

EAP Advisory Board  
4/24/20 Meeting Minutes

Participants: Jeanne Agri, (BMCA), Shannon Nolin (BMCA), Steve Tower (NHLA), Ray Burke (NHLA), Pradip Chattopadhyay (OCA), Janice Johnson (Eversource), Sandra Morin (Eversource), Sue Corson (Unitil), Jessica Allen (Liberty), Lisa Sheehy (NHEC), Karen Emis-Williams (NHMWDA), Amanda Noonan (NHPUC), Rorie Patterson (NHPUC)

- 1) Townsquare Media
  - Ryan Sheehy of Townsquare Media provided a presentation on Digital Marketing Strategy. Mr. Sheehy's presentation explained the nature of consumer-minded digital marketing and how it can be used to raise awareness of EAP and how to apply. The presentation explained the techniques Townsquare can use to ensure a message is appropriately reaching its target audience.
  - After the presentation, a discussion on marketing took place.
  - Main point is to raise awareness and encourage people to apply.
  - Utilities were asked to check if they have room in their admin budgets to do more outreach given what has been approved up to this point
    - New Hampshire Electric Co-op said she thinks budgets are going to be very tight. They're already looking at expenses now and would have to take it up the chain.
    - Eversource agreed. Eversource is also going to be doing more coordinating between EAP and HEA so not sure if they would have extra room in budget.
    - Would still be helpful for utilities to confirm this before we ask for more money to do any additional marketing.
    - Clarification that it wouldn't come out of general operating budget for utilities but that there might be wiggle room in "admin costs," which have historically been underspent compared to what was budgeted for the program year.
  - PSA has been running across four radio stations for 6 to 8 weeks, and the PSAs will be extended so they continue to run
  - Discussion regarding the creation of a Facebook page for EAP resulted in BMCA agreeing to look into developing a page to increase social media presence of EAP
- 2) Review of January 2020 draft minutes
  - Draft minutes from 1/24/20 meeting were approved without edits.
- 3) Customer surveys
  - CAAs are not currently doing face to face interviews so haven't been doing customer surveys. Need to discuss what to do going forward
  - CAAs have about 11,000 emails that they could send the survey to
  - Group discussed whether to do a survey monkey via email now and in person surveys in fall when walk-in traffic might increase or wait and do the email and in person survey at the same time
    - What is the concern about splitting surveys up between in-person and email?
      - Some concern that we might get different results based on timing of the survey.

- Is it worth just holding off and waiting until February?
      - Some asked if we would be more likely to get a response now when people aren't working. But others suggested this might make the results different than what we would receive under normal circumstances
    - Also some concern that many seniors don't have email. So should make sure we provide both options
    - Whatever we do, it was decided that this survey would not be the benchmark given the current crisis and limitations
    - Consensus reached to wait until August to do the email and survey monkey at the same time
- 4) Enrollment
- 28% of applications were new compared to recertifications.
  - People are mostly coming to CAAs for food and then CAAs screen for EAP and other assistance.
  - CAAs also aren't removing people from EAP right now who have failed to reapply so that will cause an increase too
  - Should we be tracking the number of people who should have renewed but did not?
    - CAAs send out letters with applications and 45 day letters. A call is also made 15 days prior to enrollment end date.
  - Discussion of whether households should have more time after state of emergency ends to complete recertification
    - CAAs intend to be flexible, but procedure for doing it is the challenge
    - Might be difficult to re-send the 45 day letters as letters are an automatic process. Any new letter would have to be done manually
- 5) Data Collection
- CAAs can pull the enrollment info and can do it by tier (broken down by new applications and what tier they fall into)
    - The enrollment reports break enrollment down by tier which allows comparison. One limitation of the enrollment reports is it won't compare new enrollments versus recertifications.
    - NHLA discussed that people could be experiencing a significant change in income at the end of July when extra UI benefits of \$600/wk ends.
      - Some people receiving that might not be eligible right now or might be eligible for a lower discount, but they will lose \$2,400 per month per person after 7/31
  - Reviewed projections based on a 10% enrollment increase
    - Would take us from \$2.6 million to \$1.3 million over a pretty short period of time
    - Projection does not carry into 2021, but concluded that 36,000 is not a sustainable enrollment number. The Commission will update the projections to include the 2020-2021 program year.
    - Question about whether a 10% increase in enrollment due to changed economic conditions is the right estimate
      - One economist used 10% as well to estimate increase to uncollectibles

- The projections uses the utilities forecasted kWh sales for the 2019-2020 program year, however, we should expect kWh sales to be lower
- NH PUC has not opened a formal proceeding to consider how collection activity should be handled after the state of emergency ends.

6) CAA Procedures Manual

- NHLA raised concerns about income verification given lack of access to documents by many people, and raised using self-attestation for applicants unable to provide required documentation. NHLA stated that DHHS is allowing self-attestations for their programs at this time.
- BMCA provided the following information:
  - CAAs are giving people more time
  - CAAs do have a form for people to self-attest when they have no income
  - CAAs believe most of the time, applicants can get something
  - Relatively easy for applicants to get documentation from UI
  - CAAs think chasing the paperwork after the fact would be very difficult
  - CAAs do not think this is an issue that is holding up applications
  - Applicants can send info even after denied to reopen claim.
- NHLA asked if the group could get data about new applications broken down by number of denials and reason
  - CAAs will look at this data. It was agreed that this information would be monitored and an ad hoc meeting convened before the regular July meeting if necessary
- NHLA proposed modifying the procedures manual to allow CAAs to use reasonably anticipated income rather than the 30 day lookback of income verification when income from the past 30 days is not representative of current circumstances (i.e., when applicant has just become unemployed)
  - Concerns were raised that the current EAP income determination process mirrors LIHEAP and WAP procedures, and changing the procedures for EAP may cause administrative inefficiencies.
  - NHLA is concerned that the alternative of requiring newly unemployed to return in two weeks with further income documentation is likewise potentially inefficient.
- No conclusion was reached on this issue before the end of the meeting.