



News Release

Lifeline, Inc.

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Home Energy Assistance Program Summer Crisis Program Available to Lake County Residents July 23, 2020

PAINESVILLE, Ohio— Beginning July 1, the Ohio Development Services Agency and Lifeline, Inc. will help income-eligible Ohioans maintain their utility service through the Home Energy Assistance Summer Crisis Program. The program helps eligible Ohioans pay an electric bill, purchase an air conditioning unit or fan, or pay for central air conditioning repairs. This year, the program will run until September 30, 2020.

“This year, we’ve extended the length of the program and expanded eligibility requirements so we can help more Ohioans during this health crisis,” Lydia Mihalik, director of the Ohio Development Services Agency said. “We’re working with Lifeline every day to help Ohioans in need.”

In 2019 more than 295 families in Lake County were assisted through the Home Energy Assistance Summer Crisis Program. In just the first two weeks of the program, already over 115 families have applied for assistance.

“It’s been a hot summer already, and so many of our residents are still struggling financially as a result of COVID-19 that we’re not surprised that application numbers are up,” said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline. “Our goal with the Summer Crisis Program is always to keep our most vulnerable residents, the elderly and those with health conditions, safe, cool and comfortable in the hot summer months.”

The Summer Crisis Program assists low-income households with an older household member (60 years or older), or households that can provide physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed for a household member’s health. Examples of conditions can include lung disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, asthma, etc. This year, households that were diagnosed with COVID-19 in 2020, have a disconnect notice, have been shut off, or are trying to establish new service on their electric bill are also eligible for assistance.

Eligible households can receive up to \$500 if they are a customer of a regulated utility, or \$800 if they are a customer of unregulated utilities such as electric cooperatives and municipal utilities. The assistance is applied to their utility bill, or to purchase an air conditioning unit or fan, or pay for central air conditioning repairs. Ohioans must have a gross income at or below 175% of the federal poverty guidelines to qualify for assistance. For a family of four the annual income must be at or below \$45,850.00.

Also new this year, Ohioans enrolled in the Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus Program (PIPP) who meet the above criteria may be eligible for assistance towards their default PIPP payment, first PIPP payment, central air conditioning repairs, or may receive an air conditioning unit and/or fan.

Ohioans can visit energyhelp.ohio.gov to start their application prior to their required appointment. This year appointments can be held over the phone or in person at Lifeline. To schedule an appointment call, 1-440-381-8230 or visit <https://app.capappointments.com/> Due to COVID-19 precautions, all application intake will be scheduled by appointments only and may be offered by phone interviews. No walk-in sessions will be held. Customers will be called within 15 minutes of their scheduled appointment times. Appointments will be added daily for the following business day to accommodate critical circumstances.

For more information about the features of the Summer Crisis Program locally and what is needed to apply,

contact Lifeline's Energy Assistance Office at 440-350-9160 or visiting our website at www.lcifeline.org. Lifeline's office re-located in June 2020 and is now located at One Victoria Place, Suite 265A in Painesville. Additional information can also be found at www.energyhelp.ohio.gov or by calling (800) 282-0880.

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers was founded in 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County residents by providing them assistance and life skills programming that is designed to increase self-sufficiency. In 1980 Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County, UWLC, and in 1987 was designated a community action agency by the Ohio Development Services Agency, ODSA. In 2008, Lifeline was designated as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping Lake County's low-income residents break the cycle of poverty and make the transition from agency-dependency to self-sufficiency. Lifeline's current programming includes services in the healthcare, housing & energy assistance, information & referral services and consumer education & job training areas. Our motto is 'helping people, changing lives.' Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODSA, the Lake County Board of Commissioners, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the City of Mentor, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Lake Health and through private donors.