Energy and Telephone Assistance in the States

Virginia

Telephone Assistance

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

Lifeline (Universal Service Plan)

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

Benefits (2005)

Maximum monthly credit: $13.50
- Basic federal support: $8.25
- State support: $3.50
- Federal match: $1.75

Funding (2005)

Federal: $2,208,977
State: $846,300 (est.)

Local telephone companies recover the cost of providing the state portion of this benefit ($3.50 per subscriber) in the rates they charge non-Lifeline subscribers for basic local telephone service.

Eligibility (2006)

To receive Lifeline assistance, state residents must complete an application with their local telephone provider and prove they are enrolled in any of the following programs:
- Food stamps
- Medicaid

Beneficiaries must recertify with their local telephone provider annually to remain eligible for this program.

Participation (2005)

Households served: 20,150
Participation rate: 6.9% (based on participation in the federal Medicaid program)
**Link-Up**

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

**Benefits (2006)**

Link-Up subscribers receive the following:
- A credit of $30 or a 50% reduction, whichever is less, on the charges 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: $55,148

**Eligibility (2006)**

Eligibility requirements are the same as for Lifeline.

**Participation (2005)**

Households served: 2,311

**Energy Assistance**

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

The federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides the Commonwealth of Virginia with a block grant to help eligible low-income households meet their immediate home energy needs. With this grant, Virginia distributes payments under three categories of assistance: fuel, crisis, and cooling. The state also uses a portion of the grant to supplement funding for Virginia’s Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

**Benefits (FY2006)**

- Fuel: $311 average per household
- Cooling: $950 maximum per household, which includes maximum benefit for security deposit ($200), electricity payment ($200), and air conditioner purchase ($550)
- Crisis: $2,200 maximum per household, which includes maximum benefit for equipment repair/purchase ($1,700), security deposit ($200), and primary heat/primary utility (varies maximum approximately $250–$300)

Virginia provides financial assistance with heating costs through the fuel assistance component of LIHEAP and payments for energy-related emergencies through the crisis assistance component. The cooling assistance component provides financial payments to qualified households to purchase one portable fan; repair a ceiling, attic, or whole-house fan; purchase one air conditioner; repair central air conditioning unit or heat pump; pay electric security deposits; and pay electric bills. Provision of cooling assistance is contingent on the availability of funds and requires eligible households contain at least one vulnerable household member.

Clients receive one fuel benefit a year. Benefits are paid to the energy provider unless the clients’ home energy costs are included in rent, their electricity or gas is provided by a nonparticipating vendor, they have limited storage, or they heat with coal or wood. In these cases, the payment is sent directly to the clients.

**Funding (FY2006)**

Total: $75,052,711

- Federal: $75,052,711
  - Regular net block grant: $38,165,637
  - One-time additional net block grant: $33,092,921
- Total emergency/cont.: $3,794,153
The Virginia Department of Social Services accepts applications for LIHEAP in local social services offices throughout the state. The main office mails fuel assistance applications to the prior year’s recipients, maintains the energy assistance automated system that determines eligibility through local department’s data input, informs clients, and makes fuel assistance payments to energy providers and clients. Local departments of social services input payments through the Energy Assistance Program automated system for crisis and cooling assistance.

Virginia allocates LIHEAP funding in the following manner:

- Fuel assistance: 52%
- Cooling assistance: 10%
- Crisis assistance: 12%
- Weatherization: 15%
- Administration, etc.: 11%

Cooling assistance has been a regular yearly program but is contingent on the availability of funds.

Fuel assistance application period is the second Tuesday in October through the second Friday in November. Crisis assistance is available from November 1 through March 15 for primary heating security deposit, space heater for temporary use, primary heating equipment repairs or purchases, supplemental equipment and maintenance, and emergency shelter. Crisis assistance is available from the first workday in January through March 15 for the purchase of primary heating fuel or payment of primary heating utility. Cooling assistance is available from June 15 through August 15.

**Eligibility (2006)**
State residents with household incomes at or below 130% of poverty are eligible for assistance.

**Participation (FY2006)**
Households served by program component:
- Heating: 110,590
- Cooling: 39,685
- Winter crisis: 17,541
- Weatherization: 1,257

**Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**
This program helps low-income residents—especially those 60 years and older, disabled, or living with young children—increase energy efficiency and reduce home heating costs by adding insulation, sealing air leaks, and repairing or replacing heating systems. New program policies soon will allow replacement of old refrigerators and water heaters as well. This program also works to improve health and safety by reducing hazards of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Benefits (FY2006)
Maximum benefit per household: $2,826

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, replacing broken glass panes, and installing storm windows

**Funding (FY2006)**
Total: $10,697,080
Federal: $10,697,080
  - Department of Energy: $4,344,862
  - Additional LIHEAP funding: $6,352,218

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development distributes grants to 23 community action, nonprofit, and local government agencies throughout the state.
These agencies accept applications, determine eligibility, and provide weatherization services, such as performing energy audits and implementing suggested measures.

**Eligibility (FY2006)**
State residents with household incomes at or below 130% of poverty are eligible for assistance. The Weatherization Assistance Program prioritizes services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and households with children.

**Participation (2006)**
Households served: 1,036

**Seasonal, Health-, and Income-Related Disconnection Policy**
Virginia does not have state-mandated disconnection policies related to temperature, health, or income.