



Illinois Department of Commerce

& Economic Opportunity

OFFICE OF ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Bruce Rauner, Governor

Percentage of Income Payment Program (PIPP) Steering Committee Minutes of Meeting Held on July 7, 2016 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Attendance in Chicago

Members: *Aimee English, Citizens Utility Board; Nancy Kane-Richards, Community Contacts; Jennifer Schmidt, CEDA*

Guest: *Janice Dale, Illinois Attorney General Office*

DCEO Staff: *Maria Gallardo, Karina Jimenez, Angela Westbrook*

Attendance in Springfield

Members: *Mindy Browning, ERBA; Lauren Pashayan, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance; Dalitso Sulamoyo, Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA); Kathy Walk, CEFS*

Attendance via Conference Telephone

Members: *Melanie Brown, Ameren Illinois; Jen Fenske, Nicor Gas; Kerri Halsall, DuPage County Department of Community Services; Joan Howard, Illinois Commerce Commission; Michelle Machay, Peoples Gas/North Shore Gas; Jim Monk, Illinois Energy Association; Martha Strawser, Rockford Human Services; Julie Vahling, AARP; Kris White, Will County*

Guests: *Grace Brigando, Commonwealth Edison; Cherise Conley, Commonwealth Edison; Philip Gentry, Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA); Julie Hubbard, Illinois Area Agency on Aging*

DCEO Staff: *Janet Hawes-Davis, Patty Hughes, Leslie Ann Lesko, Amy Park*

Call to Order

Maria Gallardo called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

Nancy Kane-Richards made a motion that the April 8, 2016 minutes be accepted with correction noting that Office of Energy Assistance (OEA) Recommendations on page 4 should indicate that Local Administering Agencies (LAAs) are in disagreement of excluding zero income households not that they are not in support of the proposed change. Aimee English seconded the motion. A vote was taken, motion carried.

PIPP Discussion Items

- **Business Rules New Change:**

Single Tracking and Reporting System (STARS) Auto Drop with LAA Override Functionality- STARS, not the LAA, will automatically drop a PIPP participant on day 56 after missed payment. Currently, if the client has not made a CPR payment in full by day 45 after the first bill due date, the client is in default of their responsibility under the PIPP. The LAA sends two letters to remind participant of their PIPP responsibility. After the final notice is sent, the participant is allowed 5 business days from the date of the letter or date stamp, whichever is later, to become current or to appeal the potential termination. The LAA will have an override functionality that would allow them to temporarily stop a client from being automatically dropped in certain situations. LAAs will be required to document the reason the client drop is being overridden and manually drop the client, when the time comes. The override functionality was supported and voted by the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Policy Advisory Council (PAC) according to the department.

The auto drop functionality and client intervention were discussed. Lauren Pashayan recalled that the PIPP Steering Committee did not support auto drop unless there is an override function. Lauren is concerned that clients will not receive due process. Maria Gallardo stated that clients are actually provided more time than required by the Business Rules to become current. She also stated that Business Rules new changes were documented, presented to the PAC on April 21, 2016 at which time they were approved.

Maria Gallardo stated that the auto drop function was discussed during the PIPP Steering Committee meeting held via conference call on April 15, 2016. However, the minutes are not available during this meeting. After the April meeting, Capital Strategies met with the Department with assurance that adding this functionality is possible. Aimee English requested population data on clients that will be affected by this requirement.

Since this meeting took place, OEA has increased the number of days where a PIPP client will be auto dropped from 56 to 60 days. LAAs will still have the override functionality to prevent an auto-drop in cases where it is necessary.

- **Program Year (PY) 17 Program Start-Up Plan –** The Governor signed a Stopgap budget bill that will fund LIHEAP and PIPP. DCEO now has spending authority to process LAA grants. The Stopgap budget bill covers funding for six months. However, grants are valid for 12 months. PIPP will begin in September during the start of the LIHEAP. The PY17 budget for PIPP will be reduced.

Dalitso Sulamoyo informed the Committee that part of the agreement for the passing of the Stopgap budget bill was to forgive the borrowing of \$75 million in LIHEAP funds. This will impact the funds that will be available for PIPP because those funds will not be repaid by the end of December.

Maria Gallardo stated that meter charges collected by utilities have been deposited. The Department plans to release \$58 million in State supplemental funding to be made available to LAAs as the first release of funding allocation for LIHEAP and PIPP.

The PIPP clients dropped at the end of PY15 was discussed. Participation in PIPP offered in PY16 will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis by priority group. Clients will be enrolled until the LAAs reach their budget capacity. LAAs will announce availability of programs to the communities.

Janice Dale commented on what happens to allocations to LAAs that have never enrolled clients in PIPP. Maria Gallardo indicated that all LAAs have enrolled PIPP clients. Assuming that the reference is intended for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Reconnection Assistance Pilot Program which launched in PY15, funds received as a result of FERC were deposited into the State Supplemental fund and remain available. In PY17, FERC will be reinstated. The Department will work with LAAs to administer the program. Some agencies in the common service area did not enroll FERC customers due to customers declining to enroll. Janice Dale commented that FERC is a separate funding source not associated with meter charges collected by utilities.

Disconnected clients being allowed to enroll in LIHEAP during the September priority period was discussed. Maria Gallardo indicated that no decision has been made at this time. Guidance will be provided to LAAs at a later date via a Procedure Letter. LAAs are reminded that when reconnection assistance funds are utilized to reinstate utility services, reconnection must occur within 48 hours or 18 hours, if there is a life threatening situation in the household.

- STARS Enhancements/Changes in Preparation of the Start of PIPP - Capital Strategies started in June and have been diligently working to implement changes prior to the start of PY17. Documented system issues/enhancements to be made were discussed:
 - Enhancement 1 - correct the missed payment process and the corresponding letters process.
 - Enhancement 2 - automatically drop clients (day 60) for missed payment with override capability.
 - Enhancement 3 - Correct STARS to ensure a client maximum benefit of \$1,800 (under internal discussion). This may occur due to business cycle, fiscal year, and system. The population affected by this issue was a low percentage.
 - Enhancement 4 - Print and mail intervention letters centrally in batch. The Department of Human Services currently handles printing and mailing letters. LAAs requested that the Department handles some printing of centrally batched letters.

Other Business

Client choice and establishing a minimum PIPP benefit threshold was discussed. LAAs would like this issue to be revisited. Nancy Kane-Richards stated that if the system offered an

automated process that would deny a client's participation would greatly benefit LAAs. Maria Gallardo stated that feedback is welcome and discussion is good.

Maria Gallardo stated that supporting this possible system change is critical to Capital Strategies' deadline for implementing such changes and the start of the program is quickly approaching. The PAC did not support the proposed rule change at the April meeting. Maria stated that the Act is silent on client choice according to DCEO. This enhancement recommendation will be included on the next scheduled PAC meeting agenda for vote. Proposed Business Rule with supporting data to be presented to the PAC to support this argument will be shared with the PIPP Committee prior to the next PAC meeting.

The LIHEAP workshop will be held in Springfield on July 20, 2016. This is a meeting with our network of local agencies. Invites have been forwarded to LAAs.

LAAs discussed the possibility of having PIPP training. LAAs are in agreement that PIPP 101 training is required rather than a PIPP refresher due to new staff, changes made in STARS, and the suspension of PIPP. A STARS webinar will be tentatively planned for August to cover system changes and enhancements.

Training and consumer education for public announcement was discussed. The PIPP Consumer Education Sub-committee will discuss and meet at a later date. Jennifer Schmidt volunteered to participate.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the PIPP Steering Committee will be held on October 6, 2016 from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn. Motion was seconded. Motion carried.