



**OREGON HOUSING *and*
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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Date: October 1, 2022

To: Agency Directors
Energy Assistance Coordinators
Community Action Partnership of Oregon

From: Tim Zimmer, Assistant Director Energy Services
David Kaufman, Energy Assistance Coordinator
Lisa Goben, Senior Energy Compliance & Policy Officer

Re: Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP)
COVID Energy Assistance Program (COV-OEAP)
Temporary Guidelines for Program Year 2023

In response to concerns related to COVID-19, OHCS is continuing the following temporary policies applicable to the Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) and to the COVID Energy Assistance Program (COV-OEAP).

These temporary policies have been adopted for Program Year 2023, effective October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023.

Application Method

Applications require an applicant signature and date on the current program year disclaimer. In some cases, such as when taking an application by phone, the applicant signature and date cannot be obtained. In these cases, intake staff may read the disclaimer to the applicant. If applicant agrees that the information submitted is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge, and agrees to the language in the disclaimer, intake staff select "*Signature Exception*" in the payment new screen include a note in the payment comment box in OPUS as to why the signature cannot be obtained and write "verbal signature" and the date it was verbally agreed to on the intake report/application (where the client would normally sign and date). The first and last name of intake staff processing the signature exception is to accompany the comment.

For tracking purposes, OPUS will have a report available to easily show all signature exceptions and will allow exceptions to be rectified and removed from the report if signatures are obtained at a later date.

Required Documentation

We recognize that not all applicants have the ability to take photos of documents, scan documents, make copies, text, use e-mail or have access to the internet. If an applicant is unable to provide documentation, intake staff may accept the information verbally, select "*Documentation Exception*" from the income dropdown box, and make a note in the payment comment box in OPUS along with the reason for the hardship.

For tracking purposes, OPUS will have a report available to easily show all documentation exceptions and will allow exceptions to be rectified and removed from the report if documents are obtained at a later date.

Utility Bills

Utility bills are requested of applicants to verify client accounts (Manual requirements regarding utility bill criteria still apply e.g., name on account, residential account etc.). If unable to obtain utility bills from applicants, agencies are to use utility portals, or contact the utility directly to verify information via a Utility Verification Form (UVF) as appropriate (*please note: all requirements outlined in the manual for using a UVF still apply*).

Payment Amounts

Benefit levels for both OEAP and COV-OEAP will have a floor of \$250 and a ceiling of \$2,500. Payments should be based on the need of the individual household and justification for the chosen payment amount must be included in the payment comment section. As always, requests for amounts over \$2,500 can be forwarded to Lisa Goben at lisa.goben@hcs.oregon.gov and/or David Kaufman at david.kaufman@hcs.oregon.gov. Be sure to include a brief description of the reason for the request, the program being used, the amount and the authorization number.

Eligibility

If an applicant household includes one person enrolled in one of the following programs and provides documentation of their current enrollment to said program, the household will be eligible for OEAP and/or COV-OEAP.

Documentation of **current** enrollment in the programs itemized in the table below must be an official document from the program source and may include any of the following: award letter, eligibility approval letter, SNAP screen printout, etc. Please Note: This is not an exhaustive list; we ask that you please talk with OHCS program staff on the use of non-routine documents to show current enrollment in any given program. Please be sure the documentation of enrollment clearly states a current date and the name of the person enrolled.

Express Enrollment Programs:

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)*	Federal Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program (USDOE)*
Women, Infants and Children (WIC)	Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program /SNAP (Food Stamps)	Medicaid/Oregon Health Plan
TANF or Tribal TANF	OEAP/COV-OEAP
*If a household has received LIHEAP, OEAP, COV-OEAP, and/or US DOE weatherization assistance in the current program year or previous one program year, the household will be automatically eligible for express enrollment.	

Additional information specific to COV-OEAP

- The income threshold for COV-OEAP will be 80% of Area Median Income (AMI).
- Eligibility for COV-OEAP requires a “COVID impact”. Examples include loss of employment, reduction or loss of income, or adverse health conditions due to COVID (this is not an exhaustive list). If no COVID-19 related situation exists within a household, these funds should not be utilized. The “COVID-19 impacted” button in the payment screen must be checked and a selection from the “COVID Related Event” drop down should be selected. (Please do not put medical related information in the OPUS system).
- As this program is separate and distinct from other existing programs, a household may receive these funds in addition to any previous funding received this program year.

All other requirements as outlined in the intake operations manual for the current program year still apply; please contact OHCS directly if you have any questions/concerns about the use of these funds.