned by a full-time college student who is not counted as a Household Member.
12. Income earned by an Applicant who is a full-time high school student will be excluded from the Household's income. If an Applicant is an emancipated minor, then that emancipated person is considered an adult, has his/her own household, and income is counted
13. Income from the sale of a primary residence, personal car, or any other personal property
14. In-kind payments. In-kind payments to an Applicant in lieu of payment for work, including the imputed value of rent received in lieu of wages or items received in barter for rent

15. Non-cash income such as General Assistance voucher payments, the bonus value of food and fuel produced and consumed on farms, and the imputed value of rent from owner-occupied farm housing
16. One-time compensation for injury or retroactive compensation for injury
17. One-time insurance payments
18. Reimbursement for expenses incurred in connection with employment
19. Reimbursement for medical expenses
20. Retroactive payments and overpayment adjustments from an entitlement program for a time period outside of the period being considered for HEAP eligibility (*i.e.*, Social Security Benefits, etc.)
21. TANF
22. Tax refunds
23. (Tribal) Eligible Band Member General Welfare Assistance Program funds

SECTION 18: CERTIFICATION

It is the Certifier's responsibility to review and verify the entire Application file and the System of Record (not solely income). It is important to remember that the Certifier is not only certifying the Households eligibility for Fuel Assistance/ECIP benefits, but also income-eligibility for other programs such as the Weatherization Assistance Program, the Central Heating Improvement Program (CHIP), TANF, Supplemental Benefits, Energy Self-Sufficiency, LIAP, and AMP.

1. The Certifier must review all information in the System of Record prior to certifying the Application. "Certifying" an Application on paper is not permitted.
2. Each Application must be certified eligible or denied within thirty (30) business days from Application Date.
3. If an Applicant has signed the Application at Intake, or completed an Online Application, a Reminder Form and all outstanding HEAP forms must be sent within one business day of Intake. The Applicant is given 15 business days to return missing documentation. If an Application is mailed for signature, no additional time is granted for extending certification requirements.
4. Separation of duties is required and provides essential checks and balances to ensure accuracy and compliance. Intake and certification cannot be performed by the same person, except for Subsidized Rent with Heat included (\$21.00 benefit) Applications and Online Applications.
5. In the case of a paper Application, the person who enters/creates the Application in the System of Record cannot certify the Application.
6. Any deviations from the policies/procedures outlined in the Rule, State Plan, or Guide must be approved/denied by MaineHousing prior to certifying the Application. The CAA must complete a HEAP Waiver Request.
7. The Certifier is responsible for:
 - a. Verifying all required documents are received, legible, fully executed, and uploaded into the System of Record.
 - b. Reviewing the entire Application file and the System of Record for accuracy and completeness.
 - c. Assessing the Application file as a whole (Does it make sense? Do the case file notes and documentation tell the entire story?)
 - d. Resolving any inconsistencies or errors.
 - e. Verifying the benefit calculated correctly.

Direct Check

1. The Benefit will be issued as a direct check if:
 - a. Household resides in a Dwelling Unit that shares a tank or meter for Home Energy with another Dwelling Unit.
 - b. Household Members' name is not on the Home Energy account.
 - c. Household heats with wood, wood pellets, corn, coal, or bio-fuels.
 - d. Household is responsible for heat and the landlord requires a specific non-contracted Vendor be used. The Applicant must provide documentation to substantiate the situation, and the CAA must document in Case Notes.

No Working Heating System

1. CHIP Only

If an Application is complete, all applicable documentation has been provided, the Household is determined income eligible, and they do not have any working Heating System(s) the Application must be certified – Denied – “CHIP Only”

No Electrical Service

Household has no electrical service; therefore, does not have a working Heating System:

1. If the lack of a functioning Heating System is due to a lack of electricity, the Household is not eligible to receive a Fuel Assistance Benefit.
2. If the CAA determines the Household meets all other HEAP eligibility requirements (except for not having a working Heating System), the CAA should consider using private funds, if available, to restore electrical services.
3. If Application is taken during ECIP timeframe, CAA may explore using ECIP funds for the utility disconnect. For the Application to be certified eligible and use ECIP funds for a utility disconnect, **CAA must be able to remedy** the disconnect and restore power either by using ECIP funds or a combination of ECIP funds and non-HEAP funds.
4. If utility service is restored within fifteen (15) business days of the denial notification, the CAA will proceed as follows:
 - a. Update Application as needed
 - b. Enter Case Notes in System of Record (ex. Utility service restored; oil furnace is working as of 01/10/2024)

- c. Recertify Application

Household Moves Prior to Certification

1. If all the Applicants **move to Subsidized Housing with Heat included or an ineligible Dwelling Unit** prior to certification, the Household may not be eligible for the entire Benefit.
2. CAA will notify MaineHousing of the date of the move prior to certifying the Application based on the Household's situation on the Application date. MaineHousing will determine what (if any) portion of the benefit the Applicant is entitled to. MaineHousing will prorate the Benefit amount and issue the payment accordingly.
3. If all Applicants **move to an eligible Dwelling Unit** prior to certification.
 - a. CAA will certify based on the information provided on the Application Date.
 - b. The HEAP Application Update must be completed.

Certification and Benefit Notification

An Application must be Certified (*i.e.*, eligible or denied) within thirty (30) business days of Application Date.

Upfront Requests to Vendors (Non-Emergency)

If the CAA is made aware that it is in the Household's best interest to complete an Upfront Delivery Request for a non-emergency situation (e.g., Vendor has limited delivery in service area), and the Application is Certified with Benefit, the CAA may follow the Upfront Process.

Denial Notification

1. Lack of documentation: list all documents needed.
2. Original denial notification must be mailed to the Applicant within three (3) business days of the date of the denial. The denial notification must state all reasons for the denial.
3. A copy must be uploaded to the System of Record

If an Application has been denied, the Applicant has fifteen (15) business days to submit missing documentation, information, or documentation of medical expenses (if over income). If documentation/information is received within the required timeframe, CAAs may complete a Denial Reversal in order to put the Application back into a pending status to make updates/corrections and to recertify the Application.

SECTION 19: LOW INCOME ASSISTANCE PLAN (LIAP)

One of the ways a Household may apply for LIAP is through the HEAP Application. **Certification for HEAP does not mean the Household is eligible to receive a LIAP benefit.** Each utility company has additional criteria the Applicant must meet to receive a LIAP benefit.

MaineHousing sends each electricity Vendor a LIAP report weekly, listing those Households that have been certified eligible.

1. The electricity Vendor will not issue a LIAP benefit to a Household unless the Household is listed on the LIAP report. If the CAA can obtain written confirmation from the utility Vendor that the Applicant is an authorized user on the account, they may request LIAP.
2. CAAs must ensure that the name on the utility bill or authorized user confirmation matches what is entered into the System of Record in the Energy Billing Data section.

NOTE: LIAP is the acronym used to describe the state-wide plan. Except for Central Maine Power, all MaineHousing contracted electricity providers call their low-income assistance program LIAP. Central Maine Power refers to their program as the Electricity Lifeline Program or ELP.

Electric Account not in a Household Member's Name

If the electricity account is subsequently placed in a Household Member's name, the Applicant will inform the CAA of the situation and will provide the CAA with backup documentation. The CAA will follow the Application update process. The succeeding System of Record LIAP enrollment file that is sent to utility providers will reflect the change.

SECTION 20: DENIAL REVERSALS

If an Application has been denied, the Applicant has fifteen (15) business days to submit missing documentation, information, or documentation of medical expenses (if over income). If documentation/information is received within the required timeframe, CAAs may complete a Denial Reversal to put the Application back into a pending status in order to make updates/corrections to and recertify the Application.

A. Common reasons for Denial Reversal

1. Missing documentation was received by the required deadline.
2. The information entered into the System of Record was incorrect.
3. MaineHousing requested corrections.
4. Medical deductions were received by the required deadline.
5. CHIP Only Applications: Heating System was repaired or replaced.

B. Prior to Processing a Denial Reversal:

1. Verify all documentation necessary to recertify or correct the Application has been received and HEAP guidelines have been met.
2. Complete the Denial Reversal process and document in Case Notes.
3. Make any changes to the Application that are necessary.
4. Record the Denial Reversal on the *Denial Reversal Tracking Form*.

NOTE: If missing documentation is received after the fifteen (15) business day period but is postmarked within the fifteen (15) business day timeframe CAAs should accept the documentation. CAAs should scan the envelope (showing the postmark) into the System of Record.

SECTION 21: PAYMENT OF BENEFITS

A. Weekly Payment Process

1.	Tuesday: • MaineHousing begins processing payments in the System of Record.
2.	Wednesday: • MaineHousing prints all checks, Benefit Notification letters, and Vendor Voucher Reports.
3.	Thursday: • Federal Funds are received. • MaineHousing mails Vendor checks, Vendor Voucher Reports, and direct checks with corresponding Benefit Notification to Applicants.
4.	Following Tuesday: • Benefit Notification letters are mailed to Applicants whose Benefit payment was sent to a Vendor.
If there is a holiday week, the payment process may move ahead/back a day depending on when the holiday is observed.	

B. Benefits Issued

1. Vendor (Pre-Delivery)

Benefits are issued to Vendors within ten (10) business days of the certification date, or when HEAP funds are available, whichever is later.

NOTE: Benefits cannot be issued to a Vendor account that is not in a Household Member's name.

2. Direct Check

a. Applicant must receive a direct check if:

- i. There's no Vendor for their designated Fuel Type in their area (CAA will enter Case Notes in the System of Record).
- ii. Household's requested Fuel Type is wood, wood pellets, corn, coal, or bio-fuels.
- iii. Rent with Heat included (Subsidized or Non-Subsidized).

- iv. The Household is responsible for paying for the heat; however, the fuel account is not in a Household Member's name. CAA must obtain documentation that the Applicant is responsible for paying the heating cost.
- v. The Household uses a propane Vendor that is not a HEAP participating Vendor and does not own their own propane tank.
- vi. The Household's Dwelling has a shared Heating System and/or fuel tank.
- vii. Household is responsible for heat and the landlord requires a specific non-contracted Vendor be used. The Applicant must provide documentation to substantiate the situation, and the CAA must document in Case Notes.

Application Error

If the Benefit amount increases, an additional balance will populate on the Benefit History. Ensure the correct Vendor is listed on the Recipient line.

If the Benefit amount decreased resulting in an overpayment, **CAA must complete a Benefit Return Form** and e-mail liheap@mainehousing.org. The Subject Line must state: Application ID- Overpayment, to request guidance on how to proceed.

Application Update and Corrections

Application corrections may be necessary for a variety of reasons. The updates required will depend on the current status of the Application and the reason updates are needed.

If there are changes for a Household after the Application Date, the Benefit calculation must still be based off the Household's situation as of the Application Date.

The only time information used in the Benefit calculation should be changed/updated is the information was due to an error at Intake or Certification and the Application does not accurately represent the Household on the Application Date.

If the Application changes are due to changes in the Household's situation after the Application Date an Application Update Form must be completed. Changes cannot be made to any field in the System of Record that will affect the Benefit calculation.

Households that move to Subsidized Housing with Heat included or to an ineligible Dwelling Unit may not be eligible for the entire Benefit depending on the date the Household relocated, and the amount of any Home Energy deliveries made during the current Heating Season.

A Change of Address/Change of Product is the change of approved address or fuel type for which a Benefit is eligible for use.

A Benefit Return is the return of funds (to MaineHousing) for all or part of a payment made to the Vendor on behalf of a Household. Benefit Returns can be initiated by MaineHousing, the CAA, or the Vendor.

In processing Application Updates and Corrections, Benefit Returns, MaineHousing will make the final determination as to when changes can and cannot be made or when funds can and cannot be reissued as directed by federal guidelines.

1. Benefits are generally available for use during the Program Year of receipt and up until April 30th of the following Program Year.
 - a. Benefits will only be available for reissue or transfer during the Program Year of Issue up until March 31st of the Program Year immediately following.
 - b. Benefits issued for PY2024 and prior have expired and cannot be reissued to the Household or Vendor.
 - c. PY2025 Benefits may be applied to unpaid eligible deliveries made between October 1, 2024 and April 30, 2026.
 - d. PY2026 Benefits may be applied to unpaid eligible deliveries made between October 1, 2025 and April 30, 2027.
2. A Household may not receive more than one standard HEAP Benefit in a Program Year.
3. If there is a change in Household composition the Benefit will stay with the original Dwelling. If all Household Members move the benefit will follow the Applicant.
4. An Applicant may not be a counted member of a Household on more than one Application a Program Year.
5. Benefits can only be reissued to Households residing in an eligible Dwelling.
6. Benefit Returns require documentation to substantiate the continued eligibility of a Household. If for any reason the required documentation is not provided, it may delay the reissuance and/or result in forfeiture of Benefits.
7. Change of Vendor requests are only allowable if a Household moves and their Vendor does not serve their new area with the applicable fuel type; or if a Vendor refuses to serve a Household. CAAs must inform Applicants of this protocol during the Intake process.
8. A Household is suspected of committing fraud.

CAA Responsibilities

1. CAA must initiate the Application Update Process:

- a. If Household's requested Vendor is different on a new Application compared to the prior year's Application.
- b. If CAA becomes aware that the sole member of an eligible Household is deceased.
- c. Upon written notice from the Applicant that they have moved and will be using a different Vendor.
- d. Upon written notice from the Applicant that they have moved and are no longer eligible to use the Benefit.
- e. If CAA becomes aware of an Overpayment.
- f. If CAA becomes aware that a Benefit was issued to the incorrect Vendor.
- g. If CAA becomes aware that the Benefit was issued for the wrong product or address.

2. CAA must:

- a. Obtain the necessary documentation from the Applicant which includes the Application Update Form, updated Vendor account information, and utility information if required.
- b. Review the HEAP Application Update Form to verify completeness and accuracy.
 - CAA must determine which (if any) Household Members reside at the original address
 - CAA must determine under the new circumstances if the benefit remains eligible for use.
- c. Generate the Benefit Return Form.
- d. Upload the completed forms to the Forms section of the System of Record.
- e. Enter a Case Note detailing the situation.
- f. Email MaineHousing at liheap@mainehousing.org with "Application Update" and the Application ID in the subject line.

SECTION 22: APPLICATION UPDATE SITUATIONS

In any instance where a Household situation changes (e.g. Change of Address/Product/Vendor), the Household must complete the HEAP Application Update Form.

For a change of Vendor or Product, the Applicant must have experienced a change in circumstances that justify the change. Switching Vendors in an effort to save on fuel costs due to Vendor pricing is not adequate justification to make a change. Households may not switch Fuel Types after a Benefit has been issued without ample justification and approval from MaineHousing.

SECTION 23: INFORMAL REVIEW AND FAIR HEARING

1. For any dispute other than a dispute regarding TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits (which are not subject to Informal Review), the Applicant must submit a written request for an Informal Review no later than:
 - a. Thirty (30) calendar days from the postmarked date of the denial notification or the benefit notification;
 - b. Ninety (90) calendar days from the date of the Application, if the Application has not been approved or denied; or
 - c. Ninety (90) calendar days from the postmarked date of the request for refund of an Overpayment.
2. Written request for Informal Review may be mailed to MaineHousing, 26 Edison Drive, Augusta, Maine 04330 or emailed to LIHEAPcompliance@mainehousing.org.
3. The Informal Review will be conducted by a person other than the one who made or approved the decision under review.

MaineHousing will:

- a. Review Applicant's file for errors.
 - b. Conduct necessary research.
 - c. Work with CAA to resolve all errors (if applicable).
 - d. Communicate with the Applicant and give them an opportunity to present written or oral objections.
 - e. Render a decision and communicate the results to the Applicant.
4. If the Applicant does not agree with the results of the Informal Review the Applicant may submit a written request for Fair Hearing, but only if:
 - a. The Applicant's claim for assistance was denied or not acted upon with reasonable promptness;
 - b. The Applicant disputes the criteria used to calculate the amount of their Benefit; or
 - c. The Applicant is required to refund an Overpayment.
5. **MaineHousing will:**
 - a. Schedule a Fair Hearing date and notify the Applicant of their rights if the issue cannot be resolved to the Applicant's satisfaction.

- b. Conduct the scheduled fair hearing with the Applicant, Fair Hearing Officer, and MaineHousing staff.
 - c. Render a final decision after hearing.
- 6. CAA Intake and Certification staff are expected to be familiar with the Informal Review and Fair Hearing process. For more information see Section 13 of the Rule.
- 7. The CAA will:
 - a. Provide the Application file, Case Notes, and required documentation to MaineHousing.
 - b. Work with MaineHousing to correct all errors (if applicable).
 - c. Participate in the Fair Hearing upon MaineHousing's request.

SECTION 24: TANF FUEL SUPPLEMENTAL BENEFITS

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services provides MaineHousing with TANF funding to supplement Fuel Assistance Benefits for HEAP-eligible Households with children.

Except as may be expressly provided for in the HEAP Rule, the use and administration of TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits are subject to the same standards for HEAP Benefits set forth in the HEAP Rule – Chapter 24.

The following provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits. For additional information, please email MaineHousing at liheap@mainehousing.org.

Q1: What is the source of funding and the amount awarded to Maine Housing?

A1: As required by State of Maine legislation, 22 M.R.S. § 3769-E, the Department of Health and Human Services shall provide \$3,000,000 annually in TANF funds to MaineHousing. These funds must be used to provide supplemental fuel assistance to low-income families with children.

Q2: Who is eligible for TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits?

A2: A Household will be eligible to receive a TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit if the:

- a. Household's HEAP Application has been certified-eligible in the current Program Year; and
- b. Household includes at least one member who is under the age of eighteen (18) on the Application Date for HEAP; and
- c. Household has a direct or indirect heating burden (\$21 benefit recipients are not eligible for the TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit).

Q3: What is the Benefit amount per household?

A3: Subject to the availability of funding, the TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit per Eligible Household per Program Year shall be determined each program year by MaineHousing based on projected number of Eligible Households.

Q4: Who is the point of contact for questions about TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits?

A4: Questions about TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits should be directed to MaineHousing. Email liheap@mainehousing.org or call 1-800-452-4668.

Q5: Do HEAP rules and guidelines apply to TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits?

A5: Except as expressly outlined in the Rule, the use and administration of TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits are subject to the same requirements and guidelines as set forth for HEAP Benefits in the HEAP Rule – Chapter 24 and HEAP Vendor Guide.

Q6: When are TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits processed?

A6: TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits will be processed separately from regular HEAP Benefits. TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit payments will be issued following the issuance of the Household's regular HEAP/Fuel Assistance Benefit.

Q7: How are TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits issued/paid?

A7: TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits will be issued in accordance with the information recorded in the System of Record – *i.e.*, designated Vendor or direct check.

Q8: How are clients notified of their eligibility for TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits?

A8: Client Benefit Notification letters will be mailed on the third business day following the date the Vendor Report was mailed to the Vendor.

Q9: How will TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits be documented in the System of Record?

A9: TANF Fuel Supplemental payments will be recorded on the benefits tab in the System of Record as a TANF Allocation.

Q10: What if the account information, physical address, or fuel type listed on the Vendor Voucher Report differs from the Vendor's (account) records?

A10: Vendor must contact MaineHousing immediately by email to liheap@mainehousing.org or calling 1-800-452-4668. Any deviations from the Vendor Voucher Report must be approved in writing by MaineHousing prior to delivery. CAAs are **not** authorized to approve deviations.

Q11: Which funds/benefits must be used first?

A11: A Household's regular HEAP/Fuel Assistance Benefit must be exhausted before using TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits. If the Household receives a PY2026 regular HEAP/Fuel Assistance Benefit and has a remaining credit balance of PY2025 TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits, the Vendor must use the TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits first. Benefits/funds must be used in the following order:

- a. PY2025 HEAP funds
- b. PY2025 TANF Fuel Supplemental funds
- c. PY2026 HEAP funds
- d. PY2026 TANF Fuel Supplemental funds

Q12: Do TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits expire?

A12: Yes. Use dates for TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits follow the same guidelines as standard HEAP Benefits.

Program Year	Delivery must Occur between:	Benefit cannot be used on or after:
2024	Oct. 1, 2023 and April 30, 2025	May 1, 2025
2025	Oct. 1, 2024 and April 30, 2026	May 1, 2026
2026	Oct. 1, 2025 and April 30, 2027	May 1, 2027

Q13: How are partial deliveries handled (*i.e.*, the amount delivered is less than Household's remaining TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit)?

A13: Non-utility Vendors may make multiple deliveries against the Household's TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit. MaineHousing will pay the Vendor for each (partial) delivery within ten (10) business days of its receipt and approval of the Vendor's delivery ticket/invoice and transaction history report.

Q14: How do TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefits impact a Household's eligibility for Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) services?

A14: Any remaining TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit funds must be used in conjunction with or in lieu of ECIP funds. The CAA will need to contact the Vendor to confirm the amount of remaining TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit funds. ECIP amount will be equal to the fuel cost, plus delivery fee, minus remaining HEAP funds, minus remaining TANF Fuel Supplemental funds. In the case of electricity, any remaining Low Income Assistance Program (LIAP/ELP) benefits must also be used in conjunction with or in lieu of ECIP funds.

Q15: What if the Household moves and/or requires a Fuel Type or Vendor change?

A15: The TANF Fuel Supplemental Benefit Notification letter instructs the Applicant to notify CAA, in writing, if they move and/or need to change Vendors or fuel types. CAA will follow the same process as a HEAP Application Update.

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION PROTECTION GUIDELINES

INFORMATION PROTECTION GUIDELINES

MaineHousing and its business partners rely on computer technology that is powerful and far-reaching to facilitate our ability to serve clients throughout the state of Maine. Every day, information systems process, store, and transmit confidential client information and sensitive data. Keeping protected information secure is an obligation mandated by state and federal laws, along with contractual agreements between MaineHousing and its partners – and it's the right thing to do.

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is any information about an individual that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. PII is also any other information that is linked (or linkable) to an individual, such as medical or financial information.

Examples of PII include, but are not limited to:

- **any** information provided by applicants or participants in MaineHousing programs (includes information provided by third parties working on behalf of an applicant/participant).
- personal identification numbers, such as social security number (SSN), passport number, driver's license number.
- financial account or credit card information, including account numbers, card numbers, expiration dates, cardholder name, or service codes.
- healthcare/medical information disclosed to MaineHousing.
- names and addresses of clients participating in MaineHousing programs or on waiting lists.
- the address of a shelter or other living accommodations for victims of domestic violence.

The format that the information is in **does not** matter. Paper records, electronic files, and email can all contain protected information.

INFORMATION PROTECTION MEASURES

- Encrypt all Personally Identifiable Information contained on computers, laptops, and portable electronic devices, such as CD's and USB drives.
- Encryption converts the contents of a file to make them unreadable to others, unless they have the correct password. There are many file and disk encryption options available, such as BitLocker for Windows, or several free/open-source options that are easy to use.

- Send e-mails or e-mail attachments with Personally Identifiable Information through an email encryption server or application.
- If you don't have access to an application that encrypts e-mail, request that your MaineHousing contact send you a secure e-mail. You will receive an encrypted e-mail notification that will allow you to access MaineHousing's email encryption service. You can securely reply to the encrypted message by using the reply function through the secure email portal. Alternatively, MaineHousing can provide access to ShareFile for securely sending documents back and forth to MaineHousing.
- Put measures in place to prevent loss, theft, misappropriation or inadvertent disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information. These could include data loss prevention (DLP), data access governance, secure file transfers, or audit logging applications/services.
- Remove documents that contain PII from printers or fax machines, do not leave paperwork containing PII on desks or other work areas unattended, place paperwork containing PII in a locked file at the end of the business day, and shred documents containing PII that are no longer needed.
- Securely dispose of any computer equipment or storage media containing PII. Destroy or securely erase hard drives.

If you suspect or become aware of a failure to protect Personally Identifiable Information, notify your contact at MaineHousing *immediately*.

APPENDIX B: HEAP PROGRAM YEAR 2026 WAIVER



July 23, 2025

VIA Email

2026 LIHEAP Subgrantees

RE: Waiver for Certificates or Records of Birth

Maine State Housing Authority ("MaineHousing") made the decision to include certificates or records of birth showing the person's name, date of birth and U.S. place of birth under List A in the Household Eligibility section of the Program Year 2026 Home Energy Assistance Rule that became effective July 1, 2025. This decision was made based on a review of what other federal and state agencies accepted as proof of citizenship and the distinction between an official U.S. Birth Certificate and Certificates or Records of Birth. MaineHousing also based this decision on the fact that these certificates and records can vary significantly from State to State, with some containing more information than others.

On September 25, 2024, MaineHousing issued a 2025 Program Year waiver allowing Certificates of Live Birth as long as all of the appropriate information was contained within the certificate but stated it would be further vetting whether or not this was an acceptable way to verify citizenship. Several Subgrantees have requested that MaineHousing allow certificates and records of birth as standalone documents to verify citizenship. Upon further review, MaineHousing will grant a waiver as follows:

- 1) Certificates or Records of Birth issued by the State of Maine that include the person's name, date of birth and U.S. place of birth, including county and city/town, and parent's names, dates of birth and birthplaces* that are certified and contain a seal may act in the place of a U.S. Birth Certificate. If the document does not contain all of these items, it cannot be used as a standalone document to verify citizenship.
- 2) Certificates or Records of Birth issued by any other U.S. State must contain the same information as stated above and must be submitted to MaineHousing for review and approval.
- 3) Certificates or Records of Birth showing the person's name, date of birth and U.S. place of birth that do not fall into #'s 1 or 2 above, may still be used as a List A item and can verify citizenship in conjunction with a List B item.

*The Certificates or Records of Birth may only be used to verify the individual who is the subject of the Certificate or Record of Birth. It may not be used to verify citizenship of a parent listed on the Certificate of Live Birth.

This waiver is only good for Program Year 2026. This waiver will not extend to the following Program Year.

Sincerely,

Daniel Brennan

Director of Maine State Housing Authority

26 Edison Drive | Augusta, Maine 04330-6046 | 207-626-4600 | 800-452-4668 | Maine Relay 711 | Fax 207-626-4678 | mainehousing.org