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NATIONAL ENERGY & UTILITY AFFORDABILITY COALITION

How to Greatly Expand the Enrollment of Low-Income Elderly in LIHEAP

Jim Dieterle, AARP Volunteer

PSE&G: 30 Years; AARP: 17 Years

- NJ's largest gas & electric utility: 2 million customers; retired manager customer operations
- AARP NJ state director: 1.3 million members; retired April 2015 & became AARP volunteer
- Part of AARP's community of over 60,000 volunteers
- AARP staff & volunteers: dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all as we age
- AARP is nationwide: a state office in every state

Impact of Home Energy Costs on Older Adults

- Energy costs much greater impact on older consumers with lower incomes
- Often must choose between cutting back on energy or other necessities risking health
- Often unable to afford heating and/or cooling leading to adverse health outcomes

Which Type of Weather-related Event Most Dangerous to Seniors?

- Hurricanes?
- Extreme Cold?
- Tornadoes?
- Extreme Heat?
- Lightning?
- Something Else?

Seniors are Most At-risk for Suffering from Extreme Heat!

- Hypothermia? Seniors suffering from sub-normal body temperatures? No!
- Hyperthermia? Seniors suffering from extreme heat? YES!
- Heat & dehydration can stress seniors already challenged by age & chronic medical conditions

Extreme Heat Brings Risk of Death to Seniors!

- It kills more people than deaths from lightning, hurricanes, & tornadoes combined
- It can lead to organ/brain damage & death
- CDC: heat-related deaths most frequent in 65+ and especially in communities of color
- Often deadliest in areas with only average temperatures - seniors less adapted to heat

Affordable Air Conditioning Critical

- 7 million seniors living at/below fed pov. level
- Pandemic income impacts on caregivers hurt
- CDC: 2/3's of heat-related deaths occur at home, with 91% NOT using air conditioning
- Maricopa Cty, AZ: avg annual heat-associated deaths 46% higher 2014-2019 vs prior 13 yrs.

LIHEAP Benefits Critical for the 65+ Poor - Far Less Than Half Get Them

- Post-pandemic: likely to continue fewer in-person application processes vs. on-line appl.
- 42% of 65+ lack high-speed internet at home
- New York City: 500,000 seniors w/o internet
- Gov. data re. 60+ getting LIHEAP? AZ: 30%; FL: 40%; Ohio: 39%; NY: 40%; PA: 38%

Solution: Auto-enrollment Using State Medicare Part D LIS Database

- OCS allows state LIHEAP prime grantees to decide how to conduct their LIHEAP intake
- SNAP data, etc. already used to auto-enroll
- Fed. gov. provides Medicare Part D (RX) Low Income Subsidy (LIS) databases to every state
- Part D LIS income max: $19,320: 1; $26,130: 2

NJ Uses Part D LIS Data to Auto-Enroll Poor 65+ for LIHEAP Benefits

- HH size/heat source/utility data added to NJ Rx database: LIHEAP database then matched
- If no match, LIHEAP benefits are provided
- First year: 46,537 add'l LIHEAP benefits worth $25 million provided to NJ 65+ households
- NJ 60+ performance: from bottom 25% to top

Estimated Results If NJ Model Used

- AZ: 40,000 more; FL: +108,000; Ohio: +89,000; NY: 146,000+; PA: 62,000+
- Reduced suffering and deaths for YOUR state's 65+ Medicare Part D LIS population
- Greater LIHEAP efficiency gained with lower LIHEAP administrative costs

NOW IS the Time to Become a Change- Agent – a Hero to Seniors

- Huge boomer population turning/already 65+
- $4.5 billion LIHEAP supplemental funding could provide additional benefits for 65+
- 10% of LIHEAP funding can be used for LIHEAP administration plus state gov. infrastructure funding coming from fed. gov.

As An AARP Volunteer, Do Let Me Know If I Can Help You!

"May we each discover our own form of spiritual electricity and light up our world"

Eileen Rivers

Continuing the Learning

- 65+ low-income population, see https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/the-number-of-people-living-alone-in-their-80s-and-90s-is-set-to-soar
- Find your state's LIHEAP 60+ results at https://liheappm.acf.hhs.gov/
- Call or e-mail Jim if questions at jdieterle@aarp.org or call him at 609-865-7615