

UCHRA Announces Program Policy Changes

The State of Tennessee Department of Human Services recently announced a policy change regarding the application process through UCHRA's county offices for families and individuals applying for energy assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and for emergency assistance through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). For both programs the current contract year, which began July 1, 2010 and would normally end June 30, 2011, will be extended an additional three months to end September 30, 2011. Clients who were served during the July – June period will not be eligible to apply again until October 1, 2011. During the three-month period from July 1 – September 30 applications will be accepted only from eligible households that were not served during the previous 12-month period.

“This is a significant change in policy,” stated Phyllis Bennett, UCHRA Executive Director. “These programs have operated on a July – June year since UCHRA began administering them in the early ‘80s, and I believe they have always been awarded based upon the State fiscal year.”

According to the Department of Human Services the reason for the change is that the Federal fiscal year is October 1 – September 30, and funds for these programs are appropriated for that period. DHS feels that planning and coordination of both LIHEAP and CSBG will be improved by aligning the LIHEAP and CSBG funding with the Federal fiscal year.

“We are concerned about getting word of this significant change out to the public, and especially to households that are used to being able to apply for LIHEAP and/or CSBG beginning July 1,” said Lee Webb, UCHRA Community Services Director. “UCHRA is doing everything possible to circulate this information to everyone affected.”

Anyone having questions regarding this policy change may contact the Smith County office located at 120 Paulene Gore Way, Suite A, Carthage, TN 37030, or phone (615) 735-0476. For more information on programs available in your county, go to www.uchra.com/smithcounty.html.