

Why LIHEAP Matters

The **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** is a **critical, lifesaving program** that targets and serves the most vulnerable—older Americans, individuals with disabilities, and households with young children. Most of these families and individuals survive on less than \$20,000 per year; many are on fixed incomes.



HOW LIHEAP REACHES HOUSEHOLDS

- LIHEAP is a **40+ year-old program** funded annually through the Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations process and continues to receive strong bipartisan support.
- Once funding is enacted, the **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) distributes funds using a statutory formula based on heating and cooling degree days, population, energy burden, and other indicators.**⁵
- Funds are allocated to states, tribes, and territories, which administer the program locally and tailor benefits to meet the specific needs of their communities.⁶
- Unlike entitlement programs like SNAP and TANF, **LIHEAP is not guaranteed**; the number of households served depends on annual funding approved by Congress and state program design, with priority given to vulnerable households and those with high energy burdens.

STRONG SAFEGUARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- While LIHEAP funds are administered by grantees and provide flexibility in designing and operating their programs, **LIHEAP has robust safeguards to ensure funds are used as they are intended; to support families in need.**
- As such, HHS provides oversight by requiring annual state plans, which must be accepted before funding is awarded.⁷
- **Quarterly reporting, implemented during COVID and continued today, gives HHS near real-time insight into spending, performance, and household impact.**⁸
- LIHEAP operates under layered federal and state oversight, including HHS monitoring and grantee-led audits of local agencies to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.⁹

ADDRESSING MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FRAUD

- In 2009, the Government Accountability Office released a report about claims of fraud within the LIHEAP program. Following the report, the **LIHEAP Program Integrity Working Group was formed to implement reforms to establish fraud-prevention systems and LIHEAP is now widely regarded as a well-managed, accountable program.**¹⁰
- As part of these reforms, identity verification requirements were established, including the use of Social Security validation for everyone in the household.¹¹
- HHS also issued guidance encouraging states to exercise due diligence in qualifying LIHEAP applicants, including the use of government systems to verify applicant and household information.¹²

LIHEAP KEEPS FAMILIES SAFE

In FY 2024, the program helped nearly **6 million households** and prevented or restored service disconnections 3.65 million times.¹

The program alone lifted **57,000 children** and **78,000 older adults** out of poverty last year.²

In addition to bill assistance, LIHEAP supported weatherization for over **45,000 homes in 2025** making them safer and more energy efficient and helping to lower future energy bills.³

Despite its impact, LIHEAP currently **reaches only 1 in 6** eligible households, underscoring the need for continued support for the program.⁴

SOURCES

1. <https://liheappm.acf.gov/datawarehouse>
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