

Low Income Energy Assistance Workgroup Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 7, 2022 · 1:00 – 2:30pm

Google Meet joining info

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/evv-phgr-hoj>

Or dial: (US) +1 475-221-6174 PIN: 558 741 268#

More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/evv-phgr-hoj?pin=9043392849028>

Agenda

- I. Introductions
- II. Approval of the minutes
 - A. Work Group approved minutes from last meeting without edits
- III. OHEP Updates
 - A. Budget billing
 1. Removal of budget billing requirement for EUSP eligibility as ordered by Public Service Commission.
 2. In PSC Order Number 89952 utilities were ordered to coordinate with OHEP to update their systems to support the removal of Budget Billing. As of December 1, 2022, all utility partners have made system changes necessary for the EUSP budget billing requirement.
 3. In coming weeks OHEP will issue policy documents and communications campaign info for the Work Group to review.
 - B. Third party supplier requirements for OHEP recipients
 1. This legislation was passed in 2022 legislative session
 2. A lot of decisions were made in the PSC legislative style hearing and rule making session, but a lot left undecided.
 - a) Major concern leaving PC53: What happens to existing contracts when a customer then becomes an OHEP recipient?
 3. Under the current guidance from the PSC, suppliers will be tasked with dropping existing contracts for energy assistance customers enrolled
 - a) Some work group members indicated having received contracts with 5 year terms (Just Energy) with large cancellation penalties (\$200- \$500) since the hearing. This echoes concerns brought up in the legislative style hearing by community members and advocates.
 4. July 1, 2023 full implementation date for OHEP.
 - a) Electronic copies of the OHEP application have been updated, OHEP intends to pursue an educational campaign at the start of Program Year 2024 to inform customers about new changes to EUSP.
 - b) In Spring there may be an opportunity to leverage existing outreach and customer education in preparation for this date. Education and Outreach would focus on how to leave a supplier with rates above SOS.

IV. Presentation from DHCD on Weatherization

A. OHEP- DHCD referral program

B. 3 methods for a customer to apply:

1. OHEP

- a) Referral is also done if a customer is over income for OHEP programs.
- b) DHCD downloads batches of OHEP applications on a monthly basis.
- c) OHEP referrals account for 94.9% of all DHCD leads.

2. LWA (local weatherization organization)

- a) Typically Community Action Agencies or municipal organizations
- b) Can provide/ unlock additional local grants for customers.
- c) LWA referrals account for 2.6% of all DHCD leads.

3. DHCD Application

- a) Work group members inquired if customers are able to apply for DHCD programs without applying for OHEP first?
- b) Work group members also inquired if customers are able to apply for DHCD by calling into the main DHCD number.
- c) Direct applications to DHCD account for only 2.4% of DHCD leads.

C. Some DHCD programs allow for categorical eligibility from other programs.

D. Initiatives to increase success rates for DHCD customers:

- 1. Online application with status tracking
- 2. Increase communication with customers
- 3. Exploring more areas for Categorical Eligibility

E. Questions from Work Group:

- 1. Highlighting: Whole home efficiency is intended to make the home more efficient, base efficiency is in lieu of whole home efficiency because health and safety repairs exceed project budget.
 - a) DHCD cannot touch the envelope of the home if the customer is not eligible for whole home
- 2. Are there opportunities in the state for funding which may make these types of repairs possible?
 - a) Yes, IRJ and IRA funds, and other DHCD home rehab programs, DHCD is exploring options for how to address these funds.
- 3. Advocates indicate that there are considerable challenges to getting customers through DHCD process.
 - a) Work group member Cited that communication stops when CMNP customers get transferred to DHCD
- 4. Does DHCD break down ineligible data?
 - a) Yes. About 50% of projects get deferred to base efficiency programs once they get to the contractor examining the household.
- 5. How big is the low income EMPOWER team at DHCD?

- a) 8 programs. 28 staff members. Not all full time for every program. Closer to 15 full time employees.
 - (1) DHCD indicates that staffing IS a major concern for them.
 - (a) Use automation and standardized processes to deal with this, no staff available to do additional outreach.
 - 6. DHCD acknowledged Timelines are a challenge. Partially due to the data clean up efforts.
 - a) 2-3 full days to do OHEP data clean up
 - b) Monthly batching also introduces additional delays in processing.
 - c) All assignments in 1st week of month then uploaded to Hancock
 - (1) Contractors have 2 weeks to contact the customer.
 - F. Idea from Work Group: Including a component about housing quality and energy usage as transparency when customers move into a new home?
 - 1. Example: prohibiting rental units from receiving housing vouchers if the score for this type of thing is low.
- V. Does the work group need to edit HB606 to extend this work group?
 - A. Work Group currently ends on 6/30/23 Specifically to allow more time for the group to get into deeper discussions.
- VI. Submission of application recommendations
 - A. Took recommendations from this summer. And drafted a letter to the DHS secretary.
 - 1. Updates on each recommendation included with agenda
 - 2. E-vote to get members to weigh in on content of letter
 - 3. Once everyone votes, will be submitted to the DHS Secretary
- VII. Next meeting:
 - MEA/ OPC for RGGI funding and expectations for the future in the next meeting?
 - Want long term forecast for funding from SEIF (ex: 10 years on)
 - OPC can present on energy burden.
 - Arjun Makijani from IEER may be able to present about affordability- Report out in January, possibly present in February