



LIFE

Low-Income Forum on Energy

LIFE Low-Income Forum on Energy
2009 Regional Meeting Evaluation
Ellicottville, NY
May 5, 2009

The second of seven meetings in the LIFE 2009 Regional Meeting Series was held in Ellicottville, New York on May 5, 2009. Sixty-six individuals attended this event. Phil Quinlan, a representative from Congressman Eric Massa's office provided the keynote address.

Attendees by Affiliation

| % of Attendees | Type of Organization |
|-----------------------|---|
| 20% | Community Action Agency |
| 2% | Community-Based Low-Income Energy Agency |
| 0% | Community-Based Low-Income Housing |
| 2% | Consultants |
| 4% | Cooperative Extension |
| 2% | Educational Institution |
| 8% | Energy Service Company (ESCO or Marketer) |
| 4% | Faith-Based Organization |
| 20% | Local Government Agency |
| 13% | Not-For-Profit |
| 0% | Public Official |
| 0% | Rural or Neighborhood Preservation Organization |
| 13% | State Agency |
| 8% | Utility Company |
| 4% | Weatherization Agency |

Agenda and Ratings

Note: attendees were asked to rate session content using the following scale:
5=Excellent 4=Very Good 3=Good 2= Fair 1=Poor

Session 1: Consumer Protections 101 and Then Some...

Rating: 3.56

The number one resource that low-income clients have is their caseworker. The more that you know, the better you can assist your clients to meet their energy needs and take advantage of the protections that they are entitled to. Learn about the important protections that the Home Energy Fair Practices Act (HEFPA) offers utility customers. *Speakers: Pamela Carter, NYS DPS; Kenneth Gossel, National Fuel; Rosie McCollumn, NYSEG; Carl Pawlak, National Grid; Corinna Powell, NYS DPS*

Session 2: Applying the Knowledge: Initiating Client Energy Actions

Rating: 3.94

Clients are provided with information everywhere they go, but how can you get them to apply this information and benefit from it? This session will dispel myths related to energy use, provide simple energy saving actions to share with your clients, and provide tips on how best to communicate these ideas to the low-income households you serve. *Speaker: Jeff Flaherty, Honeywell Utility Solutions*

Session 3: An Update on Weatherization

Rating: 3.49

This presentation will outline the recent revisions to the Weatherization Assistance Program resulting from the incorporation of funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Hear about the updates to WAP and how frontline workers can assist their clients within the framework of the new WAP plan. *Speakers: Jeff Butler, NYS DHCR; Kathy Jimerson, NYS DHCR*

Session 4: Case Study: Best Practices – Regional Highlights

Rating: 3.61

This session will highlight a local agency or initiative and provide information on how it works, what makes it work, and its potential for replicability. *Speaker: Kenneth Gossel, National Fuel*

Session 5: Non-Traditional Resources – Life After HEAP

Rating: 4.26

As you know, traditional energy assistance sources such as HEAP and WAP have limited funds and are only able to serve a small portion of those eligible. Along with this reality, recent trends in the economy and the energy market have led to an increase in the number of households in need. This situation is compounded by the many that need assistance but are just above the income eligibility guidelines. This session will explore some non-traditional and community-based sources of assistance that can be used to assist both income-eligible clients as well as those that are just beyond the eligibility guidelines. Learn from members of your community about “LIFE after HEAP”. *Speakers: Ellen Herner, Cattaraugus County DFA; Janene Hiscock, Niagara County DSS; Lorna Salmeri, Niagara County DSS; Bill Vogt, Chautauqua Opportunities*

Session 6: Putting Your New Knowledge to the Test: Hypothetical Family – Assisting the Smiths

Rating: 4.30

Increasing energy costs combined with the recent economic downturn have left many families feeling the pinch and needing assistance. Explore the resources available in your community as you work with other attendees to find solutions for the Smiths.

Evaluations Returned: 36

Total day’s average rating of all session scores: 3.77

How did you hear about this meeting? (Attendees were asked to... check all that apply.)

28% Postcard notice
28% Email notice
10% LIFE Newsletter

21% My supervisor
8% A colleague
5% Other - PSC Letter, NYSCAA Poverty Symposium

Attendees were asked...

What information did you learn today that you will use in your day-to-day work?

- All sessions were well-done
- Available services from other agencies
- Weatherization
- HEAP
- Networking session was helpful
- Session 6 put the whole picture together
- Good theme
- Combining services and organizations
- Saturday and evening HEAP possibilities
- All info was too basic

What questions did you still have at the end of today?

- None
- Is there emergency housing available if service is turned off?
- Vouchers?
- SSI Guarantee?
- What can we do to have a more practical impact on people's lives?
- How can the HEAT process be streamlined?
- What can we do to handle individuals who abuse the system?
- Where is NYSDSS/OTDA?

What would be some good follow-up sessions for next year?

- Consumer Protections again
- Session 4 and 2 were helpful
- How Weatherization is going with the increased funding
- NYS DSS/OTDA
- How to Apply for Increased Funding
- Focus more on energy conservation
- Ways to prioritize clients
- More figures on how Weatherization has helped households

Name any of the speakers you heard from today that you would like to hear more from in the future.

- (7) Ken Gossell
- (3) Chuck Dolinkas
- (3) Janene Hiscock
- (3) Lorna Salmeri
- (2) Jeff Flaherty
- Bill Vogt
- Carl Pawlak

What speakers would you like to recommend for LIFE to invite to present next year?

- NYS DSS/OTDA
- Bill Vogt
- Jeff Butler
- John Dennis
- Brian Paterson
- Martin Bakowski

How can LIFE better serve your organization and your clients as we work to address the challenges and opportunities facing low-income New Yorkers seeking safe, affordable and reliable energy?

- Provide materials to distribute to consumers
- Provide totally updated information on computer
- Forewarning of energy cost increases
- Send out a newsletter
- More info is always helpful
- Develop visual and audio aids to capture customers attention

Logistics

Note: attendees were asked to rate session content using the following scale:
5=Excellent 4=Very Good 3=Good 2= Fair 1=Poor

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Timeliness of meeting notification | Rating: 4.53 |
| Ease of pre-registration | Rating: 4.43 |
| Ease of on-site registration | Rating: 4.53 |
| Meeting facility, food & beverage | Rating: 4.60 |

General Suggestions / Comments

- Session 6 was fun
- Presenters were great
- Utility's seem to have too much influence
- Well worth the time
- Break up with videos – too many speakers in a row
- I felt the 'mock interview' mocked the low-income consumer
- Great job
- Conference was very beneficial
- PSC booklet in Spanish would be help

And Comments on Refreshments and Logistics....

- Need to provide better directions