



**2013 Regional Meetings**

# Low-Income Forum on Energy 2013 Regional Meeting Series

## AGENDA

**Orchard Park, New York**  
May 21, 2013

**Erie Community College**  
4041 Southwestern Blvd.  
Orchard Park, NY 14127





## Welcome

On behalf of the LIFE Steering Committee, welcome to today's LIFE Regional Meeting, one of six taking place around the State. This year's theme, LIFE in Action, is designed to provide you with specific action steps you can take to help your constituencies. As the cost of energy continues to pose challenges to New Yorkers with low or fixed incomes, it is important to provide community leaders and service providers with useful, timely information to assist low-income consumers. Today's program will supply you with valuable information on available resources, updates on key programs, and will highlight certain regional best practices. Please also take advantage of the tremendous opportunity for networking at today's event. Often, it takes the right contacts to help serve your clients in the most effective and efficient manner. We hope that you enjoy today's meeting and I'd like to thank you for participating in the LIFE dialogue!

*Len Silverstein, LIFE Chairman*

8:00 – 9:00 AM

### Registration & Networking

9:00 – 9:30 AM

### Welcome & Introductions

*Speakers:*

*Len Silverstein, NYS Dept. of Public Service, LIFE Chairman  
Chris Coll, NYSEERDA*

9:30 – 9:45 AM

### Session 1: LIFE as a Resource

The Low-Income Forum on Energy (LIFE) encourages an interactive exchange of information and collaboration among the programs and resources that assist low-income energy consumers. Comprised of organizations and individuals committed to addressing low-income issues, the LIFE network can be a valuable resource for you to better serve your clients and can also provide an opportunity for professional growth. Hear from the LIFE Implementation team on how you can utilize the LIFE network to better serve your clients.

*Speakers:*

*Sue Montgomery Corey, Community Power Network of NYS  
Chuck Schwartz, Long Island Green*

9:45 – 10:00 AM

### Session 2: Utility Programs

Hear about the consumer protections and assistance programs for electric and natural gas customers through National Fuel Gas, National Grid, and NYSEG.

*Speakers:*

*Ebony Brumfield, NYSEG  
Christa Doyle, National Fuel Gas  
Mark Johnson, National Grid*

10:00 – 10:30 AM

### Session 3: Updates on the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a federally-funded program that issues heating benefits to supplement a household's annual energy cost. Many low-income households depend on HEAP benefits to offset their home energy costs, with nearly 1.4 million households in New York State receiving a benefit during the 2012-2013 program year. Reductions in federal funding over the last few years have required the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance HEAP Bureau to enact changes to the program to ensure that funds are available to as many households as possible. This presentation will provide you with an update on the 2012-2013 HEAP Program and will look forward to the 2013-2014 program year.

*Speaker:*

*Emily Maher-Cmaylo, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance*

10:30 – 10:45 AM

### Networking Break

10:45 – 11:30 AM

### Session 4: Serving Vulnerable and Non-traditional Populations

As a result of the economic downturn and societal factors such as the return of veterans from duty, many social service offices are seeing clients that are seeking assistance for the first time. For those that are seeking assistance, there are many other who don't. In addition, it is critical that service be provided to the elderly, children, the disabled and the sick. Providing service to these non-traditional and vulnerable clients may require different strategies. Hear from those who conduct outreach to and provide service to vulnerable and non-traditional populations.

*Speakers:*

*Nicole Drye, City of Buffalo Impact Team  
Carol Halter, Harvest House Ministry Center  
Peter Pilc, New York National Guard Family Programs*

11:30 – 12:00 PM

### **Session 5: New York's Competitive Energy Market**

In 1994, the energy industry was restructured in New York to provide consumers the opportunity to purchase electricity and natural gas from an energy service company (ESCO), instead of only from their utility. The Department of Public Service has opened a proceeding, in Case 12-M-0476, to review and address specific concerns, such as aggressive door-to-door marketing, and other important aspects of the competitive energy market for residential customers. In addition, the Department has surveyed residential customers to find out their experiences with ESCOs. This presentation will review the results of the survey, provide an overview of the public comments received in the proceeding and will discuss options for future Commission action to address the concerns raised in the residential survey and in this proceeding.

*Speaker:*

*Len Silverstein, NYS Dept. of Public Service*

12:00 – 1:00 PM

### **Lunch & Networking**

1:00 – 1:15 PM

### **Session 6: The Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) Program**

The Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program is a New York State program for seniors administered by the Department of Health. It helps more than 270,000 income-eligible seniors aged 65 and older to supplement their out-of-pocket Medicare Part D drug plan costs. This presentation will provide you with an overview of the EPIC program and highlight recent changes to the program.

*Speaker:*

*Gabrielle Dotterweich, NYS EPIC Outreach Representative*

1:15 – 1:45 PM

### **Session 7: Best Practices: PUSH Buffalo's Aggregation and Workforce Development Initiatives**

Since early 2012, PUSH Buffalo, a grassroots community-based organization on the West Side of Buffalo and independent contractor to NYSEERDA, has been partnering with a small network of energy efficiency contractors in the region, including New Buffalo Impact, to create living wage jobs in the home performance industry for disadvantaged local residents. PUSH is creating demand for weatherization and energy efficiency services by leveraging existing relationships with low income constituents living on the West Side as well as building new relationships with moderate and middle income households across Erie County that suffer from high energy burdens. In return for job leads, contractors are making affirmative commitments to hire locally and pay their new and existing workers living wages. This approach is delivering triple bottom line benefits to local communities while raising job and performance standards across the industry in WNY.

*Speakers:*

*Clarke Gocker, PUSH Buffalo*

*Kate Howard, PUSH Buffalo*

1:45 – 2:15 PM

### **Session 8: An Update on the Weatherization Assistance Program**

The Weatherization Assistance Program provides an essential service to low-income New Yorkers by delivering energy conservation improvements and addressing health and safety issues in homes across the state through a network of 60 sub-grantees. This presentation will provide you with an update on program activities during the last year and plans for the 2013-2014 program, including the coordination with the Healthy Homes Initiative.

*Speaker:*

*Rick Jost, NYS Homes and Community Renewal*

2:15 – 2:30 PM

### **Networking Break**

2:30 – 3:15 PM

### **Session 9: Coordination Amongst Organizations to Help Low-Income Populations**

To provide the most effective service to their clients, successful organizations are able to coordinate with other organizations and programs. By having referral mechanisms in place, or by leveraging resources, they make sure that no one goes un-served. Hear how these organizations coordinate and leverage resources to better serve their clients.

*Speakers:*

*AnnMarie Szpakowska, Erie County Dept. of Social Service*

*Amanda Bender, Erie County Senior Services*

*Kathy Kanaley, Erie County Council on Elder Abuse*

3:15 – 3:45 PM

### **Session 10: Discussing Energy with Your Client**

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:*

*Michele Evanson, Honeywell*

3:45 – 4:00 PM

### **Session 11: Use a LIFE Line**

Do you still have questions that were not answered throughout the day? Do you have a specific case that you would like to get input on? Use a LIFE line and ask your colleagues for help!

4:00 PM

### **Wrap Up and Closing Remarks Evaluation & Raffle**

The evaluation form is a critical tool in developing the type of event that is most beneficial to you. Please complete the evaluation form throughout the day and turn it in at the end of the program. When you turn in your evaluation, you will be given a ticket for the raffle drawing, which will occur at the end of the day.



## Thank You to the Western New York Regional Meeting Leader

The LIFE Steering Committee would like to thank our Western New York Regional Meeting leader, Kate Granger, National Grid, for her time and expertise in the development of the agenda for this meeting. Her commitment to the LIFE mission and the support from the organizations that they represent on the LIFE Steering Committee is greatly appreciated.

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Since the NYS Public Service Commission initiated LIFE in 1998, the LIFE Steering Committee has been an integral part of the growth and development of the program. The Steering Committee is comprised of the following organizations:

The Association for Energy Affordability, Inc.  
Cattaraugus County Community Action, Inc.  
Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation  
Community Power Network of NYS, Inc.  
Consolidated Edison of NY, Inc.  
Honeywell  
National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation  
National Grid  
New York State Community Action Association (NYSCAA)  
New York State Department of Public Service (NYS DPS)  
New York State Department of State (NYS DOS)  
New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR)  
New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)  
New York State Office for the Aging (NYS OFA)  
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)  
New York State Weatherization Director's Association (NYSWDA)  
New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG)  
Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc. (O&R)  
United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region  
Rochester Gas and Electric (RG&E)

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LIFE is sponsored by the New York State Public Service Commission and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. For more information about LIFE, please visit our website at [www.lifenynews.org](http://www.lifenynews.org).

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## Save the Date!

The 2014 LIFE Statewide Conference  
will be held in May 2014, in Albany NY.

*Details including dates and program information will be available in late 2013.*

As part of our on-going commitment to both environmental and fiscal responsibility, we will not be printing and distributing presentation handouts. Please support us in these efforts by going to [www.lifenynews.org](http://www.lifenynews.org) after to download copies of available presentations. Attendees will receive an email notification when the presentations become available.