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Applications are available for heating assistance grants

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Eligible households can begin applying today for grants through the 2007 winter heating assistance program.

The program, Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, begins today and all needy families are encouraged to apply for the grants before the extreme cold hits Illinois.

Through LIHEAP, a state-and federally-funded energy assistance program run by the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, heating bill payments are made on behalf of households with incomes of up to 150 percent of the federal poverty level. A single person household can qualify with a monthly income of up to \$1,276, a two-person household can qualify with a monthly income of up to \$1,711 and a family of four can earn up to \$2,581 to qualify for the program. Benefits are paid directly to the utility.

"We are making every effort to help families stay connected to their heat and energy during the winter, so they don't have to make impossible choices between paying their heating bills or putting food on the table," Gov. Rod. Blagojevich said. "With winter temperatures approaching fast, I urge all families who are eligible for LIHEAP to apply now so they can be safe and healthy in the months ahead."

Applications from the elderly, disabled persons, and other priority households were accepted on Sept. 1. The winter heating program is expected to serve 300,000 households this winter with an estimated \$150 million in state and federal funding.

"The LIHEAP program benefits families and seniors across Illinois," said Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services Director Barry Maram. "We are aggressively reaching out to every community, through our local community action agencies, to make sure that families know what benefits are available to help them stay warm and safe in the winter."

For a complete listing of LIHEAP's local community action agencies and additional information about the grant program, go to www.liheapillinois.com, or call the toll-free Keep Warm Illinois hotline at 877-411-9276.

For energy assistance and weatherization tips visit www.keepwarm.illinois.gov or call toll-free 877-411-9276.

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