

If You Can't Afford Your Heating, Call 1-866-657-4273

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TRENTON -- Residents who are experiencing hardships in paying winter home heating bills may be able to seek assistance from NJ Shares, a non-profit organization that can help families who need temporary help, Senate Majority Leader Stephen M. Sweeney and Assembly Deputy Speaker John J. Burzichelli said Tuesday.

Residents ineligible for other forms of public assistance that can demonstrate a hardship and have a history of good-faith payments to their energy providers may be eligible for assistance from NJ Shares.

NJ Shares is the only statewide non-profit organization that provides grants to help families facing a temporary financial predicament pay their energy bills.

"As unemployment continues to burden so many of our residents, NJ Shares can help them find some financial support in this time of economic turmoil," Sweeney said. "Over the last 10 years, the program has assisted thousands of New Jersey residents who are suddenly in a temporary financial crisis due to unpredictable circumstances."

NJ Shares assistance grants of up to \$700 for natural gas and \$300 for electric is provided to families and individuals whose monthly income meets certain guidelines; for example, a qualifying family of four could have a monthly income between \$3,976 and \$7,350. Qualified families who use oil heat could receive grants of \$700 or 150 gallons of fuel, depending on their situation.

Residents interested in learning more about NJ Shares may call the program's toll-free number at 1-866-657-4273, visit the program's official Web site: www.njshares.org, or contact the Third District Legislative offices.

The Third District Legislators noted that New Jersey has a variety of other programs to help elderly and low-income residents heat their homes and pay their utility programs.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federal program administered in New Jersey through the state's Department of Community Affairs. Individual residents with incomes of less than \$1,950 per month and families of four with incomes of less than \$3,975 per month can receive grants to offset heating bills. Applicants for the LIHEAP program also will be considered for the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) Universal Service Fund, which provides assistance for paying natural gas and electric bills.

LIHEAP and USF-eligible residents also may qualify for free home energy consultation and installation of energy efficiency measures to help lower their electric bills through the NJBPU Comfort Partners program.

The legislators explained that individuals wanting more information on any available assistance program should contact their offices or visit www.state.nj.us/bpu/assistance/programs.

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