

## **Energy Assistance Programs**

The Opportunity Council offers bill assistance to eligible households for their home heating and energy bills. Your household must be income eligible to receive assistance. Depending on the time of year, we can help with the following bills: electricity, natural gas, propane, heating oil, and wood. For each of the programs, your household may receive each once per program year (October through September). You do not have to be in arrears to receive assistance.

### **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)—Whatcom/Island/San Juan Counties**

- LIHEAP is a federally funded heating assistance program that assists low-income individuals and families with bill assistance through a one-time grant payment on their electric, natural gas, propane, heating oil, or wood heating bills.
- This program is generally offered seasonally starting around October/November and goes through June (or when funds are exhausted).
- The grant varies from \$100 to \$1,000 depending on household size, average monthly income, housing type, and annual heating bills.
- HOMEOWNERS ONLY: may be eligible to receive assistance repairing or replacing your main heating unit through the LIHEAP Furnace Repair program. We can assist with all heating types including forced-air furnaces, baseboard heating, parlor stoves, heat pumps, and wood stoves.

### **Puget Sound Energy's Home Energy Lifeline Program (PSE HELP)—Whatcom/Island County**

- PSE HELP is a bill assistance program funded by PSE customers (rate payers) that provides a one-time grant on PSE electric bills.
- In order to receive assistance, you must have an active PSE account in your name at your current address.
- This program is offered throughout the program year from October through mid-September (or when funds are exhausted).
- The grant varies from \$100 to \$1,000 depending on household size, monthly income, housing type, and annual electric costs.

### **Cascade Natural Gas's Washington Energy Assistance Fund (CNG WEAF)—Whatcom/Island County**

- WEAF is a bill assistance program funded by CNG customers (rate payers) that provides a one-time grant on CNG natural gas bills.
- In order to receive assistance, you must have an active CNG account in your name at your current address.
- This program is offered throughout the program year from October through mid-September (or when funds are exhausted).
- The amount varies from \$100 to \$500 depending on household size, monthly income, housing type, and annual natural gas costs.

### **Cascade Natural Gas's Winter Help Program (CWH)—Whatcom/Island County**

- Funded by CNG customers through donations, CWH is primarily used to help CNG customers with deposits, reconnections, and preventing disconnections.
- To be eligible, a CNG customer must have an account in their name at their current address.
- It is offered throughout the program year from October through mid-September (or when funds are exhausted).
- The amount varies up to \$350 depending on the amount of assistance needed.

## **Crisis and Disconnection Appointments—Whatcom/Island County Only**

Opportunity Council reserves a limited number of appointments each week for people who are in imminent crisis (meaning they have a 72-hour shutoff notice), completely disconnected for nonpayment, or for those without heat/out of fuel (during LIHEAP season only). Once appointments have been filled for the week, we will have no more until the following Monday. Please contact us on Monday mornings for best availability.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** These appointments use the same four programs listed above and the same rules apply; if you have already received these programs this program year (October to September), you will not be eligible for a crisis appointment until October. We do not have other funds available to help and will refer you to other possible assistance within the community.

## **How to Apply for Assistance**

For more information and to see if you qualify, please contact the Energy Assistance Information Line. Our trained staff will prescreen you for eligibility and schedule you for an upcoming appointment. We also screen your household for other programs like Weatherization, Weatherization + Health, and Home Repair programs. Appointments are in person or by phone; occasionally, there may be a few appointments at satellite locations within the county.

**Whatcom County Residents:** Call (360) 255-2192; Monday-Thursday from 9am-12pm and 1-4pm and Friday from 9am-12pm. Appointments are made by phone only; we do not accept walk-ins. If you are hearing impaired, please contact us via email (see “Contact Us”) or stop by our office at 1111 Cornwall for other possible accommodations.

**Island County Residents** (Camano & Whidbey Islands): Call (360) 679-6577; Monday-Thursday from 9am-12pm and 1-4pm and Friday from 9am-12pm or stop by our Oak Harbor office at 1791 NE 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.

**San Juan County Residents:** Please contact your local family resource center for information regarding the LIHEAP program or other assistance that may be available.

- For Lopez Island, please call the Lopez Island Family Resource Center at (360) 468-4117 or stop by their office at 160 Village Rd in the village.
- For Orcas/Waldrón Islands, please call the Orcas Community Resource Center at (360) 376-3184 or stop by at their new location at 374 2-A North Beach Rd in Eastsound.
- For San Juan Island, please call the San Juan Island Family Resource Center at (360) 378-5246 or stop by their office at 476 Market St in Friday Harbor.

## **What documents to bring to your appointment (for all programs/all counties)**

For an in-person or phone appointment, you must have with you the following documentation:

- Proof of Social Security Numbers for ALL household members.
  - Examples: social security cards, w-2 forms, 1040 tax returns, or other official document with full name and social security number listed. For MINORS only: birth certificates, Enhanced State IDs, or U.S. Passports are acceptable in lieu of social security cards.
- Proof of ALL household income for ALL household members RECEIVED or PAY DATES the preceding three (3) full months prior to the month of the appointment. Example: If your appointment is scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup>, we require income received in March, April, and May.
  - We include all income types (including income on behalf of children like child support, adoption support, or social security benefits).
  - If an adult (18+ years) had no income, they will need to sign additional forms to verify no income.
- Valid Photo ID for the person applying. Photo ID must be government-issued and contain date of birth.
- Recent heating and electricity bill at your current address or your rental lease agreement to verify residence.

\*Note: If you do not have these documents at the time of your appointment, we may be able to give you ten (10) business days to provide them. Your energy assistance will be delayed until we can verify your eligibility. If you have questions about any of the above documents required, please contact our energy assistance department for your county.