



LIHEAP Action Day 2012

Making the Most of Your LIHEAP Advocacy

Low-income Forum on Energy (LIFE)
January 20th, 2012

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Agenda

- **Effective advocacy requires careful planning**
- **Develop a comprehensive action plan**
- **Develop your specific plan for LIHEAP Action Day**
- **Make your visits brief but effective**
- **Summarize key points and seek future communication**
- **Other tools to strengthen your advocacy tool kit**
- **Presenter's contact information**

Effective advocacy requires careful planning

- Focus on those families and customers in need
- Document the need with facts and anecdotes
- Develop a specific plan, then work that plan specifically
- Zero in on the decision makers -- especially Hill staffers!
- Partner with others who can influence the cause
- Prepare to respond to changes
- Expect regulatory challenges
- Anticipate “potholes”
- Remember - focus on those in need



Successful LIHEAP advocacy takes time, effort, dedication, coordination and consistency



Develop a comprehensive action plan

Start with a coordinated communications plan

- **Draft the LIHEAP “story” for your area – be factual but succinct**
 - Tell the “good” news of LIHEAP in 2009 through 2011 by highlighting stories of those customers who benefited from LIHEAP
 - Detail the LIHEAP specifics for your area, including assistance dollars coming into your area/congressional district/state, as well as dollars still needed for those not getting help - demonstrate the “affordability gap”
- **Develop a LIHEAP Action Day external communications plan**
 - Use the LIHEAP “story” as the basis for your low-income communications
 - Identify opportunities to share the story anywhere/ any way you can
 - Develop press releases for local, state and regional media channels, and seek pre-and post-Action Day communication prospects
 - Leverage other company external and internal communication channels (i.e., external website, company intranet, business publications, community outreach programs, etc.)

**Specific planning is vital to the success of
your overall LIHEAP advocacy plan**



Develop a comprehensive action plan

Seek support from “new” LIHEAP allies

- Pursue endorsements and / or resolutions from allies
 - Organizations that serve LIHEAP customers (i.e., Area Agencies on Aging, Community Action Agencies, The Salvation Army, HHS Regional Directors, etc.) can add value



Leverage partnership communication plans

- Share the LIHEAP “story” and encourage partners to publish through their communication channels
 - Websites and newsletters of allies, service group conferences and other means provide ways to share the LIHEAP message



Draft and pursue editorial opportunities

- Seek meetings with newspapers, TV/cable stations and others
 - Media outlets often seek public service announcements and LIHEAP may serve that need



Leverage EEI or AGA LIHEAP Advocacy web pages

- Both websites enable fast and easy contacts to Congress by all



Alliances and communications are crucial to executing your plan effectively and efficiently



Developing your specific plan for LIHEAP Action Day

Draft a schedule of visits to your Congressional offices

- **Ask your DC office to identify those Congressional offices that are allies (in order to strengthen) as well as those that may not be (in order to persuade)**
 - If you have a Washington office, work hand in glove with it! DC office has many corporate priorities; check to ensure they mesh with your LIHEAP advocacy effort.
- **Leverage your DC contacts to secure appointments for Action Day**
 - Ask DC office to make the visits with you (or more so, you with them); they know the players and will surely make the visits more productive
 - Get their help to get you to the “right” people - legislative aides that focus on energy, appropriations (or LIHEAP) – again, especially those who may not be strong supporters
 - Prepare a specific time schedule to conduct the visits
 - Time with reps may be brief, so “script” your visits to maximize value
 - Congressional schedules are tight, so respect that for those you visit
 - Confirm dates and times of visits about one week prior

**Your LIHEAP Action Day plan requires precision,
teamwork and clarity of message**



Make your visits brief but effective

- **Respect the time of those whom you are visiting**
 - Time with reps may be brief, as Congressional schedules are tight, so respect appointment times for those you are visiting – be on time
- **Offer thanks for their on-going support of LIHEAP funding**
- **Focus on key points up front and clarify the “ask”**
 - Support \$5.1 billion in funding for LIHEAP
 - Cosponsor/Support the expected Markey bill to reauthorize LIHEAP at \$7.6 billion
- **Explain the benefits (shortcomings) of current funding, and share the realities (good/bad) if funding changes**
 - Share the “**affordability gap**” for your state, and how many are impacted by that back home (make it local)
 - As some of the staffers and representatives may not know all there is to know about LIHEAP, provide additional data on LIHEAP based on their interest and receptivity



Be clear on why you are visiting, and on what you hope Congress will do to help LIHEAP recipients

Summarize key points and seek future communication

- **Educate Congressional staff and members on how your utility and other service providers are helping**
 - Other assistance funds, utility donations, community partnerships and initiatives help but are just not enough
- Ask how you can help bring the urgency of message to focus for Congress
- **Provide a “leave-behind” document on LIHEAP**, summarizing the message just shared and focusing on the importance of LIHEAP to constituents in need
- **Provide contact information** and build relationship for future follow-up
- **Thank them** for their time and attention
- **Follow-up** from home with a letter of appreciation and reinforcement



A successful visit will enable a partnership that should offer great future value to your LIHEAP efforts



Other tools to strengthen your advocacy “toolkit”

Various models and examples of useful tools are available at:

- **The National Fuel Funds Network (NFFN)**
- **LIHEAP Clearinghouse**
- **Edison Electric Institute (EEI)**
 - www.SupportLIHEAP.org
 - One-page LIHEAP “story”
 - LIHEAP Action Day planning tools
 - LIHEAP editorials and public service announcements
 - Media release models (newspaper, websites, Twitter, etc.)
 - Model letters to Congress, state legislators and local power brokers
 - Resolutions and other demonstrations of partnership
 - “Planning Your Visit” audio guide
 - “Affordability gap” data and impact
 - And more

**Take advantage of the resources and tools available to
make LIHEAP Action Day 2012 the best ever!**



Contact Information

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Email me with any questions you may have, and I'll be happy to provide examples of working documents, links to referenced websites and more.

THANK YOU!