News Release

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Lifeline's Home Energy Assistance Program Summer Crisis Program Off to a Busy Start
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PAINESVILLE, Ohio— The Ohio Department of Development and Lifeline, Inc. are helping income-eligible Ohioans maintain their utility service through the Home Energy Assistance Summer Crisis Program. The program helps eligible Ohioans pay an electric bill, purchase an air conditioning unit or fan, or pay for central air conditioning repairs. This year, the program will run from July 1 until September 30, 2025.

"We're proud to partner with community action agencies across the state to deliver this critical support during the hottest months of the year," said Lydia Mihalik, director of the Ohio Department of Development, which administers the program. "Time after time, this program has proven to be a vital lifeline for countless Ohioans when temperatures start to rise."

Over 44,000 households were assisted statewide through the Summer Crisis Program in 2024. In Lake County 348 households received assistance in 2024. Now serving both Lake and Geauga Counties, 87 households have applied for assistance in Lake and Geauga Counties since the start of the program on July 1, with 50 being approved so far—this includes 18 households who have received air conditioners and 11 who have received tower fans.

"We always help so many families through the Summer Crisis Program and we expect this year to be no exception," said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director at Lifeline. "It's already been a very hot start to summer and our goal with the Summer Crisis Program is always to keep our most vulnerable residents, the elderly and those with health conditions, safe, cool and comfortable in the hot summer months."

The Summer Crisis Program assists low-income households or those that have a disconnection notice, have been shut off, are trying to establish new service on their electric bill, require air conditioning, or those with an elderly household member (60 years or older) who can provide physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed for their health. Qualifying medical conditions can include lung disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, asthma, and others.

To qualify for assistance, Ohioans must have a gross income at or below 175 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a family of up to seven members, and 60 percent of the State Median Income for a family of eight or more members. For a family of four, the annual income must be at or below $56,262.50.

Eligible households can receive up to $500 if they are a customer of a regulated utility, or $800 if they are a customer of unregulated utilities such as electric cooperatives and municipal utilities. The assistance is applied to their utility bill, or to purchase an air conditioning unit or fan, or pay for central air conditioning repairs.

Starting this year, applying for assistance and managing an account will be easier than ever. A new, streamlined online portal will be available at energyhelp.ohio.gov. To get started, Ohioans must register for an OHID account, which provides a secure and convenient way to access their HEAP account.

“We know that when someone is facing a crisis, every minute counts,” said Director Mihalik. “This new online system makes it faster and easier for Ohioans to apply for help — so they can get the support they need, when they need it most.”

Registration takes less than 7 minutes, and can be completed in these easy steps:

- Visit energyhelp.ohio.gov, and click “Log into the EA portal.”
- Click “Create an OHID,” and follow the six-step account creation process.
- Ensure account security by setting up multi-factor authentication.

To apply for the program, clients are required to schedule an appointment with Lifeline, Inc. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 1-440-381-8230 or visiting https://app.capappointments.com/. Appointments will be added daily for the following business day to accommodate those whose electric is already disconnected. Appointments will be for Summer Crisis Program applicants only. Customers applying for HEAP and PIPP will not be given an appointment, but have the options to apply online or to drop off, fax or mail applications and all verifications to our office for processing. A Lifeline drop box is located in the first-floor lobby at 8 N. State Street.

For the first time this year, Geauga County’s HEAP Summer Crisis Program will also be operated by Lifeline, with appointments available at our Newbury office.

Appointments will also be offered at some of Lake County’s senior citizens centers throughout the summer crisis season. These appointments can be scheduled directly through the senior center. Currently appointments are available at Eastlake Senior Center on July 30, Willoughby Senior Center on August 6, Mentor Senior Center on August 20 and Madison Senior Center on August 27. We expect more appointments to become available at other centers as we move into the summer, including at locations in Geauga County.

Additionally, Lifeline offers appointments at the Wickliffe Family Resource Center on Mondays. Appointments at Wickliffe Family Resource Center can be made by calling the appointment line at 440-381-8230 or calling the office at 440-350-9160.

Clients need to bring copies of the following documents to their appointment:

- Copies of their most recent energy bills.
- A list of all household members and proof of income for the last 30 days or 12 months for each member.
- Proof of U.S. citizenship or legal residency for all household members.
- Proof of disability (if applicable).
- Physician documentation that cooling assistance is needed for a household member’s health.

For more information about the features of the Summer Crisis Program locally and what is needed to apply,

contact Lifeline's Energy Assistance Office at 440-350-9160 or visiting our website at www.lclifeline.org. Lifeline's offices are located at 8 North State Street Suite 300 in Painesville and 12375 Kinsman Road Building H Suite 17 in Newbury. Additional information can also be found at www.energyhelp.ohio.gov or by calling (800) 282-0880.

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers was founded in 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County residents by providing them assistance and life skills programming that is designed to increase self-sufficiency. In 1980 Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County, UWLC, and in 1987 was designated a community action agency by the Ohio Department of Development, ODOD. In 2008, Lifeline was designated as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Lifeline received interim designation as Geauga County's community action agency in 2020.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping Lake and Geauga Counties' low-income residents break the cycle of poverty and make the transition from agency-dependency to self-sufficiency. Lifeline's current programming includes services in the healthcare, housing & energy assistance, information & referral services, guardianship, and financial education. Our motto is 'helping people, changing lives.' Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODOD, the Lake County Board of Commissioners, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the City of Mentor, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities and through private donors.