

Michigan Energy Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated 12/14/2017

Q1. What is the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP)?

A1. MEAP is a mixture of State and Federal administered funds assisting low income households at risk for gas or electric shut off. Households must be at or below 150% of the federal poverty level. Funding is available from November 2017 to September 2018, with 70% of the funds needing to be spent by May 31st.

Q2. How much funding is available for Barrier Busters requests?

A2. The amount is just under \$120,000 from the State of Michigan. Federal funding will be coming in early 2018, increasing the award to over \$240,000, perhaps 50% of all Barrier Buster funding. As emergency assistance need outstrip available dollars, MEAP allows the network to stretch out more flexible local funding pots across three quarters of the year. Without MEAP funding, Barrier Busters annual assistance would be exhausted between May and June.

Q3. What is the maximum amount an individual household can get, annually?

A3. A household can receive up to \$3,000 in combined MEAP and DHHS State Emergency Relief (SER) during the grant year. Households may apply for MEAP assistance more than once, if needed.

Q4. The application references DTE ORA and our agency doesn't have access, how do we work around this?

A4. Contact Barrier Busters staff who can do an ORA search.

Q5. The utility bill references a "Low Income Self Sufficiency Plan (LSP). What's this?

A5. LSP is a reduced repayment plan whereby every few months a portion of the back owed debt is forgiven. A household can only be enrolled in LSP or MEAP, not both. The Salvation Army and United Way of Southeast Michigan run LSP programming – if they're receiving LSP refer them back to their LSP agency and do not put in a Barrier Busters request.

Q6. The household is behind on a Home Protection Plan – can MEAP be used? How about for late fees/charges?

A6. No. Home Protection Plan (HPP) is a home appliance insurance payment, not a gas or electric line. Late charges, noted as "LPC" on the DTE ORA bill, can't be paid from MEAP, but won't stop a MEAP application from being considered.

Q.7 The household is behind on their Shut off protection plan, can MEAP help?

A7. MEAP can be used to pay any past miss Shut Off Protection Plan payments (SPP). However, it can't be used to pay on the current month.

Q8. Does SER have to be applied before the MEAP application?

A8. No. If a SER decision has been made, whether an award or denial, that notice does need to be included.

Q9. If a household applies for MEAP, can a different type of Barrier Busters request be made that year?

A9. Requests are encouraged to occur once annually, but staff understands that emergencies happen, and those with low income are particularly vulnerable. As long as the submitted narrative provides support and rationale, multiple requests for the same household can be submitted.

Q10. To apply, does the power already have to be shut off or is a shut off notice needed?

A10. No. "At risk of shut off" means that the household is 30+ days delinquent, have a shut off notice or is already shut off, and not enrolled in the low income self-sufficiency protection plan known as LSP.

Q11. As part of a rental lease, an individual needs the utilities in their name but they have an outstanding bill from a previous address. Can MEAP help this person?

A11. Yes, if the submitted documentation reflects a letter from the landlord or a lease which reflects this need. The old account cannot be due to fraudulent or illegal activity.

Q12. Does the account at the address need to be in the client's name?

A12. Their legal ID needs to match the account address, but the account does NOT need to be in their name.

Q13. The application states that documentation and the signed application can be faxed or uploaded to a Sharefile link, which is a new choice. What's this about?

A13. Frequently last year faxed IDs and Social Security cards would be illegible, even if "blown up" to fit the entire page. The Sharefile option is the recommended submission choice if your agency has a scanner. Otherwise, faxing is still an option.

Q14. The MEAP application process is confusing and complicated, what with needing to remember when to (or not) attach a certain document, or calculating the copayment using some calculus formula, et cetera.

A14. With the additional requirements that are not part of "regular" Barrier Busters requests, it's recognized that MEAP requests may be more time consuming. A number of process hurdles have been identified, hopefully making for an easier application process, including:

- Application is down to seven pages with the two “as needed” forms pushed to the back. Requestor reminders and prompts are emphasized in ***bold and/or italics*** across the application.
- Fields that appear more than once on the application only need to be entered once (like last year).
- Math fields are now calculated automatically!
- Barrier Busters staff are available to provide up to date DTE ORA statements.
- Scanned documentation uploaded to Sharefile site to improve document legibility.

Q15. “40 in 30” challenges feel rushed and are anxiety provoking – why are they necessary?

A15. 70% of MEAP funds must be spent down by the end of May, and the “40 in 30” challenges were a mechanism to make sure no funds would be returned to the State of Michigan. Recognizing the increased capacity strain this placed on agencies, monthly challenge goals will be established on the front end as part of funding level updates during the first week of each month. Currently for December, the challenge goal stands at \$42,000.

Q16. Where did the client copayment field go?

A16. Copayments are no longer required!

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Q17. I have so many other questions!

A17. This FAQ is a living document, so please send questions to the BB staff email, l-bbstaff@listserver.ewashtenaw.org, and we’ll provide periodic updates on the Member Resources page.