



**Analysis and Statement of Principles:
The Low Income Home Energy Assistance
Program in New England**

October 2005

THE
NEW ENGLAND
COUNCIL

October 2005

On behalf of the New England Council, I am pleased to present an updated edition of **“The New England Council’s Analysis and Statement of Principles on the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program in New England.”** I hope that it proves to be a helpful resource to you as you consider the impact of energy assistance funding in the region.

As you know, New England is colder and has more heating degree days than other parts of the country, yet maintains almost no natural energy resources of its own. As a result of limited fuel supplies, the region is subject to significantly higher prices in home heating oil and natural gas.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) plays a critical role in addressing the energy needs of low-income families throughout the United States. Federal LIHEAP funding provides a valuable stopgap for households trying to balance the high costs of heating their homes and providing for their families.

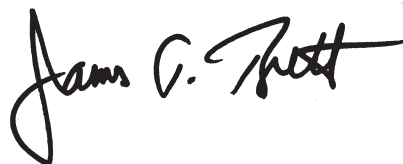
In FY 2005, LIHEAP funding totaled over \$217 million in New England, which includes both formula grants and emergency funding and represents about 10 percent of the total funds distributed by the program. The current total projected funding for New England in FY 2006 is between \$181 million and \$192 million.

The following analysis provides an overview of the importance of LIHEAP to the New England region. The report highlights LIHEAP funding history and the present need for additional funding in the region. It also outlines the Council’s specific policy recommendations, which include a call for \$4 billion in LIHEAP funding for FY 2006 to help offset the rapidly rising costs of home heating.

As Congress enters the final stages of passing the Labor-HHS-Education appropriation bill, this report emphasizes the importance of additional LIHEAP funding for low-income households in the New England region, as well as its impact on the economic well-being of our nation.

As always, we appreciate your support and look forward to working with you to ensure the economic prosperity and well-being of the New England region. If you have any questions or concerns about this or any other issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



James T. Brett
President & CEO

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
LIHEAP Appropriations Funding History.....	5
○ Table 1: FY 1982 - FY 2005 LIHEAP Appropriations Funding History	
FY 2005 New England LIHEAP Funding.....	6
○ Table 2: FY 2005 New England State-by-State Allocations	
○ Graph: State Share of Total New England LIHEAP Funding in FY 2005	
LIHEAP State Allocation Formulas.....	7
○ Table 3: New England LIHEAP State Allotment Ratios from FY 1981 Formula	
FY 2006 LIHEAP Appropriations Funding Status.....	9
○ Table 4: FY 2006 LIHEAP Funding Appropriations Status by State, Preliminary Estimates	
Winter Energy Outlook 2005-2006.....	10
○ Table 5: Residential Heating Energy Prices From 2001 – 2005	
New England Council Statement of Principles for LIHEAP.....	12
FY 2005 New England State Low-Income Energy Profiles.....	14
New England State LIHEAP Coordinators.....	15
Research References.....	16

Executive Summary

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides critical home heating and cooling funds to low-income households throughout the United States. The program is particularly important to New England, which is colder and has more heating degree days than other regions of the country. For New England, LIHEAP funding provides a critical safety net for households trying to balance the high costs of heating their homes and providing for their families.

In response to the 1973 oil embargo by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Federal Government created programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 1974 that provided energy funding assistance for low-income households. In 1981, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) was created under title XXVI of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981, Public Law 97-35. Since then, LIHEAP has provided critical funding to low-income households for home heating and cooling assistance, weatherization repair assistance, and energy crisis emergency funding.¹

In FY 1982, LIHEAP was launched at \$1.875 billion and has since ranged in funding from as high as \$2.18 billion in FY 2005 to as low as \$1.08 billion in FY 1996. Funds are provided through regular state grant funds, which are allocated based on a standard formula, and emergency funds, which can be released upon presidential discretion to address natural disasters, high energy prices and other economic conditions.² Over the past three decades, the program has allocated over \$40 billion in block grants to the states for home energy assistance and emergency funding.³

Home to cold winters, the New England region has benefited significantly from the program, receiving approximately 10 percent of all LIHEAP funding in recent years. In FY 2005, over \$180 million of state block funding and an additional \$37.1 million in emergency funding was allocated to the region. LIHEAP funding is critical to the region, where falling winter temperatures equate to unaffordable heating costs for low-income households, especially in light of limited energy and fuel supplies produced in the region.

In July 2005, LIHEAP was reauthorized for up to \$5.1 billion per year as part of comprehensive energy legislation passed in Congress. Although funding is authorized for \$5.1 billion, it is unlikely that Congress will appropriate that much for the program through the FY 2006 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill.⁴ Currently, House and Senate versions of the bill call for different levels of LIHEAP program funding. The House-passed version includes \$2 billion, while the Senate version set funding at \$2.183 billion, including \$300 million reserved for emergency funding. It is anticipated that the Senate will pass its version of the bill before the end of the year. Following final Senate passage, differences between the two versions will need to be resolved in conference or in an omnibus appropriations package.

¹ LIHEAP Brochure, US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families.
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/liheap/brochure.pdf>

² Rising Energy Prices Chart, National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, April 2005.
http://www.neada.org/LIHEAP_Issue_Brief_02.pdf

³ FY 1982 – FY 2005 LIHEAP Appropriations, Division of Energy Assistance/OCS/ACF, Dept. of Health and Human Services, September 15, 2005. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap/approp.htm>.

⁴ LIHEAP Newswire, Vol. 4, Number 7, July 31, 2005. <http://www.liheap.org/newswire.html>.

This winter, prices for home heating fuels are expected to nearly double and in some cases more than double 2001 prices, due in part to the destruction of U.S. oil refineries by Hurricane Katrina. Overall funding for the LIHEAP program, meanwhile, has remained relatively flat since 2001. The rising cost of energy should signal to lawmakers that additional funding above levels currently appropriated in the Labor-HHS-Education bill is necessary to support low-income home energy assistance.

The New England Council urges Congress to increase LIHEAP funding to **at least \$4 billion** for FY 2006. With the increased cost of home heating and the rising number of eligible households that require assistance, increased LIHEAP funding is essential to provide meaningful assistance to thousands of low-income Americans.

The Council also supports maintaining the LIHEAP funding allocation formula to the states. Altering the LIHEAP formula would disrupt the balance between high-cooling and high-heating regions currently set in place. The solution to aiding other regions of the country, particularly those impacted by the need for energy assistance for cooling days, is to increase overall funding for LIHEAP so that all areas of the country where low-income families are affected by adverse weather conditions receive adequate assistance.

Finally, the Council also calls on Congress to advance LIHEAP funding, enabling states to begin preparations for the winter season in the spring and early summer. With advanced knowledge of funding levels, states may plan more efficiently and economically with the limited federal resources they are given in order to assist low-income Americans on a more timely basis.

LIHEAP Appropriations Funding History

Since its creation in 1982, Congress has appropriated over \$40 billion for the LIHEAP program, which has been funded from as low as \$1.08 billion in FY 1996 to as high as \$2.18 billion in FY 2005.

As the following chart illustrates, LIHEAP funding has increased slightly over the past six years. Since 2001, LIHEAP base funding has increased by about 20 percent. At the same time, however, prices for home heating fuels this winter are expected to nearly double and in some cases more than double 2001 prices.

FY 1982 - FY 2005 LIHEAP Appropriations Funding History⁵ (in Millions)

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Base LIHEAP Funding</u>	<u>Supplemental</u>	<u>Leveraging Incentive/REACH Funds*</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
1982	\$1,752	\$123		\$1,875
1983	\$1,975			\$1,975
1984	\$1,875	\$200		\$2,075
1985	\$2,100			\$2,100
1986	\$2,010			\$2,010
1987	\$1,825			\$1,825
1988	\$1,532			\$1,532
1989	\$1,383			\$1,383
1990	\$1,393	\$50		\$1,443
1991	\$1,415	\$195		\$1,610
1992	\$1,475		\$25	\$1,500
1993	\$1,321		\$24.8	\$1,346
1994	\$1,412	\$300	\$25	\$1,737
1995	\$1,289	\$100	\$30	\$1,419
1996	\$877	\$180	\$22.5	\$1,080
1997	\$975	\$215	\$25	\$1,215
1998	\$975	\$160	\$25	\$1,160
1999	\$1,073	\$175	\$27.5	\$1,275
2000	\$1,073	\$744	\$27.5	\$1,844
2001	\$1,373	\$456	\$27.5	\$1,856
2002	\$1,673	\$100	\$27.5	\$1,800
2003	\$1,761	\$200	\$27.3	\$1,988
2004	\$1,762	\$99	\$27.3	\$1,888
2005	\$1,857	\$298	\$27.3	\$2,182
Total	\$36,157	\$3,595	\$369.2	\$40,118

* REACH = Residential Energy Assistance Challenge funds

⁵ U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, FY 1982- FY 2005 LIHEAP Appropriations, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap/approp.htm>.

FY 2005 New England LIHEAP Funding

In FY 2005, New England received approximately 10 percent of all LIHEAP funding, or over \$180 million of state block funding and an additional \$37.1 million in emergency funding for a total of about \$218 million.

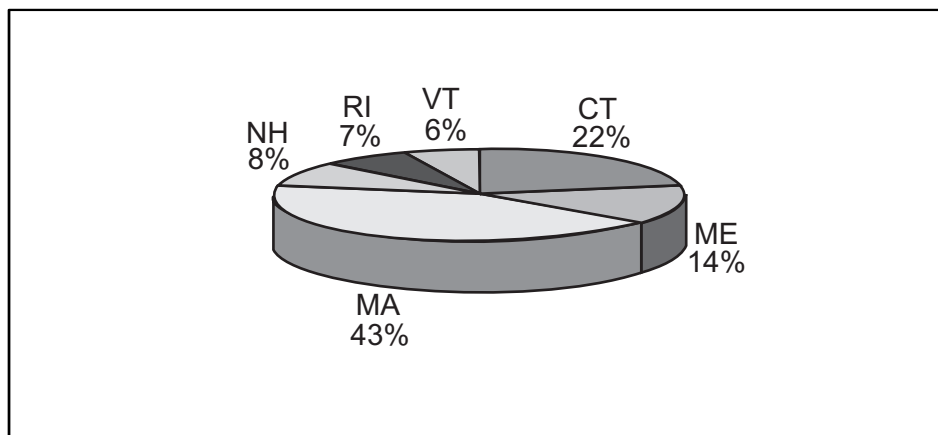
LIHEAP funding is critical for the region where falling winter temperatures equate to unaffordable heating costs for low-income households, especially with limited energy and fuel supplies in the region.

The following table illustrates the total funding New England has received in state block grants and emergency funds through the LIHEAP program in FY 2005. Below is a state-by-state breakdown.

**FY 2005 LIHEAP Funding in New England
State-by-State Allocations⁶**

State	FY 2005	1 st Emergency Grant	2 nd Emergency Grant	3 rd Emergency Grant	Total LIHEAP Funding
Connecticut	\$38,923,479	\$3,164,657	\$3,164,657	\$1,582,328	\$46,835,121
Maine	\$25,216,210	\$2,628,208	\$2,628,208	\$1,314,104	\$31,786,730
Massachusetts	\$77,859,848	\$5,637,425	\$5,637,425	\$2,818,712	\$91,953,410
New Hampshire	\$14,737,281	\$1,410,030	\$1,410,030	\$705,015	\$18,262,356
Rhode Island	\$12,816,175	\$946,648	\$946,648	\$473,324	\$15,182,795
Vermont	\$11,046,117	\$1,081,976	\$1,081,976	\$540,987	\$13,751,056
New England	\$180,599,110	\$14,868,944	\$14,868,944	\$7,434,470	\$217,771,468

State Share of Total New England LIHEAP funding in FY 2005



⁶ National Consumer Law Center Initiatives: Energy and Utility, http://www.nclc.org/initiatives/energy_and_utility/ and National Energy Assistance Directors Association http://www.neada.org/appropriations/2005_0726_table.pdf

LIHEAP State Allocation Formulas

The state block grant funds are allocated using two different formulas depending on the level of funding. When LIHEAP block grant funding is appropriated below \$1.975 billion, the percentages from an allocation formula developed in FY 1981 for the LIHEAP program are applied. The FY 1981 formula was derived from an extremely complex system of factors which looked at heating degree days, home heating expenditures, total residential energy expenditures, number of households with income at or below the Bureau of Labor Statistics' lower-living standard income level, and the population with income equal to or less than 125 percent of the poverty income guidelines.⁷ Accordingly, each state receives the same percentage of available funds each year when LIHEAP block grant funding is below \$1.975 billion.

When LIHEAP block grant funding exceeds \$1.975 billion, LIHEAP funds are distributed according to each state's share of expenditures by low-income households for home energy. Passed in 1984, this "new" formula relies on various data sources to derive an estimated amount of heating and cooling fuel expenditures by low-income households per state. To protect states from any decreases in funding, Congress passed the "hold-harmless provision" which works as a floor to ensure that, under this formula, no state would receive less than it had in FY 1983 when funding levels were at \$1.975 billion.

The "new" formula has only been used twice, in FY 1985 and FY 1986, when block grant funding levels were at \$2.1 billion and \$2.007 billion respectively.⁸ If Congress were to provide additional funding for LIHEAP to exceed \$1.975 billion, the "new" formula would apply and the "hold-harmless" provision would safeguard states from decreases in LIHEAP funding.

New England receives approximately 10 percent of the total LIHEAP block grant appropriations when funding is below \$1.975 billion. The following chart illustrates the allotment ratio accorded to each state in the New England region.

New England LIHEAP State Allotment Ratios from FY 1981 Formula⁹
(Total State Funds Based on a 1.00 Ratio)

State	Allotment Ratio
Connecticut	0.02098632
Maine	0.01359579
Massachusetts	0.04197959
New Hampshire	0.00794588
Rhode Island	0.00691008
Vermont	0.00747576
Total for New England	0.09889342

⁷ LIHEAP Allocation Formula, Division of Energy Assistance, Dept. of Health and Human Services.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap/formula.htm>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Emergency funds are allocated to states by using the following formula. Fifty percent of the funds are based on each state's share of the regular block grant allocation formula. The rest is based on the regular block grant allocation formula weighted by the relative percentage of low income households in each state that use heating oil and propane for heat.

FY 2006 LIHEAP Appropriations Funding Status

Congress appropriates funding for the federal LIHEAP program through the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. Each chamber develops their own version of the bill and then differences are sorted out in conference.

The House-passed version was approved on June 24, 2005, and funds the program at \$2 billion. The Senate version, on the other hand, appropriates \$183 million more, for a total amount of \$2.183 billion, of which \$300 million is allocated for emergency funds. Passed by the Appropriations Committee, it has not yet been considered by the full Senate.

Although the Senate version appropriates more funds than the House version, the emergency funding contained in the Senate version is distributed at the discretion of the President and therefore it is not certain when the New England states would receive these funds. The House version does not provide extra funding for an emergency energy crisis. Pursuant to the House version, New England is projected to receive \$192,052,000, which is \$10,562,000 more than the Senate version. While the Senate version would initially distribute less funding to the states, it would grant more funds if emergency funds are released and distributed. Based on the projected winter energy outlook, the distribution of the emergency funds is very likely.

Below are the House and Senate projected appropriation levels for FY 2006 LIHEAP funding in New England.

FY 2006 LIHEAP Funding Appropriations Status by State Preliminary Estimates¹⁰ (in Thousands)

State	House Passed	Senate Version*
Connecticut	\$41,392	\$38,880
Maine	\$26,815	\$25,189
Massachusetts	\$82,797	\$77,774
New Hampshire	\$15,672	\$14,772
Rhode Island	\$13,629	\$12,802
Vermont	\$11,747	\$11,033
New England	\$192,052	\$181,400
U.S. Total State Grants	\$2,006,799	\$1,883,000

* Does not include \$300 million in emergency funds

¹⁰ LIHEAP FY06 Appropriations Status, National Energy Assistance Directors Association, July 13, 2005.
http://www.neada.org/LIHEAP_Issue_Brief_02.pdf

Winter Energy Outlook 2005 - 2006

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting this winter will be colder than last year's, which had 3,430 heating degree days compared to a projected 3,768 for this winter.¹¹ A colder winter will force an increase in energy demand, which will place a strain on already limited home heating fuel supplies, and subsequently cause an increase in heating costs.

Indeed, the prices for home heating oil, propane, and gas are projected to reach unprecedented levels this winter. From the winter of 2001-2002 through the winter of 2004-2005, the average price to heat a home for the winter increased 98 percent from \$637 to \$1,261 for heating oil, 58 percent from \$602 to \$954 for natural gas, and 55 percent from \$888 to \$1,377 for propane.¹² The chart below indicates this significant increase in home energy prices since 2001.

Residential Heating Energy Prices From 2001 - 2005¹³

Winter Heating Season	Heating Oil	Natural Gas	Propane
2001-2002	\$637	\$602	\$888
2002-2003	\$995	\$797	\$1,124
2003-2004	\$953	\$870	\$1,147
2004-2005	\$1,262	\$954	\$1,377
Percent Change 2002-2005	98.0%	58.5%	55.1%

Since last winter, home heating costs have increased an additional 32 percent for home heating oil, 20 percent for propane, and 9.7 percent for natural gas. In 2005, energy expenditures in the United States are expected to be approximately 24 percent above the 2004 level.¹⁴ These increases are part of a long-term upward trend in residential energy prices, which experts do not expect will subside in the near future, especially when considering Hurricane Katrina's impact on already high costs.

As home heating becomes less affordable for low-income families, LIHEAP funding levels have remained relatively static. Since 2001, LIHEAP base funding has increased by only 18 percent. Meanwhile, the average LIHEAP recipient in 2005 receives only \$318 in assistance, and only 15 percent of the 32 million Americans eligible to receive LIHEAP funding actually receive the federal assistance. The average federal LIHEAP grant has increased by 1.1 percent between 2002 and 2005.

¹¹ National Gas Supply Association's Winter Outlook, http://www.ngsa.org/facts_studies/winter_outlook_2005.asp.

¹² Short Term Energy Outlook Report, Energy Information Agency, DOE, September 7, 2005. www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/steo/pub/contents.html

¹³ Rising Energy Prices Chart, National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, April 2005. http://www.neada.org/LIHEAP_Issue_Brief_02.pdf

¹⁴ Short Term Energy Outlook, Energy Information Agency, DOE, September 7, 2005.

The number of eligible households continues to grow, reflecting the impact of high energy costs on American families. Since 2002 the number of households benefiting from LIHEAP has increased by 20.1 percent, from 4.2 million to an estimated 5.1 million in FY 2005, the highest level on record.¹⁵

Home heating oil and natural gas are the main heating fuels in the Northeast. The region is colder than other parts of the country and has almost no natural energy supplies of its own. The Northeast is especially dependent on home heating oil, consuming more than 75 percent of the nation's home heating oil supply. This winter, home heating oil prices are expected to increase significantly in the Northeast.

For example, according to the Energy Information Administration, home heating oil prices this winter will be \$2.69 a gallon or \$1,866 per household for the winter, which is over a 50 percent increase from last year's costs when home heating oil prices were \$1.82 a gallon or \$1,262 per household for the winter.¹⁶ Home heating expenditures in the Northeast last winter were 83 percent higher than the average heating oil expenditures for the region in 1997 to 1999. As prices continue to escalate, New Englanders will be facing energy burdens of nearly 22 percent of their annual income and record high bills in this upcoming winter season.¹⁷

With limited budgets, low-income households face tough choices as they struggle to balance home heating needs with other vital services and basic necessities, such as water, sewage, housing, and food. The combination of rising home energy costs, harsh winter weather forecasts, and limited energy supplies makes LIHEAP a critical component to helping low-income households cope with their burdens and bills. As we enter the winter season, Congress should reassess the current funding levels for LIHEAP to provide greater assistance to current program participants and reach the thousands of eligible homes that are in need.

¹⁵ Rising Energy Prices Chart, National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, April 2005.

¹⁶ Heating Oil and Propane Update, Energy Information Agency, DOE, October 5, 2005.

<http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/oog/info/hopu/hopu.asp>

¹⁷ Power, Meg. Energy Bills of Low Income Consumers in FY 2005: Economic Opportunity Studies. November 23, 2004.

New England Council Statement of Principles for LIHEAP

1. LIHEAP Funding

Policy Recommendations

The New England Council supports:

- **Increased Funding for LIHEAP**

The New England Council urges Congress to increase LIHEAP funding to **at least \$4 billion** for FY 2006.

The Council supports increased funding for LIHEAP because it is essential to the well being of the neediest New Englanders. With the increase in the price of home heating fuels, it is essential that adequate funding be made available for low-income families to help bridge the gap between balancing family needs against the high costs of home heating.

LIHEAP is currently expected to be funded between \$2 billion and \$2.183 billion in FY 2006. LIHEAP funding levels have changed little since the program's inception 23 years ago despite increased home heating fuel costs and limited supplies.

With the increased cost of heating a home and the number of eligible households that require assistance, increasing LIHEAP funding is essential to provide meaningful assistance to thousands of low-income Americans.

- **Keeping Dollars Current**

As stated, LIHEAP funding has increased very little since 1981. However, the cost of home heating has changed dramatically. As a result, the effectiveness of the benefits received by low-income families through the LIHEAP program has been reduced in recent years as funding levels remain low.

Total LIHEAP funding is currently anticipated to be between \$2 billion and \$2.183 billion for FY 2006, despite U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) projections that prices this winter for home heating fuels are expected to nearly double and in some cases more than double 2001 prices, when LIHEAP was funded at \$1.8 billion.

By keeping LIHEAP funding levels current with inflation, the benefits of the LIHEAP program will do more to help low-income families cover the cost of their energy bills.

2. LIHEAP Allocation Formula

Policy Recommendations

The New England Council supports:

- **Maintaining the LIHEAP Allocation Formula to the States**

Over the past several years there has been much discussion in Congress about potentially altering the LIHEAP allocation formula to the states to include greater emphasis on cooling days. The altering of the LIHEAP formula to accomplish this goal, especially with no increase in funding, only shifts funding away from the colder regions of the country, especially New England, and in the end hurts one region of the country in order to help another.

The solution is not to alter the LIHEAP formula, but to increase overall funding for LIHEAP so that all areas of the country where low-income families are affected by adverse weather conditions are helped.

The New England Council urges Congress to increase the overall funding for LIHEAP to at least \$4 billion. An increase in funding will help to aid areas of the country that have excessive heating and cooling days so that the neediest of citizens can be assisted in balancing high energy costs with the needs of their families.

3. Advance LIHEAP Funding

Policy Recommendations

The New England Council supports:

- **Advance LIHEAP funding**

Under Public Law 97-35, Congress is authorized to appropriate funds one year before the start of a program year in order to allow states to plan the design of their programs. This is especially useful to states when appropriations bills are delayed until up to or after the end of the fiscal year.

Currently, states are often forced to begin planning for LIHEAP programs without a set budget level. This can lead to delay and confusion in delivery of program services as major revisions and modifications take place throughout the course of the year when time and energy should be devoted to serving the neediest of Americans.

Advance LIHEAP funding would enable states to begin preparations for the winter season in the spring and early summer. With advanced knowledge of funding levels, states may plan more efficiently and economically with the limited federal resources they are given and assist low-income Americans on a timelier basis, when it matters most — during the cold winter season.

FY 2005 New England State Low-Income Energy Profiles¹⁸

- **Connecticut**

LIHEAP FY 2005 Funding

\$38,923,479

Income Eligibility Level

[150% Federal Poverty Level](#) (200% if senior or disabled)

FY 2004 Benefit

Heating: \$200 min, \$535 max

Households Served (Estimate for FY 2004 Heating)

79,496

Program Dates: November 1 – March 15

- **Maine**

LIHEAP FY 2005 Funding

\$25,216,210

Income Eligibility Level

[150% Federal Poverty Level](#)
[55% State Median Income](#) (elderly over 60, children under 2, or persons susceptible to hypothermia with medical documentation)

FY 2004 Benefit

Heating: \$1 min, \$440 average, \$575 max

Households Served (Estimate for FY 2004 Heating)

47,553

Program Dates: October 1 - April 30

- **Massachusetts**

LIHEAP FY 2005 Funding

\$77,859,848

Income Eligibility Level

[200% Federal Poverty Level](#)

FY 2004 Benefit

Heating: \$400 min, \$464 average, \$590 max

Households Served (Estimate for FY 2004 Heating)

136,656

Program Dates: November 1 - April 30

- **New Hampshire**

LIHEAP FY 2005 Funding

\$14,737,281

Income Eligibility Level

[185% Federal Poverty Level](#)

FY 2004 Benefit

Heating: \$120 min, \$484 average, \$975 max

Households Served (Estimate for FY 2004 Heating)

28,002

Program Dates: October 1 - April 30; July 1 - April 30 for elderly and disabled

- **Rhode Island**

LIHEAP FY 2005 Funding

\$12,816,175

Income Eligibility Level

[60% State Median Income](#)

FY 2004 Benefit

Heating: \$100 min, \$375 average, \$750 max

Households Served (Estimate for FY 2004 Heating)

26,369

Program Dates: October 1 - April 30

- **Vermont**

LIHEAP FY 2005 Funding

\$11,046,117

Income Eligibility Level

[125% Federal Poverty Level](#)

FY 2004 Benefit

Heating: \$5 min, \$663 average

Households Served (Estimate for FY 2004 Heating)

19,887

Program Dates: July 15 – February 28

¹⁸ National Center for Appropriate Technology, LIHEAP Clearinghouse, State Low-Income Energy Profiles, <http://www.ncat.org/liheap/sp.htm>.

New England State LIHEAP Coordinators¹⁹

Connecticut

Ms. Carlene Taylor
Program Supervisor
Energy Services Unit
Dept. of Social Services
25 Sigourney Street, 10th Floor
Hartford, Connecticut 06106
TEL: (860) 424-5889
FAX: (860) 424-4952
E-MAIL: carlene.taylor@po.state.ct.us
WEB SITE:
www.dss.state.ct.us/svcs/energy.htm
PUBLIC INQUIRIES: 1-800-842-1132

Maine

Ms. Jo-Ann Choate
LIHEAP Coordinator
Energy and Housing Services
Maine State Housing Authority
353 Water Street
Augusta, Maine 04330
TEL: (207) 624-5708
FAX: (207) 624-5780
E-MAIL: jchoate@mainehousing.org
WEB SITE: www.bundlemeup.org/grants.htm
PUBLIC INQUIRIES: 1-800-452-4668

Massachusetts

Ms. Theresa Brewer
Director
Bureau of Energy Programs
Community Services Programs
Division of Community Services
Department of Housing and Community
Development
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 300
Boston, Massachusetts 02114-2524
TEL: (617) 573-1438
FAX: (617) 573-1460
E-MAIL: theresa.brewer@ocd.state.ma.us
WEB SITE:
www.mass.gov/dhcd/components/cs/1prgapps/liheap/default.htm
WINTER HEATING HELPLINE WEB SITE:
www.state.ma.us/winterheating/
PUBLIC INQUIRIES: 1-800-632-8175

New Hampshire

Ms. Celeste Lovett
Fuel Assistance Program Manager
Governor's Office of Energy and
Community Services
57 Regional Drive
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-8519
TEL: (603) 271-8317
FAX: (603) 271-2615
E-MAIL: CLOVETT@GOV.State.NH.US
WEB SITE:
www.state.nh.us/governor/energycomm/assist.html

Rhode Island

Mr. Matteo Guglielmetti
Program Manager
Dept. of Administration, Division of
Central Services, State Energy Office
One Capitol Hill
Providence, Rhode Island 02908-5850
TEL: (401) 222-6920 Ext. 112
FAX: (401) 222-1260
E-MAIL: matteog@gw.doa.state.ri.us
PUBLIC INQUIRIES: 1-800-253-4328 or (401)
222-6920

Vermont

Ms. Pam Dalley
Fuel Assistance Program Chief
Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance
Department of Prevention, Assistance,
Transition, and Health Access
103 South Main Street
Waterbury, Vermont 05676
TEL: (802) 241-2994
FAX: (802) 241-4327
E-MAIL: pamd@path.state.vt.us
WEB SITE:
www.dsw.state.vt.us/districts/fuel/index.htm
PUBLIC INQUIRIES: 1-800-479-6151 or 1-802-
241-1165

¹⁹ Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Division of Energy Assistance, Dept. of Health & Human Services.
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/liheap/states.htm>.

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THE
NEW ENGLAND
COUNCIL

98 North Washington Street, Suite 201, Boston, Massachusetts 02114
(617) 723-4009 * Fax (617) 723-3943
email: newenglandcouncil@msn.com