



# County of Santa Cruz

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## HUMAN RESOURCES AGENCY

Cecilia Espinola, Administrator

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(831) 454-4130 or 454-4045 FAX: (831) 454-4642

July 30, 2001

AGENDA: August 14, 2001

### BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

county of ~~santa~~ Cruz

701 Ocean Street

Santa Cruz, CA. 95060

### STATUS REPORT ON ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN

Dear Members of the Board:

Although California's energy crisis appears to have eased in the past two months, there is still an ongoing crisis for low-income residents unable to meet the demands of high energy bills. Consumer energy prices are expected to remain high for the next 5-10 years. In the efforts to address this problem, your Board approved on April 24, 2001, an outreach plan to inform and enroll eligible low-income residents in available energy assistance programs. The purpose of this letter is to request your Board's acceptance of a status report on the Energy Assistance Programs Outreach Plan.

The Utility and Energy Assistance Report, presented to your Board on February 13, 2001, outlined the impact of the energy crisis on the County's low-income residents. The report made a recommendation that the Human Resources Agency (HRA), the Health Services Agency (HSA), the Housing Authority and the Community Action Board's (CAB) Energy Services program work together to develop a program to integrate public outreach for energy assistance programs into the daily operations of County programs and community based organizations. Based on a strategy meeting of representatives from the above listed groups, an action plan was developed to increase the use of energy assistance programs, such as the federally funded Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and PG&E's California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) program.

The attached chart shows detailed outreach activities and the status of implementation. The outreach plan focuses on training County staff and community based organizations on the various energy assistance programs, the dissemination of bilingual information through those agencies to potentially eligible residents and application assistance. Training has been completed for County and CBO staff who are now providing bilingual information and application assistance. All community programs funded agencies are now required to provide bilingual energy assistance information and application assistance. Specific efforts have been made to enroll more people in the CARE program which offers

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**STATUS REPORT ON ENERGY  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN**

eligible customers a 20% discount and exemption from recent rate increases. The CARE application is also used as an entry point for other programs administered by CAB's Energy Services program.

Based on a survey, the majority of clients contacted through HRA and HSA are aware of the CARE program and/or are enrolled in the program. Through continuing outreach at HRA, HSA and community based organizations, enrollment in CARE and other available programs is expected to increase. Energy Services has already seen a dramatic increase in the HEAP payment assistance program. Comparing May-June 2000 to May-June 2001, the number of households served by Energy Services increased from 169 to 450 (167%). The dollars distributed also increased significantly from \$31,449 during May-June of last year to \$172,147 for the same period this year, an increase of 447%. Participation rates in the CARE and HEAP programs will continue to be tracked to monitor the effectiveness of ongoing outreach efforts.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED that your Board:

1. Accept the attached Energy Assistance Programs Outreach Plan status update.

Very truly yours,

CECILIA ESPINOLA  
HRA Administrator

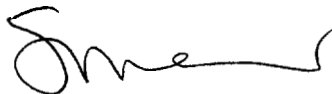


RAMA KHALSA  
HSA Administrator

Attachments:  
Energy Assistance Programs Outreach Plan Update

CE\RB

RECOMMENDED:



SUSAN A. MAURIELLO  
County Administrative Officer

CC: County Administrative Office  
Community Action Board  
Housing Authority  
Human Resources Agency Administrator  
Health Services Agency Administrator

## ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OUTREACH PLAN STATUS UPDATE AUGUST 2001

	ACTIVITY	STATUS
1.	Incorporate CARE application and CAB Energy Services information at intake and renewals for CalWORK's, General Assistance, Food Stamps, Medi-Cal and Adult Services programs.	<p>Energy assistance information and CARE applications have been distributed since May, 2001 to:</p> <p>500 Adult Services clients 2,100 CalWORK's, General Assistance, Medi-Cal and/or Food Stamp clients</p>
2.	Train community organizations on available energy assistance services and process for applying.	<p>Over 90 community-based organizations were invited to attend a presentation by CAB's Energy Services. Two training sessions were conducted in April 2001 for the CBO staff as well as designated County staff. CBO staff unable to attend the training were mailed an informational packet.</p> <p>In addition, energy assistance information was presented at the June 2001 Health Care Outreach training session where 35 CBO's were represented.</p>
3.	Conduct enrollment events at various locations including One-Stop Centers and Food Giveaway sites and public events such as job fairs and health fairs.	<p>Enrollment events are scheduled to be conducted in August 2001 at the mid-County and South County One-Stop Centers. English and Spanish radio public service announcements will advertise the events.</p> <p>Energy assistance information was distributed at the HRA Resource Fair. 200 County staff attended the fair.</p> <p>Information is being distributed by the Second Harvest Food Bank to food pantry consumers.</p>
4.	Mail bilingual information on available energy assistance services to Housing Authority tenants and landlords.	<p>Landlords signed a release to allow free weatherization work to be performed on approximately 600 Section 8 units.</p> <p>Energy assistance information was mailed to approximately 3000 Housing Authority tenants.</p>
5.	Conduct public marketing campaign to include public service announcements on local cable station and Energy Services poster distribution.	<p>Public service announcements will air on local radio English and Spanish radio stations to advertise CAB's Energy Services programs.</p> <p>Energy Services poster is in development.</p>

	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
6.	Provide application information and outreach through the Health Services Agency public health nurses, mobile outreach van and clinics.	Energy assistance information was made available to Mental Health and Public health field nursing clients via case managers. Information is also made available at the HSA health clinic.
7.	Incorporate a requirement into FY 01-02 County Community Programs contracts to provide bilingual information on available energy assistance services and assist with applications as appropriate.	A provision has been inserted into all Community Programs and CalWORK's contracts beginning in FY 01-02.
8.	Disseminate information and applications through the activities of the Health Care Outreach Coalition.	Energy assistance information <b>has</b> been incorporated into the Health Care Access book. Coalition members were given information to distribute to their clients & staff