



Date: October 1, 2023

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

From: David Kaufman, Energy Assistance Coordinator
Lisa Goben, Senior Energy Compliance & Policy Officer

Re: Temporary Guidelines for the
Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) and
COVID Energy Assistance Program (COV-OEAP)

The following temporary policies apply 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 2024, effective October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024.

Application Method

Applications require the applicant signature on the disclaimer. In some cases, such as when taking an application by phone, the applicant's signature cannot be obtained. In these cases, after updating OPUS with all required information, the worker taking the application is to read the disclaimer to the applicant. If the applicant agrees the information submitted is true and accurate to the best of their knowledge, and agrees to the language in the disclaimer, intake worker will select "Signature exception" in the Payment New Screen and a note must be made in the payment comment box in OPUS explaining why the signature cannot be obtained. The workers first, last name and date of when the verbal signature was obtained must accompany the comment.

If a signature exception is granted, OPUS has a report available to show all signature exceptions and will allow exceptions to be rectified and removed from the report if signatures are obtained at a later date.

Income Documentation

Now that the COVID-19 pandemic has officially ended, there are very few situations that would warrant an exception to obtaining income documentation. Should you feel a situation warrants an exception, please reach out to either the OHCS Program Coordinator or Senior Compliance & Policy Officer for approval of any necessary income documentation exceptions.

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 and E-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 where they were not express enrolled, 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 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.