



## **Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) Program Now Accepting Applications**

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs announces that the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is now accepting applications for the upcoming heating season, which runs from November 1, 2011 through April 30, 2012. The DCA administers this federal program, which provides low-income households with money to help pay their heating bills and makes provisions for emergency heating system services and emergency fuel assistance. The application can also be used to apply for the Universal Service Fund Program (USF), which is a state-funded initiative to help make natural gas and electric heating bills more affordable for low-income households.

“During these tough economic times, many New Jersey households are still struggling to pay their bills. They shouldn’t have to make a choice over whether to pay their heating bill or some other necessity, now that winter has arrived,” said Governor Christie. “If heating is a concern this winter, families should take advantage of this invaluable program and submit their applications as soon as possible.”

To be eligible for LIHEAP benefits, a household must be responsible for home heating, either directly or included in the rent, and have a gross income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. To be eligible for USF benefits, a household must have a gross income at or below 175% of the federal poverty level, and pay more than 3% of its annual income for electric or natural gas. If a household has electric heat, it must spend more than 6% of its annual income on electricity to be eligible. Assistance toward heating costs depends on income, household size, fuel type, and heating region.

To learn how to apply for LIHEAP, go to [www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/hea.html](http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/hea.html) or call 1-800-510-3102. Households should contact the authorized local community action agency or organization in their area, listed at [www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/localagencies.html](http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/localagencies.html) on the DCA website. For persons age 60 or older, or who are disabled, applications may be received and returned by mail.