

EAP Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
October 22, 2021

Present: Gary Cronin (DOE), Sue Corson (UES), Chris Vought (CAA EAP Program Manager), Ray Burke (NHLA), Karen Emis-Williams (NHLWAA), Don Kreis (OCA), Jessica Arnold (Liberty), John Braswell (Eversource), Robyn Sarette (NHEC), Kenny Landry (CAP, Belknap-Merrimack Counties, Inc.)

**1) Introductions**

**2) Review of July 23, 2021 draft minutes**

No changes to draft. Unanimously approved as final minutes.

Action item: DOE will post final version of minutes on its website.

**3) EAP Brochure – Update**

Draft of brochure is with UES communications staff. Hope to have something back next week and UES will circulate the draft to the Board.

Action item: UES will circulate a draft of the brochure.

**4) EAP PY 2021-2022 budgets – timing and process**

NHLA raised discussion of the triennial process evaluation and the RFP to hire a consultant to help review the program and how they relate to the docket to review the current budget. OCA thought DOE had the authority to approve the budgets without PUC approval, but there is some ambiguity or disagreement about who has authority over the EAP under the statutes that created the new DOE. OCA is concerned about questions that have been raised in other, unrelated dockets about the cost of EAP and how it fits into the bigger picture of customers' electric bills. OCA thinks ambiguity about who is responsible for approving the EAP budgets might need to be resolved through legislation.

UES has submitted first advanced payment and is moving forward to enroll and unenroll. All of the other utilities are proceeding in the same way.

There was some discussion to clarify that the interim budgets have been approved through November 2021.

NHLA raised concerns about whether the EAP balance will be a factor in the proceeding. DOE and OCA pointed out that many customers are likely to see increased rates around February 2021

due to various factors, including recent and pending rate cases. Historically, rate increases lead to a spike in new EAP applications. So there is reason to anticipate that EAP enrollment will increase in the near term.

#### **5) NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program (NHERAP)– process utilities follow**

NHLWAA members are seeing a lot of customers disconnected even after being approved for NHERAP assistance. There was some discussion about the notification that the utility companies receive from the CAAs. NHLWAA members are seeing customers who have received an approval letter; however, the utility company doesn't yet have the verification, and the customer is being disconnected as a result. There have been some challenges to getting the issue resolved and the customer reconnected.

NHLA raised concerns about the time it is taking to process NHERAP applications and whether the PUC rules provide enough flexibility for a customer to receive a decision before being disconnected.

Discussion about the process the utilities have in place when someone has an application pending or when a customer has been disconnected but has received approval for NHERAP. Utilities are trying to work with people who contact them before disconnection, but they are seeing people who contact them only after being disconnected. Utilities are trying to coordinate with CAAs to obtain information.

UES regularly receives info from Strafford County CAP through Empower, which has been very helpful. UES receives some information several times per week and more detailed information once per month. The challenge is that not all CAAs have Empower, which enables the regular communication.

Reminded Board that utilities have dedicated agency lines to help facilitate reconnection. Utilities will recirculate contact info for social services staff and NHLWAA will circulate to its members.

Discussed whether each CAA could identify a point person to track who is in the NHERAP queue and where they are in the process so that information can be shared with the utilities.

#### Action items:

- Utilities will recirculate dedicated agency contact info
- CAA EAP Program Manager will discuss the possibility of identifying a point person at each CAA.

#### **6) Electric Assistance Program (EAP) Triennial Process Evaluation**

Discussed that this does not need to be raised in the docket to review the current program budgets at this time. OCA will reach out to DOE staff about this. The Board agreed that time would be better spent working on issuing the RFP to hire a consultant to evaluate the program.

#### **7) HB 549 System Benefits Charge**

Bill inadvertently removed the language authorizing EAP, but the sponsor, Rep. Vose, assured OCA that he will fix that problem going forward.

#### **8) New business**

Discussed that there might be additional FAP assistance coming but has not yet been authorized.

Discussed low-income water assistance program and new Homeowner Assistance Fund.

Discussed the EAP and FAP enrollment numbers and the difference in the application processes and eligibility requirements compared to NHERAP. For NHERAP, there are less administrative burdens because self-certification is permitted. Customers can access all three programs through the CAAs, but it's possible that some people are not following through with the application process for EAP and FAP because of the additional administrative burden of providing more documentation.

Discussed that there is still work being done to determine how to update the FAP and EAP software.