



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

KODY H. KINSLEY • Secretary

CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services

December 03, 2024

Dear County Directors of Social Services

Attention: County Directors of Social Services, Energy Administrators, Managers & Supervisors

Subject: Energy Disaster Funds DCDL 2024

Priority: Time Sensitive, Action & Response Required

I. General Information

The North Carolina General Assembly has approved \$9 million in Disaster Energy Assistance for the following North Carolina counties: **Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey** counties.

NOTE: This is notice of the anticipated allocation that will be advanced to the local County Department of Social Services. You will receive notification of when the funds will be available.

Individuals and households who live in one of the disaster counties listed above can apply for Disaster Energy benefits. The households must have been impacted by Hurricane Helene, suffered a loss because of Hurricane Helen, and meet all eligibility criteria to receive disaster benefits. This letter provides guidance and procedures counties must follow while implementing and executing Disaster Energy Assistance. All employees assisting with taking Disaster Energy applications should review this DCDL carefully before the application process begins on **January 15, 2025**.

The Department will review spending for all 25 counties by March 31, 2025. The review will assess whether each county has utilized its allocated funds and whether there is any unspent balance. If counties have not used their allocated funds or have a large remaining balance, the Department may reallocate those funds. Reallocation will be made to counties that demonstrate a greater need for assistance. The base period for these benefits will follow Crisis Intervention Program rules. Energy Disaster applications will be accepted starting **January 15, 2025**.

II. Implementation Instructions and Eligibility Criteria:

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

LOCATION: 820 S. Boylan Avenue, McBryde Building, Raleigh, NC 27603

MAILING ADDRESS: 2401 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2401

www.ncdhhs.gov • TEL: 919-855-6335 • FAX: 919-334-1018

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY / AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Households will have the option to either apply for Disaster Energy via telephone or in person at one of the 25 local DSS agencies in the counties approved to operate Disaster Energy. The 2025 Disaster Gross Income Limit of 60% of State Median Income (SMI) will be used to determine eligibility for Disaster Energy and the income chart is below for your convenience. This modified Disaster Gross Income is part of LIHEAP Disaster flexibilities set forth by our federal partners with the Administration of Children and Families (ACF). Counties will follow CIP policy guidelines for citizenship verification, income, heating/fuel type, and Energy service provider. Energy Disaster funds are not limited to Energy vendors or vendors with an active vendor agreement in the NC FAST system due to the flexibility of the county Authorized Representative(A/R) process. Counties will be able to issue county checks for the Energy assistance requested and will be reimbursed via direct deposit using the county A/R process.

There will be no maximum benefit per household and there will be no limit to the number of times a household can apply for assistance as long as funding is available. The case worker must verify and document the amount needed to provide the service being requested by the applicant. If a household applies for assistance that will result in a payment of \$5,000 or more, for example, furnace repair or replacement, the supervisor will need to complete a review of the case prior to the application being authorized to ensure validity of the request and to verify the cost with the vendor.

Should the household need assistance with two different requests at the same time, it will require two separate applications. For example, the household comes in to apply for assistance to get their furnace repaired due to it being damaged during Hurricane Helene, but they need assistance with a space heater or blankets to keep their family warm until the company can repair the furnace due to the company being unable to make the repairs for several days, this will require two separate applications.

Applications must be processed within 10 calendar days of the application date and all verifications must be received within 5 calendar days. If the household was not impacted by and did not suffer a loss due to Hurricane Helene, evaluate the household for other available Energy Programs that may be able to assist them with their heating-related crisis.

Below are examples of when a household could be approved for the Energy Disaster Program if they meet all eligibility criteria and when they would not be approved.

Example 1: Household comes in to apply for assistance with having their furnace repaired. During the interview, the caseworker determines that the furnace was damaged during Hurricane Helene and the household does not have the resources to have the repairs completed. The caseworker determines that the household meets all eligibility requirements, and the application is approved for the amount quoted by the repair company.

Example 2: Household comes in to apply for assistance to replace their furnace. During the interview, the case worker determined that the furnace was not damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Helene and that the furnace had been broken for two years. The caseworker completes the interview and finds that the only disaster related loss the household experienced during Hurricane Helene

was power outage. The application for Disaster Energy would be denied and the caseworker would evaluate if there were a heating-related crisis that regular energy funds could assist with. The case worker would also make any referrals to community-based organizations that may be able to assist with furnace repair.

III. Completing the Disaster Energy Application

Use the DSS-8178D to determine eligibility. See attachment for the Disaster Energy Application. All disaster Energy applications require an interview. Caseworkers may interview directly from the guided interview in NC FAST or complete the paper DSS-8178D and then key into NC FAST. Applications must be keyed into NC FAST within one (1) business day of the date of application.

Households cannot apply at any of the 25 county DSS locations and must apply in the county where they reside. Applicants that resided in one of the 25 IA counties at the time of the disaster but has since relocated to a non-IA county are not eligible for Disaster Energy Assistance. Those applicants would need to apply for appropriate Energy assistance (CIP/LIEAP/WAP) in the county in which they currently reside.

If the applicant did not live in a disaster county at the time of the disaster or if they did not experience loss due to the disaster, deny the application for no disaster energy related emergency.

Accept applicant's statement regarding disaster related loss and timeframe of loss and document in NC FAST.

IV. Service Completion Time Frame

Once the household has been found eligible for the Disaster Energy Program, services must be rendered and completed within 45 days of approval. Caseworkers must verify with the service provider that the work can be completed within that time frame to ensure the eligible household receives the approved benefit to heat their home in a timely manner. Once verbal verification is received by the service provider, the case worker should approve the application, and the county should issue payment.

V. Partial Payments

If a county has expended the majority of their funds and a household needs assistance with more than is available, the caseworker must pend the application for the household to come up with the remaining balance prior to approving the application. If the household cannot come up with the remaining balance within five (5) calendar days, the application must be denied.

VI. Employee Applications:

Any County DSS employee who wishes to apply for Energy Disaster Benefits must apply in person rather than by telephone and the application must be taken and processed by a supervisor designated by the county social services director.

VII. Return Payments

If a full or partial payment is returned, counties will complete the return/overpayment process in NC FAST.

VIII. Use of Disaster Energy Funds

Disaster Energy payments can be used by recipient households to cover the costs listed below:

1. Utility bill assistance.
2. Utility reconnection costs/fees.
3. Utility deposits.
4. Utility meter repair
5. Propane/Fuel Oil tanks
6. Natural Gas/Propane line repair
7. Propane/Fuel Oil delivery
8. Insulation replacement
9. Necessary wiring/circuit board replacement to be able to heat home
10. Repair or replacement costs for furnaces.
11. Coats and blankets, as tangible benefits to keep individuals warm.
12. Space heaters/electric heaters.

Disaster Energy payments cannot be used by recipient households to cover costs such as:

1. Payment for water/sewer.
2. Well pump repair/replacement
3. Mortgage or rental assistance.
4. Ramps and wheelchairs.
5. School uniforms and school supplies.
6. Clothing (except for coats).
7. Mattresses, cots, air beds, and pillows.

Disaster Energy Assistance Gross Income Limits

No.	Maximum
Eligible In	Countable
Household	Income

1	\$2,728
2	\$3,568
3	\$4,407
4	\$5,247
5	\$6,086
6	\$6,926
7	\$7,083
8	\$7,241
9	\$7,398
10	\$7,555
11	\$7,713
12	\$7,870

Training for all 25 counties listed above will take place on December 18, 2024, and December 19, 2024. Please ensure all staff who will be responsible for administering the Disaster Energy Program are in attendance at one of the available sessions. Please use the links below to register by December 13, 2024.

Please register for Disaster Energy Assistance 2024 12.18.24 on Dec 18, 2024, 1:00 PM EST at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5796158452617827168>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

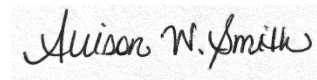
Please register for Disaster Energy Assistance 2024 12.19.24 on Dec 19, 2024, 9:00 AM EST at:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8722502052873996637>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Please submit any questions regarding this information to your Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Specialist at DSS.Policy.Questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,



Allison W. Smith, Deputy Director
Division of Social Services, Economic and Family Services

AWS/ebb