

**NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE
DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION**

**2011 NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE SURVEY
SUMMARY REPORT**

Final Report
November 2011

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA) represents the state directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). NEADA is a nonprofit educational and policy organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to support the delivery of LIHEAP services by state agencies and programs.

This report has been prepared by APPRISE for NEADA under Grant No. 90XP0249 through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations do not necessarily reflect the views of ACF.

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| | | | |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|
| California | Iowa | Montana | New York |
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Executive Summary

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), representing the state LIHEAP directors, received a grant through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to update the information about LIHEAP-recipient households that was collected in the 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2009 NEA Surveys. This survey documented changes in the affordability of energy bills, the need for LIHEAP, and the choices that low-income households make when faced with unaffordable energy bills.

The 2011 Survey included 13 states with an oversample in Connecticut, as in the 2009 Survey. Stratified samples of fiscal year 2011 LIHEAP recipients were chosen from each of the state LIHEAP databases. This report presents the findings from the 2011 NEA Survey and provides comparisons to the 2003, 2008, and 2009 NEA Surveys. The survey and report were prepared for NEADA by APPRISE.

During the period of study, low-income households across the country continued to face a difficult economic climate and continued to deal with high energy costs. The survey substantiated these issues – showing that 35 percent were unemployed at some point during the year and that 52 percent reported it was more difficult to pay energy bills than it was the previous year.

LIHEAP Recipient Households

The study confirmed that LIHEAP recipient households are likely to be vulnerable to temperature extremes.

- 40 percent had a senior in the household aged 60 or older.
- 42 percent had a disabled household member.
- 41 percent had a child 18 or younger.
- 89 percent had at least one vulnerable household member.

The study also provided information on challenges that these households faced.

- 35 percent were unemployed at some point during the previous year.
- 72 percent had a serious medical condition.
- 26 percent used medical equipment that requires electricity.

Energy Costs

LIHEAP recipients reported that they faced high energy costs.

- 45 percent reported that their energy bills were more than \$2,000 in the past year.

- Pre-LIHEAP energy burden averaged 16 percent and post-LIHEAP energy burden averaged 12 percent for these households, compared to 7 percent for all households in the U.S. and 4 percent for non low-income households in the U.S.¹
- 52 percent said that energy bills were more difficult to pay than in the previous year.
- 48 percent of those who said that it was more difficult to pay their energy bills reported that the main reason was their financial situation.

LIHEAP benefits decreased since the previous year due to the smaller appropriation in FY 2011. Mean heating benefits were \$429 in FY 2011, compared to \$483 in FY 2009.

Responses to High Energy Costs

Households reported that they took several actions to make ends meet.

- 39 percent closed off part of their home.
- 23 percent kept their home at a temperature that was unsafe or unhealthy.
- 21 percent left their home for part of the day.
- 33 percent used their kitchen stove or oven to provide heat.

Inability to Pay Energy Bills

Many LIHEAP recipients were unable to pay their energy bills.

- 49 percent skipped paying or paid less than their entire home energy bill.
- 37 percent received a notice or threat to disconnect or discontinue their electricity or home heating fuel.
- 11 percent had their electric or natural gas service shut off in the past year due to nonpayment.
- 24 percent were unable to use their main source of heat in the past year because their fuel was shut off, they could not pay for fuel delivery, or their heating system was broken and they could not afford to fix it.
- 17 percent were unable to use their air conditioner in the past year because their electricity was shut off or their air conditioner was broken and they could not afford to fix it.

Housing and Financial Problems

Many LIHEAP recipients had problems paying for housing in the past five years, due at least partly to their energy bills.

- 31 percent did not make their full mortgage or rent payment.
- 6 percent were evicted from their home or apartment.
- 4 percent had a foreclosure on their mortgage.
- 14 percent moved in with friends or family.
- 4 percent moved into a shelter or were homeless.

¹ Source: 2008 LIHEAP Notebook.

- 13 percent got a payday loan in the past five years.

Medical and Health Problems

Many of the LIHEAP recipients faced significant medical and health problems in the past five years, partly as a result of high energy costs.

- 24 percent went without food for at least one day.
- 37 percent went without medical or dental care.
- 34 percent did not fill a prescription or took less than the full dose of a prescribed medication.
- 19 percent had someone in the home become sick because the home was too cold.

The Need for LIHEAP

Households reported enormous challenges despite the fact that they received LIHEAP. However, they reported that LIHEAP was extremely important.

- 65 percent of those who did not keep their home at unsafe or unhealthy temperatures said they would have done so if LIHEAP had not been available.
- 63 percent of those who did not have their electricity or home heating fuel discontinued said that they would have if it had not been for LIHEAP.

It is clear that many of these households will continue to need LIHEAP to meet their energy and other essential needs.

I. Introduction

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), representing the state LIHEAP directors, received a grant through the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to update the information about LIHEAP-recipient households that was collected in the 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2009 NEA Surveys. This survey documented changes in the affordability of energy bills, the need for LIHEAP, and the choices that low-income households make when faced with unaffordable energy bills.

The 2011 NEA Survey selected a new sample of 2011 LIHEAP recipients to document changes in the need for LIHEAP and changes in the choices that low-income households make when faced with unaffordable energy bills. This report presents the findings from the 2011 NEA Survey and provides comparisons to the 2003, 2008 and 2009 NEA Surveys. The survey and report were prepared for NEADA by APPRISE.

A. *Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)*

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The purpose of LIHEAP is “to assist low-income households, particularly those with the lowest incomes, that pay a high proportion of household income for home energy, primarily in meeting their immediate home energy needs.” The LIHEAP statute defines home energy as “a source of heating or cooling in residential dwellings.”²

Federal dollars for LIHEAP are allocated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to the grantees (i.e., the 50 states, District of Columbia, 128 tribes and tribal organizations, and five insular areas) as a block grant. Program funds are distributed by a formula, which is weighted towards relative cold-weather conditions.

B. *2011 National Energy Assistance Survey*

The 2011 NEA Survey aimed to update the information about LIHEAP-recipient households that was collected in the 2003, 2008, and 2009 NEA Surveys. Stratified samples of 2011 LIHEAP recipients were selected to collect new information about the consequences of high energy bills for low-income households. The 2011 National Energy Assistance Survey collected the following information from LIHEAP-recipient households:

- Demographic, energy expenditure, and income information
- Healthy home behaviors

² The statutory intent of LIHEAP is to reduce home heating and cooling costs for low-income households. However, information on total residential energy costs is more accessible and more apparent to LIHEAP-recipient respondents. Moreover, any reduction in home heating and cooling costs leads to a direct reduction in total residential energy costs. Therefore, this report addresses total residential energy costs.

- History of LIHEAP participation
- Constructive actions taken to meet energy expenses
- Signs of unaffordable energy bills
- Health and safety consequences of unaffordable energy bills
- Effects of unaffordable energy bills on housing
- Changes in financial situation and affordability of home energy bills
- Impact and importance of LIHEAP benefits for recipient households

The 2011 Survey included the 13 states that were included in the 2009 Survey and a larger sample of CT LIHEAP recipients, as a result of additional funding that was allocated for a special study in CT.

C. Organization of the Report

This report has four sections that follow this introduction.

- *Section II: Survey Methodology:* Presents the methodology used.
- *Section III: LIHEAP Recipients:* Presents demographic and income information LIHEAP-recipient households that completed the 2011 NEA Survey.
- *Section IV: Problems Faced in Meeting Energy Needs:* Presents information about actions that LIHEAP-recipient households take to meet their energy needs, household necessities, and health and wellness in the face of significant financial constraints.
- *Section V: Conclusion:* Presents a summary of the key findings in this report.

II. Survey Methodology

This section summarizes the methodology for the 2011 NEA Survey.

A. Survey Implementation

A survey advance letter was sent to the sample of LIHEAP recipients. This letter announced the survey, explained the purpose of the survey, and gave potential respondents the option to call the phone center to complete the survey.

Telephone interviews were conducted between May 2, 2011 and July 3, 2011. During this time period, 1,768 interviews were completed.

B. Sample Selection and Response Rates

LIHEAP recipients were selected from each of the 13 states chosen to participate in the survey. Because of a special congressional earmark for Connecticut, a special study was conducted for Connecticut.

Table II-1 displays the number of interviews completed by state. The response rate ranged from 41 percent in New York to 69 percent in New Mexico.

Table II-1
Number of Completed Interviews by State

| State | Total Selected | Completed Interviews | Response Rate |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|
| California | 260 | 103 | 48% |
| Connecticut | 1,290 | 495 | 48% |
| Delaware | 220 | 100 | 63% |
| Georgia | 220 | 105 | 59% |
| Iowa | 220 | 102 | 65% |
| Maine | 220 | 133 | 68% |
| Minnesota | 220 | 105 | 60% |
| Montana | 220 | 102 | 62% |
| New Mexico | 220 | 102 | 69% |
| New York | 450 | 101 | 41% |
| North Carolina | 270 | 97 | 60% |
| Ohio | 220 | 111 | 67% |
| Pennsylvania | 220 | 112 | 62% |
| TOTAL | 4,250 | 1,768 | 56% |

III. LIHEAP Recipient Households

The 2011 National Energy Assistance Survey included a series of questions about household demographics.

Table III-1 displays information on the presence of vulnerable household members. The table shows that 40 percent have a senior in the home, 42 percent have a disabled household member, 41 percent have a child age 18 or younger, and 21 percent have a child age five or younger. Eight-nine percent had at least one vulnerable member (elderly, disabled, or child).

**Table III-1
Vulnerable Groups**

| | Senior ≥ 60 | Disabled | Child ≤ 18 | Young Child ≤ 5 | Single Parent |
|----------------------------|------------------|----------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|
| Yes | 40% | 42% | 41% | 21% | 15% |
| No | 59% | 56% | 58% | 78% | 85% |
| Don't Know/ Refused | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | -- |

Table III-2 displays the annual household income distribution for LIHEAP-recipient households. The table shows that 36 percent have income of less than or equal to \$10,000 and only two percent have income above \$40,000.

**Table III-2
Annual Income**

| Annual Income | Percent of Respondents |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| $\leq \$ 10,000$ | 36% |
| $\$ 10,001 - \$ 20,000$ | 41% |
| $\$ 20,001 - \$ 30,000$ | 16% |
| $\$ 30,001 - \$ 40,000$ | 5% |
| More than \$ 40,000 | 2% |
| Don't Know | 1% |

Table III-3 shows that 19 percent had income at or below 50 percent of the poverty level and 61 percent had income at or below the poverty level. Only 11 percent had income above 150 percent of the poverty level.

**Table III-3
Poverty Level**

| Poverty Level | Percent of Respondents |
|---------------|------------------------|
| 0%-50% | 19% |
| 51%-100% | 42% |
| 101%-125% | 15% |
| 126%-150% | 13% |
| >150% | 11% |

Respondents were asked whether they had been unemployed at some time during the year. Table III-4 shows that 35 percent reported that they had been unemployed at some point during the past year. This compares to 31 percent in 2003, 29 percent in 2008, and 36 percent in 2009.

**Table III-4
Unemployed During the Year**

| | 2003 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Yes | 31% | 29% | 36% | 35% |
| No | 69% | 70% | 63% | 62% |
| Don't Know / Refused | 0% | 1% | 1% | 3% |

Table III-5 displays the percent of respondents who were unemployed during the past year by vulnerable group. The table shows that households with children under 18 and non-vulnerable households were most likely to report that they had been unemployed. Fifty-three percent of households with children reported that they had been unemployed.

**Table III-5
Unemployed During the Year
By Vulnerable Group**

| | Senior | Disabled | Child ≤18 | Non-Vulnerable |
|------------------------------|--------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Number of Respondents | 705 | 738 | 722 | 195 |
| Yes | 17% | 26% | 53% | 49% |
| No | 81% | 72% | 46% | 35% |
| Don't Know / Refused | 2% | 1% | 1% | 15% |

IV. Problems Meeting Energy Needs

This section examines the financial challenges and difficult choices made by the LIHEAP recipients to manage their total residential energy costs.

A. Increased Utility Bills and Increased Need

Respondents were asked to report their annual energy costs. Table IV-1 shows that 45 percent of the respondents reported that their bills were over \$2,000.

Table IV-1
Annual Total Residential Energy Costs

| Annual Energy Costs | Percent of Respondents |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Less than \$500 | 2% |
| \$501 - \$1,000 | 8% |
| \$1,001 - \$1,500 | 10% |
| \$1,501 - \$2,000 | 12% |
| Over \$2,000 | 45% |
| Don't Know/Refused | 22% |

Table IV-2 displays the distribution of LIHEAP heating benefits in FY2008, FY2009 and FY2011. Twenty-eight percent received \$250 or less in FY2011, compared with 18 percent who received \$250 or less in FY2009.

Table IV-2
LIHEAP Heating Benefits Distribution

| Benefit Amount | Percent Received | | |
|--|------------------|------------|------------|
| | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
| Number of Respondents | 1,256 | 1,828 | 1,667 |
| ≤ \$100 | 6% | <u>5%</u> | <u>7%</u> |
| \$101-\$250 | <u>25%</u> | <u>13%</u> | <u>21%</u> |
| \$251-\$500 | <u>39%</u> | 45% | <u>43%</u> |
| \$501-\$750 | <u>11%</u> | <u>21%</u> | <u>15%</u> |
| \$751-\$1,000 | 6% | 7% | 6% |
| ≥ \$1,000 | <u>3%</u> | 6% | <u>5%</u> |
| Did Not Receive Heating Benefit | <u>9%</u> | 4% | <u>3%</u> |

Note: 2011 statistically significant differences at the 95% level from 2008 and 2009 are underlined.

Pre-LIHEAP energy burden was calculated by dividing the respondents' energy costs by their total household income and post-LIHEAP energy burden was calculated by subtracting LIHEAP benefits from energy costs and then dividing these net energy costs by total household income. Table IV-3 shows that LIHEAP benefits had a big impact on the households' energy burden. Prior to receiving LIHEAP, 22 percent of households had an energy burden higher than 20 percent. After receiving LIHEAP, 13 percent had an energy burden that was this high. Additionally, LIHEAP benefits increased the percentage with burdens below five percent from 9 percent of recipients to 26 percent.

Table IV-3
Total Residential Energy Burden

| | Total Residential Energy Burden | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | Pre-LIHEAP | Post-LIHEAP |
| Number of Respondents | 1,275 | 1,275 |
| 0-5% | 9% | 26% |
| 6%-10% | 32% | 32% |
| 11-15% | 23% | 20% |
| 16-20% | 13% | 9% |
| 21-25% | 9% | 5% |
| >25% | 13% | 8% |

Respondents were asked whether they had a more or less difficult time paying their energy bills in the past year, as compared to the previous year. Table IV-4 shows that 52 percent said they had a more difficult time and 12 percent said they had a less difficult time.

Table IV-4
Change in Difficulty in Paying Energy Bills

| Change in Difficulty in Paying Energy Bills | Percent of Respondents |
|---|------------------------|
| More Difficult | 52% |
| Same | 31% |
| Less Difficult | 12% |
| Don't Know/Refused | 5% |

Respondents who said that they had a more difficult time paying their energy bills were asked why it was more difficult. Table IV-5 shows that 48 percent said it was due to a worse financial situation and 42 percent said it was due to an increased energy bill.

Table IV-5
Reasons for Increased Difficulty in Paying Energy Bills

| | Main Reason (Unprompted) |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Number of Respondents | 940 |
| Lower Income/Lost Job/Worse Economic Situation | 48% |
| Increased Energy Bill | 42% |
| Increased Other Bills | 6% |
| Increased Medical Expenses | 2% |
| Other | 1% |
| Don't Know/Refused | 1% |

B. Signs of the Problem

Respondents were asked whether they reduced expenses for household necessities due to not having enough money to pay their energy bill during the past year. Table IV-6 compares responses to questions about signs of unaffordable energy bills for the 2003, 2008, 2009 and 2011 surveys. The table shows that approximately the same percentage of respondents faced these problems in all three years.

Table IV-6
Signs of the Problem
Comparison of Survey Results

| | 2003 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of Respondents | 2,161 | 1,256 | 1,828 | 1,768 |
| Reduced Expenses for Household Necessities | 78% | 80% | 79% | 72% |

C. Responses to the Problem

This section examines how households have responded to the problem of unaffordable energy bills. Table IV-7 shows that the following percent of households faced these problems in 2011.

- 39 percent closed off part of their home.
- 23 percent kept their home at a temperature that they felt was unsafe or unhealthy.
- 21 percent left their home for part of the day.
- 33 percent used their kitchen stove or oven to provide heat.

The percentages are approximately the same as in 2009.

**Table IV-7
Responses to the Problem
Comparison of Survey Results**

| | 2003 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of Respondents | 2,161 | 1,256 | 1,828 | 1,768 |
| Closed Off Part of Home | 39% | <u>44%</u> | 36% | <u>39%</u> |
| Kept Home at Temperature You Felt was Unsafe or Unhealthy | <u>25%</u> | <u>28%</u> | <u>26%</u> | <u>23%</u> |
| Left Home for Part of the Day | <u>24%</u> | 23% | 20% | <u>21%</u> |
| Used Kitchen Stove or Oven to Provide Heat | 31% | 33% | 33% | 33% |

Note: 2011 statistically significant differences at the 95% level from 2003, 2008 and 2009 are underlined.

D. Inability to Pay Energy Bills

Respondents were asked several questions about the inability to pay their home energy bill. Table IV-8 shows that the following percent of households faced these problems in 2011.

- 49 percent skipped paying or paid less than their entire home energy bill.
- 37 percent received a notice or threat to disconnect or discontinue electricity service or home heating fuel.
- 11 percent had their electricity or gas shut off due to nonpayment.
- 13 percent were unable to use their heating system because it was broken and they could not afford to pay for repair or replacement.
- 14 percent were unable to use their air conditioner because it was broken and they were unable to pay for its repair or replacement.

**Table IV-8
Inability to Pay Energy Bills During Past Year
Comparison of Survey Results**

| | 2003 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of Respondents | 2,161 | 1,256 | 1,828 | 1,768 |
| Skipped Paying or Paid Less than Entire Home Energy Bill | 52% | 47% | 50% | 49% |
| Received Notice or Threat to Disconnect or Discontinue Electricity or Home Heating Fuel | 38% | 37% | 36% | 37% |
| Electricity Shut off Due to Nonpayment | 8% | 9% | 9% | 9% |
| Gas Shut off Due to Nonpayment | -- | 6% | 7% | 6% |
| Electricity or Gas Shut off Due to Nonpayment | -- | 12% | 12% | 11% |
| Heating System Broken and Unable to Pay for Repair or Replacement | <u>10%</u> | 13% | 13% | <u>13%</u> |
| Unable to Use Main Source of Heat Because Unable to Pay for a Fuel Delivery | 10% | 13% | 11% | 10% |
| Unable to Use Main Source of Heat Because Utility Company Discontinued Gas or Electric Service Due to Nonpayment | <u>11%</u> | <u>13%</u> | 11% | <u>7%</u> |

| | 2003 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of Respondents | 2,161 | 1,256 | 1,828 | 1,768 |
| Unable to Use Air Conditioner Because it was Broken and Unable to Pay for Repair or Replacement | 12% | 12% | 12% | 14% |
| Unable to Use Air Conditioner Because Utility Company Discontinued Electric Service Due to Nonpayment | 6% | <u>7%</u> | <u>8%</u> | <u>5%</u> |
| Had to Use Candles or Lanterns Due to Lack of Lights | <u>8%</u> | <u>7%</u> | <u>8%</u> | <u>5%</u> |

Note: 2011 statistically significant differences at the 95% level from 2003, 2008, and 2009 are underlined.

E. Housing Problems

This section examines housing problems that respondents have faced in the past five years due to unaffordable energy bills. Table IV-9 shows that the following percent of respondents faced these problems.

- 31 percent did not make a full rent or mortgage payment.
- 14 percent moved in with friends or family.
- 4 percent moved into a shelter or were homeless.

**Table IV-9
Housing Problems During Past Five Years
Comparison of Survey Results**

| | 2003 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|---|------------|------------|-------|------------|
| Number of Respondents | 2,161 | 1,256 | 1,828 | 1,768 |
| Did Not Make Full Rent or Mortgage Payment | <u>28%</u> | 28% | 31% | <u>31%</u> |
| Evicted from Home or Apartment | <u>4%</u> | <u>4%</u> | 5% | <u>6%</u> |
| Moved in with Friends or Family | <u>9%</u> | <u>11%</u> | 12% | <u>14%</u> |
| Moved into Shelter or Was Homeless | 4% | 3% | 3% | 4% |

Note: 2011 statistically significant differences at the 95% level from 2003, 2008 and 2009 are underlined.

F. Medical and Health Problems

This section examines the medical and health problems that respondents faced in the past five years due to unaffordable energy bills. Table IV-10 shows that the following percent of households faced these problems.

- 24 percent went without food for at least one day
- 37 percent went without medical or dental care
- 34 percent did not fill a prescription or took less than their full dose of prescribed medication.
- 19 percent became sick because the home was too cold.
- 6 percent became sick because the home was too hot.

Table IV-10
Medical and Health Problems During the Past Five Years
Comparison of Survey Results

| | 2003 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of Respondents | 2,161 | 1,256 | 1,828 | 1,768 |
| Went Without Food for At Least One Day | 22% | <u>32%</u> | <u>30%</u> | <u>24%</u> |
| Went Without Medical or Dental Care | 38% | <u>42%</u> | <u>41%</u> | <u>37%</u> |
| Did Not Fill Prescription or Took Less Than Full Dose | <u>30%</u> | <u>38%</u> | 33% | <u>34%</u> |
| Became Sick Because Home was Too Cold | 21% | <u>24%</u> | <u>25%</u> | <u>19%</u> |
| Became Sick Because Home was Too Hot | 7% | 6% | <u>4%</u> | <u>6%</u> |

Note: 2011 statistically significant differences at the 95% level from 2003, 2008 and 2009 are underlined.

V. Conclusion

The 2011 NEADA study confirmed that LIHEAP recipient households are likely to be vulnerable to temperature extremes. They are likely to have seniors, disabled members, or children in the home. Over 89 percent of LIHEAP recipients had at least one of these vulnerable household members. The study also showed that these households face many challenges in addition to their energy bills, including unemployment, unhealthy home conditions, and medical issues.

Energy Costs

LIHEAP recipients reported that they faced high energy costs. Forty-five percent of the respondents reported energy costs over \$2,000 in the past year and 52 percent said that their energy bills were more difficult to pay. Almost half of those who said that their energy bills were more difficult to pay said that the increased difficulty was due to a worsened financial situation.

Responses to High Energy Costs

Households reported that they took several actions to make ends meet, including closing off part of the home and leaving the home for part of the day. Some of the actions were unsafe and could lead to injury or illness, such as keeping the home at a temperature that was unsafe or unhealthy or using the kitchen stove or oven to provide heat.

Inability to Pay Energy Bills

Despite the assistance that they received, many LIHEAP recipients were unable to pay their energy bills. Almost half of the respondents reported that they had skipped paying or paid less than their entire home energy bill in the past year and more than one third said that they received a notice or threat to disconnect or discontinue their electricity or home heating fuel.

Households went without utility service and sacrificed heating and cooling their home. Eleven percent had their electric or natural gas service shut off in the past year due to nonpayment. Almost one quarter reported that they were unable to use their main source of heat in the past year because their fuel was shut off, they could not pay for fuel delivery, or their heating system was broken and they could not afford to fix it. Seventeen percent reported that they were unable to use their air conditioner in the past year because their electricity was shut off or their air conditioner was broken and they could not afford to fix it.

Housing and Financial Problems

Many LIHEAP recipients had problems paying for housing in the past five years, due at least partly to their energy bills. Almost one third did not make their full mortgage or rent payment. Six percent were evicted from their home or apartment and four percent had a foreclosure on their mortgage.

Medical and Health Problems

Many of the LIHEAP recipients faced significant medical and health problems in the past five years, partly as a result of high energy costs. Nearly one quarter reported that they went without food, 37 percent sacrificed medical/dental care, and one fifth had someone in the home become sick because the home was too cold.

The Need for LIHEAP

Households reported enormous challenges despite the fact that they received LIHEAP. However, they reported that LIHEAP was extremely important. Many reported that they would have kept their home at unsafe or unhealthy temperatures and/or had their electricity or home heating fuel discontinued if it had not been for LIHEAP.

It is clear that many of these households will continue to need LIHEAP to meet their energy and other essential needs.