

# C.E.F.S. Economic Opportunity Corporation

*"Community Action Agency"*



1805 S. Banker Street, P.O. Box 928  
Effingham, Illinois 62401-0928  
PHONE: (217) 342-2193 ~ FAX: (217) 342-4701  
E-MAIL: [cefs@cefseoc.org](mailto:cefs@cefseoc.org)  
WEBSITE: [www.cefseoc.org](http://www.cefseoc.org)

**KEVIN BUSHUR**  
Chief Executive Officer

## LIHEAP PROGRAM UPDATES DUE TO COVID-19

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some updates on the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. We were required by the state to stop in-person customer contact on March 16<sup>th</sup> but C.E.F.S. has continued to provide all our services to customers and will continue to do so. To ensure greater access to the LIHEAP program the state has made the following changes for the remainder of this program year:

- The program ending date has been extended from May to **June 30, 2020**
- The Good Faith Effort requirement has been waived – this allows C.E.F.S. to over-ride the required payment in order to get LIHEAP funds on a customer's account. Customers that still have an outstanding balance after our payment will be instructed to contact their utility to either make payment or if possible, set a payment arrangement.

Steps our agency has taken:

- **Phone applications** – we have been accepting phone applications since March 17<sup>th</sup> and will continue to do so. Customers can call our Outreach Office directly to apply over the phone (see attached).
- **Online applications** – for customers that have the capabilities we have developed an online application accessible on our website and through the C.E.F.S. Facebook page. The link to the online application is: [www.cefseoc.org/liheap](http://www.cefseoc.org/liheap).

**Handling lack of shut off notices:** While we appreciate the steps all the utilities have taken to suspend disconnection and the sending out of disconnect notices during this pandemic, we also understand the unique problems this causes the customer, the utility and even our agency as we struggle to get our funding out to people who desperately need it. As a solution to this we are accepting verbal verification from the utility that a customer would have been in "imminent threat" of disconnect if it were not for the pandemic and we will treat them the same as having a "paper" disconnect notice and will process an application accordingly. I instructed our Outreach Offices last week to begin working with utilities and handling customers in this way. We feel that handling customers in this manner will be a benefit to all. We ask that your company work directly with our local C.E.F.S. Outreach offices to come up with the best way to communicate this information.

Please feel free to share our contact information with all your customers that are struggling to pay their bills right now and encourage them to contact us.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be reached directly at 217-342-2193 ext. 127 or by email at [kwalk@cefseoc.org](mailto:kwalk@cefseoc.org).

Kathy Walk, Energy Program Director

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

**Kathy Walk**

**Energy Program Director**  
217-342-2193 ext 127

**C.E.F.S. OUTREACH OFFICE**  
**COORDINATORS – LIHEAP**

**05-04-2020**

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**CLAY** 618-662-4024

shorvet@cefseoc.org

Front Desk ext 300

Rita Cosner ext 303

LIHEAP ext 305

Stacey Horvet ext 301

618-662-2721 Stacey Fax

Clay County Outreach Office

835 West North

Flora, IL 62839

Front Desk

Individual Fax

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**EFFINGHAM** 217-347-7514

ddepoister@cefseoc.org

Front Desk ext 100

April Baker ext 114

Margo Probst ext 116

Diane Depoister Ext. 115

217-247-7154

Effingham County Outreach Office

202 N. Banker St.

Effingham, IL 62401

217-247-7219 Front Desk

217-347-5331 - Fax

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**FAYETTE** 618-283-2631

apage@cefseoc.org

Lisa Hecht

Britney Gathe

Amie Page

Fayette County Outreach Office

517 W Gallatin St.

Vandalia, IL 62471

618-283-2715-Fax

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**SHELBY** 217-774-4541

mhankins@cefseoc.org

Sharon Cassidy

Monica Hankins

Shelby County Outreach Office

515 N. Cedar

Shelbyville, IL 62565

217-774-3532-Fax

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**MOULTRIE** 217-728-7721

Michelle Hooks

M. Lisa Spencer

Moultrie County Outreach Office

114 E. Harrison St.

Sullivan, IL 61951

217-728-2923-Fax

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**CHRISTIAN** 217-824-4712

jrusher@cefseoc.org

Front Desk ext 200

Jane Hunsche ext 203

Sara Thomas ext 201

Jodi Rusher Ext. 202

Christian County Outreach Office

220 W. Franklin

Taylorville, IL 62568

217-247-7111 Front Desk

Individual -Fax

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**MONTGOMERY** 217-532-5971

cgriggs@cefseoc.org

Jodi King

Brenda Decker

Charity Griggs

Montgomery Co. Outreach Office

8353 Rt. 127, Box 128

Taylor Springs, IL 62089

217-532-2367 Fax