



Vulnerable Populations: Focus on Aging

NEUAC
June 27, 2018

For this “Focus on Aging” session, success means we have provided you with information on...

- § An energy assistance model that helps prevent electric & gas utility service shut-offs for **moderate-income households** suffering from temporary financial emergencies.
- § The need to bring energy assistance to **65 & older** moderate-income households, many with caregivers who also are in need of energy assistance.
- § How to help **gain funding** for this energy assistance model for potential implementation in your state.

NJ SHARES Mission

New Jersey SHARES, Inc. (NJS) is a **statewide non-profit** corporation primarily **providing assistance** to individuals and families in need of help meet their energy and utility burden.

Through advocacy, community outreach, education, information and referral NJ SHARES **connects low and moderate income households** with available resources. grants to those in temporary need of assistance.



NJ SHARES Programs

- § Administers:
 - § Energy fuel funds for New Jersey utilities.
 - § Verizon's Communications Lifeline Program.
 - § Water assistance programs for SUEZ Water customers in multiple states.
 - § New Jersey American Water's Assistance Program.

- § Partners with a network of over 250 community based organizations.

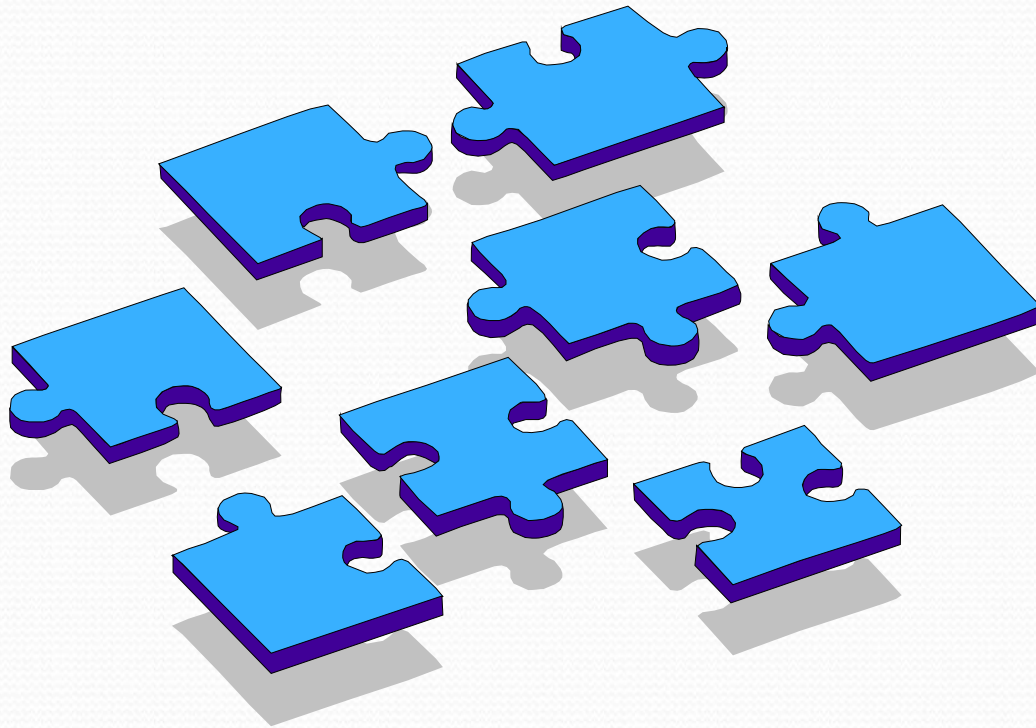


NJ SHARES Highlights

- § Since 1998, has helped more than **185,000 households** in New Jersey with **\$75,000,000** in grants for electricity and natural gas.
- § Won the National Fuel Fund Network's Victorine Q. Adams Award in 2002, 2006 & 2009.



Assistance grants help our neighbors
put their lives back together....



Serves At-Risk Households

- § 19% have children under the age of six
- § 49% had a child 18 or younger
- § 21% are single parent households
- § 55% had a household member of 50 years of age or older
- § 23% have a family member over 60 years of age
- § 82% had employment income
- § 60% have annual income below \$50,000

Grants Helping Those in Need

NJ SHARES provides grants to those in temporary need of assistance:

- § Recipients made an average of \$442 in payments in the 90 days preceding the grant.
- § More likely to have shutoff date passed or be shut off.

ANNOUNCING



NJ SHARES Family Caregiving Grant

- § Targeting caregivers' loved-ones...
- § For 1 or 2-person households where one member is 65 or older.
- § Maximum annual household income limit raised to \$70,000.
- § Moderate-income (less than 400% FPG) NJ caregiving households can also qualify for NJ SHARES assistance.



Why NJ SHARES Established a Family Caregiver Grant

- § More than one million NJ residents serving as caregivers for loved ones living in New Jersey, with 40 million nationwide!
- § Caregiving adds stress and strain to family budgets..
 - § According to AARP's "Family Caregiving and Out of Pocket Cost Study": family caregivers spend on average \$7,000 - 20% of their income, primarily for their loved ones' household bills.
- § On average, the care recipient is 69.4 years old; nearly half of caregivers care for someone age 75 years or older.

Why NJ SHARES established a Family Caregiver Grant cont.

- § Caregivers who are suffering a temporary financial emergency may help those they care for receive grants of up to \$1,400.
- § The grants will be used to either help keep their gas and electric utility service from being discontinued or help get their utility service restored if it has already been shut-off for past due bills.
- § Gross household income of caregivers' loved-ones can be higher than 400% of FPG; Up to \$70,000 or \$5,833 monthly.

NJ SHARES - Outreach to Caregivers



§ Conducts efficient and effective outreach to residents on energy assistance.

§ Participates in more than **300 community outreach events annually** allows us to target outreach to vulnerable populations.

§ Targets outreach to Caregivers through partnership with AARP NJ, Foundation on Aging, National Association of Social Workers, and **24 organizations** within our **network of 260 agencies** that focus on health, disability and senior services.





- § AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, social welfare organization with a membership of 38 million.

- § We help people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, fighting for the issues that matter most to families and strengthening communities.

- § At its heart, the work that AARP and its affiliates do can be summed up in just 12 words:
“We fight for and equip each individual to live their best life.”
It’s all about real possibilities....

Escheat Funding (unclaimed property)

- § Escheat Funding refers to the title transfer of financial assets such as utility deposits, unclaimed utility refunds or other checks in accounts that have been dormant for a very long period of time to a state authority.
- § Institutions with such dormant accounts are required to make efforts - such as sending reminders and issuing notices in publications - to locate the owners of these assets before transferring title to the state under escheat.
- § Some jurisdictions maintain online registries of dormant assets such as bank deposits, which enables their rightful owners to reclaim them since escheat is revocable in most cases.

Key Steps for Gaining Escheats Funding

- § Line up state legislative friends willing to introduce a simple state law.
- § The New Jersey law simply calls for a redirection of up to 75% of annual gas and electric utility escheats - redirected from the state's General Treasury (typically a tiny fraction of a state's budget) to the state's utility regulatory commission.
- § The regulatory commission then issues a RFP for nonprofit organizations to administer utility bill payment grants funded annually by these energy utility escheats.

Focus on Aging

- § **IF** you work for an energy utility, a consumer group, or for state government, or you know someone who does,
and...
- § **IF** you're willing to work collaboratively toward gaining a simple new state law that would redirect energy utility escheats to a fuel fund for energy bill payment assistance...
- § **Then** I'm here to tell you that utilities, consumer groups, and state government working together can gain significant benefits including helping caregivers and their loved ones keep their utility service on if they are experiencing utility shut-off notices from temporary financial emergencies.

Redirecting Utility Escheats to Help Caregivers and Their Loved Ones

- § A key was NJ's gas and electric utilities getting together with the state's major consumer groups. It was not a difficult sell with state politicians anxious to help families who otherwise would have no place to turn.
- § All parties can identify the significant benefits from redirecting an average of more than \$1 million in gas and electric utility escheats into a special fund to help oft-forgotten moderate-income families over LIHEAP income maximums, including caregivers and their loved ones.

These caregivers spend, on average, almost \$7,000 of their own money every year to help their elderly loved ones.

Escheats: Moderate-Income Families Including Caregivers' Loved Ones and Their Caregivers cont.

- § The need to provide assistance for households with incomes above the LIHEAP eligibility standard or after LIHEAP has closed is enormous.
- § Escheat funding has provided critically needed assistance to thousands of households in NJ. The need to provide assistance for households with incomes above the LIHEAP eligibility standard or after LIHEAP has closed is enormous.

Such grants can stop shut-offs of electricity and/or natural gas service or get it turned on!

Escheats: Moderate-Income Families Including Caregivers' Loved Ones and Their Caregivers

- § Utility-related escheats funding can expand the reach of existing energy assistance programs.
- § Programs can be designed to help those who are caregivers & their loved ones.
- § Over \$25 million in New Jersey energy utility escheat funding received has helped over 62,500 individuals and families in the past 13 years with over \$25 million in bill payment assistance.

What Would this Mean to Your State's Energy Utilities?

- § Reduced their cost of capital.
- § Reduced their collection expense.
- § Reduced their uncollectible bill expense.
- § Avoided impairment of regulatory issues and poor public relations from shut-off tragedies.

Helping Vulnerable Populations: Opportunity Knocks

- § In California, approximately **\$5,000,000** are escheated annually to the state's general fund!
- § In Texas, annual utility escheats averaged over **\$3,500,000** – that could fund over 8,000 grants!
- § In Pennsylvania, annual utility escheats averaged approximately **\$2,000,000** with the potential to fund 5,000 grants!

Focus on Aging - Benefits

- § Enabling moderate-income utility customers to **avoid utility shutoffs**, and the usual shutoff-related problems that result;
- § Saving utilities **capital costs, collection expenses and uncollectible bill expenses** from significantly past-due and eventually unpaid electric & gas utility bills; and
- § Helping **avoid regulatory and public relations problems** that can result from shutoff-related candle fires, heat stroke, etc. while **improving relationships with policy makers**.

Focus on Aging - Benefits

§ Enabling thousands of:

- § Caregiving households below 400% of FPG and/or the loved ones they're caring for who are over 65, in a household of 1 or 2, with an income below \$70,000 – to gain grants to help pay off their seriously past-due electric & gas utility bills.
- § Moderate-income utility customers to avoid utility shutoffs, and the usual shutoff-related problems that result.

Focus on Aging: Utilities, Consumer Groups, and Utility Regulators

The result would be a much greater ability to solve tough problems for those in need – those who have no other place to turn - together with an innovative focus on caregivers and their elderly loved ones...

Two Additional Thoughts on Helping Vulnerable Populations

- § **Did you know:** Your state might be able to use the federal government's prescription drug Medicare Part D Low Income Subsidy monthly-supplied database of recipients in your state to arrange for presumptive eligibility and automatic LIHEAP enrollment? **That could greatly increase the number of seniors in your state getting LIHEAP benefits!**
- § **Did you know:** Your state's utilities could significantly increase payments of past due heating bills from low-income working families with children, many who are also caregivers for elderly relatives, by promoting the federal government's Earned Income Tax Credit! **Doing so could bring millions more in energy utility bill payments for very little cost!**

Questions





thank you

For Additional Information

Jim Dieterle

AARP Volunteer

609.865.7615

jdieterle@aarp.org

Jim Jacob

NJ SHARES

609-883-1478

jjacob@njshares.org

