



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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You asked for a description of the eligibility criteria for energy assistance programs.

SUMMARY

The Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) and the Contingency Heating Assistance Program (CHAP) help low- and moderate-income households pay their heating bills. Both programs have income and assets limits. For CEAP, the income limits are higher for “vulnerable” households, i.e., those that have a member who is over age 59, under age six, or who has a disability. CHAP is available to moderate income households that are ineligible for CEAP. For both programs, liquid assets above a certain level (\$10,000 for homeowners and \$7,000 for renters) count towards the income limits.

The Department of Social Services administers the programs in conjunction with community action agencies. Further information about program benefits and how to apply is available at <http://www.ct.gov/dss/cwp/view.asp?a=2353&q=305188> or by calling 800-842-1508.

In addition to these state programs, Operation Fuel, a non-profit organization, provides limited energy assistance to households who are ineligible for CEAP or CHAP or who have exhausted their benefits under these programs. Further information about applying for assistance from Operation Fuel or making contributions to it is available at <http://www.operationfuel.org/>.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

CEAP and CHAP are open to citizens and permanent legal aliens (e.g., people with “green cards”). People who are in the country on temporary visas, such as student or tourist visas, and undocumented aliens are not eligible. Both programs have income and asset limits.

Under CEAP, vulnerable households must earn up to 200% of the federal poverty level to qualify for benefits. Other, non-vulnerable, households can earn up to 150% of the federal poverty level. CHAP serves moderate-income households who are not eligible for CEAP whose income is up to 60% of the state median income. Any household in which all members participate in the Temporary Family Assistance; State Supplement to the Aged, Blind and Disabled; or Refugee Cash Assistance programs is automatically considered income eligible for energy assistance benefits, but must meet all other eligibility requirements to participate. Table 1 describes the maximum income levels for the programs (income limits increase proportionately for households with more than seven members).

Table 1: Maximum Income Levels for Energy Assistance Programs

<i>Household Size</i>	<i>CEAP-Vulnerable Households</i>	<i>CEAP-Other Households</i>	<i>CHAP</i>
1	\$22,340	\$16,755	\$31,815
2	30,260	22,695	41,605
3	38,180	28,635	51,394
4	46,100	34,575	61,184
5	54,020	40,515	70,973
6	61,940	46,455	80,762
7	69,860	52,395	82,598

Both programs are open to homeowners and to tenants who pay for heat directly. Tenants whose heat is included in their rent are also eligible for CEAP if (1) their household income is up to 150% of the federal poverty level (the third column of Table 1) and (2) their rent is at least 30% of their gross income.

In determining income eligibility, the programs considers a household's liquid assets such as checking and savings accounts, stocks, bonds, and individual retirement accounts (for recipients who are at least 59-and-one-half years old). Under both programs, the first \$10,000 of a homeowner's liquid assets and the first \$7,000 of a renter's liquid assets is disregarded. Any amount of liquid assets over that limit is added to the household's income to determine eligibility.

Applicants must provide proof of income and assets for all household members who may reside with them, for the four weeks prior to the application date. If natural gas or electricity is the heating source, the applicant must provide a copy of that bill which must be in the name of the applicant or a household member who is an adult or an emancipated minor.

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