

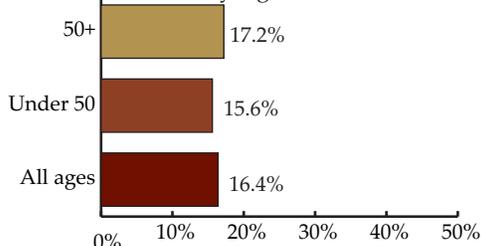
Energy and Telephone Assistance in the States

Vermont

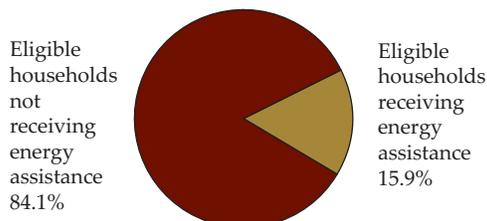
Vermont in Brief (2006)

Total state population:	623,908
State median income:	\$65,876
Percent households age 50+:	50.1%

Percent Households under 150% of Poverty, by Age

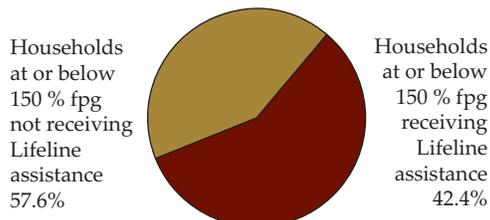


Energy Assistance among Households with Incomes at or Below 150% of Poverty



Telephone penetration rate in state: 96.3%

Percent Households At or Below 150% of Poverty Receiving Lifeline Assistance



Telephone Assistance

Lifeline and Link-Up are the primary sources of telephone assistance for low-income households in Vermont.

Lifeline

Lifeline provides participating low-income households with a monthly credit toward the price of basic local telephone service.

Benefits (2006)

Average monthly credit: \$15.75

Basic federal support: \$8.35

State support: \$5.65

Federal match: \$1.75

Funding (2005)

Federal: \$4,004,463*

State: \$1,059,113 (2005)*

*Source: State staff.

The state portion (\$3.50) of this benefit is funded through a monthly subscriber surcharge imposed on all retail telecommunications services. All retail telecommunications service providers collect the surcharge, which was set at 1.15% of billed rates in 2005, from their customers and forward the revenues to the Vermont Universal Service Fund (VUSF). The VUSF supports several programs, including Lifeline, and reimburses eligible local telephone service providers for paying the state portion of the Lifeline benefit.

Eligibility (2005)

To receive Lifeline assistance, state residents must complete an application with the Vermont Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition, and Health Access (PATH) (formerly Department of Social Welfare) and prove they are any of the following:

- Age 65 or older with household income at or below 175% of the federal poverty guideline

Energy and Telephone Assistance in the States

- Under age 65 with household income at or below 150% of the federal poverty guideline
- Enrolled in any of the following programs:
 - Food stamps
 - Aid to Needy Families with Children
 - Fuel assistance (Vermont PATH)
 - Medicaid
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

The PATH department advises the telephone company of applicant eligibility. Beneficiaries must recertify with PATH periodically to remain eligible for this program.

Participation (2005)

Households served: 24,699

Participation rate: 60% (based on 150% of the federal poverty guideline)

Link-Up

Qualified customers receive a discount on the price of installing new telephone service.

Benefits (2005)

Link-Up subscribers receive the following:

- A maximum credit of \$30 or a 50% reduction, whichever is less, on the charges that customers pay for connecting to new telephone service
- The option of deferring payment on the balance of the connection fee (up to \$200) with no interest charges for a period not to exceed one year

Funding (2005)

Federal: \$18,982

Eligibility (2005)

Eligibility requirements are the same as for Lifeline.

Participation (2005)

Households served: 1,134

Energy Assistance

Low-income energy assistance in Vermont includes the following programs:

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)—Fuel Assistance Program
- Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)
- Efficiency Vermont—Residential Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEP)

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)—Fuel Assistance Program

The federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides the state of Vermont with a block grant to help eligible low-income households meet their immediate home energy needs. With this grant, Vermont distributes payments through its Fuel Assistance Program, which includes two categories of assistance: heating assistance through the seasonal fuel assistance program, and crisis assistance through the crisis fuel assistance program. The state also uses a portion of the grant to supplement funding for Vermont's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

Benefits (FY2005)

Heating (seasonal fuel assistance): \$902 average per household

Crisis (crisis fuel assistance): No set maximum

Clients receive one benefit a year. Benefits are issued through an electronic funds transfer into the energy provider's account, unless the client's home energy costs are included in rent, in which case the payment is sent directly to the client. Assistance is available from July 15 to February 28.

The crisis fuel assistance program repairs or replaces heating systems, provides grants for emergency fuel purchase, and provides utility service shutoff protection. Crisis assistance is

Energy and Telephone Assistance in the States

available from the last Monday in November until April 30.

Funding (FY2006)

Total: \$27,902,902
 Federal: \$20,902,902
 Regular net block grant: \$11,612,664
 Additional one-time block grant: \$2,026,347
 Total emergency/cont.: \$7,263,891
 State: \$7,000,000
 Weatherization Trust Fund: \$3,500,000
 State Department of Corrections: \$3,500,000

Vermont allocates LIHEAP funding in the following manner:

Heating assistance:	69%
Crisis assistance:	11%
Weatherization:	3%
Administration, etc.:	17%

The crisis fuel assistance program may also receive up to 12% of the state's emergency contingency funds.

The Vermont legislature created the Home Weatherization Assistance Trust Fund, to be funded by dedicated tax receipts, and legislature appropriations, including LIHEAP funds. The legislature authorizes the transfer of funds to the fuel program from the trust fund for the initial period of program funding availability, with the understanding that when LIHEAP funds become available, the borrowed funds from the trust will be replaced.

Eligibility (FY2006)

State residents with household net incomes at or below 125% of poverty are eligible for seasonal assistance.

The Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition, and Health Access (PATH), Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance, accepts applications, determines eligibility, and makes payments to energy providers and clients. The office contracts with Area Agencies on Aging and community action agencies (CAAs) to distribute, accept, and help complete applications. Applications are mailed to previous

applicants automatically regardless of prior funding decisions.

State residents with net household incomes at or below 150% of poverty are eligible for assistance if they have an extenuating or unpredictable circumstance that led to their home heating crisis. The program is administered by grant agreements between the Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition, and Health Access and the state's five community action agencies.

Vermont also uses an assets test to determine the financial eligibility of clients for LIHEAP.

Participation (FY2005)

Households served:
 Heating: 19,327

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)

Through the Vermont Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), the U.S. Department of Energy provides Vermont with a formula distribution grant to help low-income residents—especially those 60 years and older, disabled, or living with young children—increase the energy efficiency of their homes, reduce their energy expenditures, and improve health and safety.

Benefits (FY2006)

Average benefit per household: \$3,000
 Weatherization technicians use energy audits to identify and implement energy-saving measures for each home. Examples of these measures include the following:

- Insulating attics, floors, water heaters, and exposed pipes
- Tuning up, repairing, or replacing the furnace or heating unit and/or air conditioner
- Providing ventilation fans—including electric, attic, ceiling, or whole-house fans—to increase air circulation
- Stopping air infiltration by weather-stripping and caulking around doors and windows,

Energy and Telephone Assistance in the States

replacing broken glass panes, and installing storm windows

Funding (FY2006)

Total: \$6,253,926

Federal: \$1,353,926

Department of Energy (DOE): \$1,353,926

State: \$4,900,000*

Vermont Home Weatherization Assistance

Trust Fund : \$4,900,000

*Source: LIHEAP Clearinghouse.

In addition to federal funds, Vermont has a statewide Home Weatherization Assistance Trust Fund established by the legislature and funded by a 0.5% tax levied on the gross receipts of all nontransportation energy vendors in the state. The tax proceeds, about \$4,200,000 annually, are piggybacked with DOE funds, placed in a trust within the state treasury, and administered by the Office of Economic Opportunity.

The Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) distributes grants to five weatherization agencies in the state. These agencies accept applications, determine eligibility, and provide weatherization services, such as performing energy audits and implementing suggested measures.

Eligibility (FY2006)

Households with incomes at or below 150% of poverty are eligible for assistance.

Participation (2004)

Households served: 1,373

Efficiency Vermont— Residential Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEP)

The Residential Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEP) was established in 1997 to improve energy performance in Vermont’s low-income housing. It is offered by Efficiency Vermont, a nonprofit state energy efficiency utility that consolidates and administers the energy

efficiency programs previously offered by the state’s 22 electric utilities.

REEP leverages utility incentives, weatherization subsidies, and owner investments to implement cost-effective energy measures.

Benefits (FY2006)

The Residential Energy Efficiency Partnership operates an all-fuel, statewide program that offers the following services to eligible households living in single family and multifamily buildings:

- Installation of energy-efficient light bulbs and fixtures
- Replacement of refrigerators with more efficient models
- Sealing drafts and air leaks around windows and doors
- Insulation of walls and ceilings
- Installation of water heater jackets, low-flow shower heads, aerators
- Replacement of electric space and water heaters with oil, gas, or propane units
- Identification of loans, mortgage products, and money-saving energy services

REEP also provides the following:

- Marketing, education, and outreach to the housing community
- Packaging services for building owners, operators, and managers, including audits, building analysis, and implementation oversight
- Financing and grant making
- Training and technical assistance

Funding (FY2005)

Total: \$2,147,497

Utility: \$2,147,497

Single-family initiatives: \$1,261,094

Multifamily initiatives: \$886,403

Funding for this program comes from a nonbypassable volumetric energy efficiency charge (EEC) that appears on all consumers’ electric bills except those of the Burlington Electric Department. Each utility negotiated

Energy and Telephone Assistance in the States

Vermont

its contribution based on factors unique to its service territory, so the size of the EEC varies among utilities.

The program is administered by Efficiency Vermont and is delivered by the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation, a nonprofit energy services company.

Eligibility (2005)

Eligible properties must have five or more residential units with at least 50% of the units occupied by tenants with household incomes at or below 80% of the area median income.

Participation (2005)

Households served: 1,100 per year (approx.)

Seasonal, Health-, and Income-Related Disconnection Policy

Seasonal

Vermont prohibits disconnection of residential natural gas or electric services for nonpayment from November 1 through March 31 if the National Weather Service forecasts temperatures to be at or below 10°F (32°F for households with members age 62 or older) for a 48-hour period beginning on the morning of the date of disconnection.

Health

Vermont requires utilities to delay for up to 30 days disconnection of residential service for nonpayment if a physician certifies in writing that the customer or a household member would suffer a health hazard in the event of service disconnection. A physician's certificate may be renewed twice within a calendar year.

Deferred Payments

The state requires utilities to offer residential customers the opportunity to avoid disconnection by agreeing and adhering to a deferred-payment arrangement. The state prohibits utilities from disconnecting service to customers who accept and complete such an arrangement.