

NHS Human Services

Services in Orange County, NY

- Intake Assessment
- Preventive
- Functional Family Therapy/PINS Intake
- HEAP
- Center for Hope
- CAB (Community Accountability Board)

HEAP Unit

- The empowerment of individuals, families and communities is central to an individual's or family's ability to achieve long term self-sufficiency.
- The HEAP unit seeks to reduce the stigma associated with traditional public benefits by engaging consumers in a manner that support strengths and assets.
- With focus on strengths rather than deficits, the HEAP Unit seeks to identify at-risk consumers living in the community and provide direct outreach assistance to consumers in need.

Outreach

- NHS is part of an Energy Task Force comprised of other Orange County service providers as well as the Orange County Department of Social Services. By collaborating with other agencies such as RECAP, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the United Way, NHS is able to assist with weatherization and furnace repair projects that directly benefit our consumers.
- At the start of the energy season advertisements are placed in local papers. Fliers have also been used as part of the outreach process.
- Energy saving workshops have been conducted to educate the consumer regarding energy efficiency and reduction of costs associated with utilities.
- Energy saving kits have also been distributed to consumers.
- Conservation becomes a central component of each assessment.

Program Objectives:

- To increase the number of people who are currently receiving HEAP.
- To provide direct outreach to at-risk consumers identified through our local utility companies.
- To provide an in-home application process for consumers in need of HEAP who may be unable to leave their home or get to the DSS office due to hardship and/or disability.
- Providing each family referred to the program with benefits counseling to improve their understanding of the benefits and value of specific benefits.

- Promoting self-sufficiency for the individuals and families, this may include increased access to benefits counseling, advocacy, or medical assistance.
- Reducing the impediments that prevent families from applying for benefits through the HEAP program.
- Improving the family's and individual's ability to overcome concrete barriers that impact a family's inability to achieve long-term independence.
- Promoting community linkages and ensuring that referred families are provided with information and referrals to mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, medical treatment and other services relevant to specific family needs.

Direct Services Provided

- Throughout the 2012-2013 Heating Season, Orange County Utility companies sought assistance through the DSS for more than 800 consumers who were at risk of losing heat during the winter months.
- Those applicants who are found to be ineligible for HEAP are referred to the Orange County fuel fund. If they are ineligible for both there may be other options thru the DSS such as open and close determinations.
- Consumers are assisted thru this entire process by the NHS caseworker.

Challenges:

- Many of the elderly that we serve do not wish to rely on Social Services and are embarrassed that they are forced by circumstances to do so.
- They feel helpless after a lifetime of working and not being able to make ends meet on their fixed incomes.
- A majority of the consumers we assist feel guilty not being able to make their monthly utility payments and therefore elect to neglect health obligations in an attempt to keep up with their bills.

- Some consumers are unable to purchase food after paying utility bills and therefore, rely heavily on food pantries for sustenance.
- Many consumers keep thermostats extremely low in an effort to conserve energy. NHS caseworkers are often greeted by elderly wearing coats and jackets while inside their homes.
- Public benefits are often not accessed due to the stigma associated with the application process. Complicated Federal and State regulations confuse consumers and discourage their application for essential benefits.

- Access to the application process for benefits on site helps to centralize services creating a positive linkage to essential human services and financial benefits.

Thank you!