

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families

Signed by:
Miranda Gray
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FROM: Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division

BULLETIN NO.: 25-14

DATE: 7/18/25

SUBJECT: Crisis Fuel Procedure

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 07/01/25

INSTRUCTIONS

- ☒ **Maintain Manual - See instructions below.**
☐ **Proposed Regulation - Retain bulletin and attachments until you receive Manual Maintenance Bulletin: _____**
☐ **Information or Instructions - Retain Until _____**

MANUAL REFERENCE(S):

P-3100

This is a new procedures manual intended for workers at community action agencies who administer crisis fuel benefits. In June 2024, the Department adopted new rules for the crisis fuel program, separate from the seasonal fuel assistance rules. To correspond with these new rules, the Department has established procedures for processing and expediting applications, assessing life-threatening home-heating crises, and providing assistance after hours. Also included in the manual are income guidelines for the 2025-26 heating season.

Manual Maintenance

This is an entirely new procedure. Going forward, significant changes will be indicated by highlighting text in gray.

Crisis Fuel Procedure

<u>Remove</u>	<u>Insert</u>
Nothing	P-3100 (25-14)
Nothing	P-3101 (25-14)
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P-3100 CRISIS FUEL PROGRAM PROCEDURES (Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3100) (7/1/25, 25-14)

The fuel program procedures are intended to assist DCF-ESD and crisis fuel workers at community action agencies when accepting and processing applications for crisis fuel assistance. These procedures are also meant to assist staff when issuing crisis fuel benefits.

These procedures also refer to the Seasonal Fuel Assistance Procedures, P-2900–P-2927, which should be used when referenced in these Crisis Fuel Assistance Procedure.

Nothing in these procedures is intended to expand or limit the rights of fuel assistance applicants and beneficiaries.

See Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3100 for legal information about the fuel assistance program.

P-3101 FORMS AND NOTICES (7/1/25, 25-14)

The following forms and notices are used by the fuel assistance program:

- 139REP – Authorized Representative Form
- 201SF – Vermont Fuel Assistance Eligibility Review: to apply for seasonal fuel benefits.
- 202SFH –Verification of Caretaker/Companionship Services: excludes non-mandatory household members for purposes of caretaking/companionship
- 202SFP – Verification of Medically Necessary Services: excludes non-mandatory household member for purposes of medical care of another household member and must be signed by physician
- 204AN – Account Name / Metered Service Verification: multi-purpose form used if the dealer is not certified and landlord does not allow changes to dealer and/or if landlord bills the client for heat, or if the fuel account is in someone else's
- 204NST – Low Income Home Energy Assistance Crisis Fuel Assistance Program Statement of Understanding
- 204VEF – Electric Service Required for Operation of Heating System.

See Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3101 for definitions of common words and phrases used by the crisis fuel program.

P-3102 ELIGIBILITY (Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3102)

P-3102A Income Guidelines (7/1/25, 25-14)

Effective March 1, 2025 to February 28, 2026

Persons in Household	185% of Federal Poverty Guideline	200% of Federal Poverty Guideline
1	\$2,412	\$2,608
2	\$3,262	\$3,526
3	\$4,109	\$4,442
4	\$4,956	\$5,358
5	\$5,805	\$6,276
6	\$6,653	\$7,192
7	\$7,500	\$8,108
8	\$8,349	\$9,026
9	\$9,196	\$9,942
10	\$10,044	\$10,858
11	\$10,891	\$11,774
12	\$11,738	\$12,690
13	\$12,586	\$13,606
14	\$13,433	\$14,522
15	\$14,280	\$15,438
Each Additional Person	Add \$847	Add \$916

Eligibility for fuel assistance benefits is based on a household's gross income. A fuel household is not eligible for crisis fuel benefits if the household's gross income exceeds **200%** of the federal poverty guidelines.

The Fuel Team at DCF-ESD must update these guidelines every year based on the federal poverty guidelines.

P-3102 ELIGIBILITY (continued)

P-3102B Household Composition (7/1/25, 25-14)

Fuel Household

One or more persons residing in the same living unit as a single economic unit who, in common, purchase energy for home heating fuel, or who in common, make payments for energy for home heating fuel in the form of rent. Everyone who shares a heat source must be included in the fuel household, and their income must be counted.

Head of Household

This is a person, either individually or with other household member(s), who is financially responsible for the cost of occupying the living unit or separate living quarters. Others who claim financial responsibility become mandatory members.

Living Unit

A living unit is a structure that meets all the following criteria:

- Is occupied by one or more members of the household;
- Is used as the household's primary domicile (i.e., main place of residence);
- Is one or more of the following:
 - Affixed to the ground on a permanent foundation;
 - A manufactured home (not a camper, RV, or motor home); or
 - Permanently immobile and not accessing water or electricity from another living unit or building;
- Contains one or more rooms;
- Contains bathroom *and* kitchen facilities specific to that unit;
- and has either:
 - A private entrance from the outside; or
 - A private entrance from an enclosed hallway leading from the outside that does not pass through or offer open access to any other living unit within the structure.

Who is a member of the Fuel Household?

All persons are included in the fuel household based on the presumption they are members of the same economic unit. To rebut the presumption, the head of household must provide reasonable evidence that the person or persons qualifies to be excluded.*

In-Household Member	Mandatory Member	Excludable *
Roomer	NO	YES
Caretaker/Companion	NO	YES
Medically Necessary Caregiver	NO	YES
DCF/Foster Care or DAIL Placement	NO	YES
Head of Household	YES	NO
Spouse or Civil Union Partner	YES	NO
Minor Children of Head of Household	YES	NO
Any minor daughter or son of any minor included in the Fuel household	YES	NO

*Excludable

The head of household may **choose** to exclude a non-mandatory person from the Fuel Household by indicating the relationship as medically necessary/personal care attendant, caretaker/companion, roomer, or person(s) in the custody of and placed in the home by DCF/FSD or DAIL (including people with disabilities in a shared living placement). The policy definition must be met to allow the head of household to exclude the person(s) from the fuel household.

Medically Necessary Caregiver

A medically necessary caregiver is a person who is not a mandatory household member and provides medically necessary services to any elderly or disabled head of household (or spouse). (See Seasonal Fuel Assistance Rule 2901(a)(7) for the definition of head of household.) A household may, but does not need to, exclude a medically necessary caregiver from the household. A medically necessary caregiver is different from a caretaker who only provides homemaker services.

Only the elderly or disabled head of household can request to have a medically necessary caregiver excluded from the household. If an elderly or disabled applicant has a live-in caregiver who provides medically necessary services for the applicant, do not count the caregiver as a household member and do not count the caregiver's income. If a medically necessary caregiver pays room and board to the head of household, that payment is counted as self-employment income of the household. (Seasonal Fuel Assistance Rule 2911.3(a)(2))

Only the head A household can only have one medically necessary caregiver, and a household cannot have a medically necessary caregiver AND a companion.

Caretaker or Companion

A caretaker (or companion) is a person who is not a mandatory household member and who provides homemaker or personal care services to the *elderly or disabled head of household or their elderly or disabled spouse/civil union partner* in exchange for the caretaker's separate living quarters. This exchange of services for living quarters is considered reasonable compensation under the rule. A household may, but does not need to, exclude a caretaker or a companion from the household. A caretaker is different from a medically necessary caregiver.

Only the elderly or disabled head of household can request to have a caretaker or companion excluded from the household. (See Seasonal Fuel Assistance Rule 2901(a)(7) for the definition of head of household.) If an elderly or disabled applicant has a live-in caretaker who provides homemaker or personal services for the applicant, do not count the caretaker as a household member and do not count the caretaker's income. Refer to P-2908A for verification of caretakers or companions. If a caretaker pays room and board to the head of household, that payment is counted as self-employment income of the household. (Seasonal Fuel Assistance Rule 2911.3(a)(2))

A household can only have one companion, and a household cannot have a companion AND a medically necessary caregiver.

Individual in Foster Care or Residential Home Care

This is a non-mandatory household member placed in the home by DCF, DAIL, or DMH, regardless of whether the person is related to other members of the household. For example, if the household has a foster child placed in the home by DCF-FSD, the child is an individual in foster care and not a mandatory household member. All payments (difficulty of care (stipend) plus room and board) received by the household for caring for someone as a shared living provider are excluded as household income. (Seasonal Fuel Assistance Rule 2912(a)(22))

Roomer/Boarder

A person who is not a mandatory household member and who pays reasonable room rent to the head of household or his/her spouse or civil union partner, for *exclusive occupancy of one or more rooms* as separate living quarters in the living unit and meals are not provided.

If a fuel assistance applicant has not received rental assistance from the GA program within 30 days of ESD's receipt of the fuel application, then reasonable room rent would be \$40/week/roomer household (not per person), *regardless of whether the rent is paid to a relative or not*. In-kind payment does not qualify as reasonable room rent.

P-3102 ELIGIBILITY (continued)

P-3102C Ineligible Households (7/1/25, 25-14)

The following households are ineligible for fuel assistance:

1. Residents and operators of institutional homes and centers where the living space is heated by the institution.
2. Residents and operators of other congregate living arrangements, regardless of who is responsible for heating the living space, including but not restricted to:
 - Residents of college dormitories or other housing units provided by the college
 - Transitional Living Centers/Units
 - Hospitals
 - Retirement Homes
 - Rest Homes
 - Boarding Houses or Commercial Rooming Houses
 - Homeless Shelters
 - Communes
 - Jails and Correctional Facilities
 - Halfway Homes
 - Fraternity or Sorority Houses
 - Community Care Homes
 - Drug, Alcohol and Rehab Centers
 - Maternity Homes
3. People living in Long-Term Care Facilities, including:
 - Assisted Living Residences
 - Hospice Care Homes

- Nursing Homes
- Therapeutic Treatment Centers
- Residential Care Homes

4. People living in hotels, motels, and short-term rentals, including:

- An Airbnb or Vrbo
- An Inn
- A Bed and Breakfast

5. People living in temporary living quarters or movable structures, including:

- travel trailers,
- semitrailers,
- truck campers,
- motor homes,
- boats,
- campers,
- recreational vehicles (RV),
- railroad cars,
- vans, cars, or buses,
- tents,
- sheds,
- garages/shops, and
- fishing shacks

If a household lives in a movable structure that has been modified to be a permanent living unit, such as a camper attached to a foundation on the ground, contact the DCF-ESD Fuel Team.

P-3103 LIFE-THREATENING HOME HEATING CRISIS

(Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3103) (7/1/25, 25-14)

Definition

A life-threatening home heating crisis occurs when:

1. A household has an imminent risk of being without heat; and
2. A member of that household is unable to temporarily relocate to a heated space because of a documented medical condition.

Procedure

If a household has a life-threatening home heating crisis *and the household is eligible for crisis fuel assistance*, then the crisis fuel worker must make reasonable efforts to resolve the home heating crisis within 18 hours.

The 18 hours begins once the crisis worker receives a completed and signed application along with all supporting documentation, except Form 202SFP. Once these completed documents are received, the Community Action Agency can provide assistance before the Agency receives Form 202SFP. Documentation of medical condition by a medical professional, using Form 202SFP, is required within 30 days of the receipt of the application.

P-3104 APPLICATION PROCEDURES (Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3104)

P-3104A Goals and General Procedure for Expediting Applications (7/1/25, 25-14)

Applying for Crisis Fuel Assistance

Households that experience a heating crisis during regular office hours may apply in person for crisis assistance at their local Community Action Agency. Crisis fuel assistance applications are accepted beginning on the last Monday of November each year.

1. No applications for crisis assistance for oil, kerosene, bulk propane, coal, or wood will be accepted after the second Friday in April.
2. No applications for crisis assistance for electricity, natural gas, or metered propane will be accepted after the last business day in April.
3. Occasionally DCF-ESD may extend the crisis fuel application deadline beyond these dates.
4. See P-3105 for procedures on applying for crisis fuel assistance outside regular business hours.

A household applying for crisis fuel assistance must also apply for seasonal fuel assistance (Form 201SF) at the same time, unless:

1. The household already receives seasonal fuel assistance;
2. The household's income is above 185% of the federal poverty line (but no more than 200%); or
3. These are extenuating circumstances, for example, bad weather prevents in-person applications.

An application for crisis fuel assistance must be denied unless unforeseen extenuating circumstances have prevented the household from heating the living unit.

Goals of Expedited Seasonal Fuel Assistance for Clients Facing a Home Heating Crisis

Expediting a client's seasonal fuel benefit for a consumer with a home heating crisis has three goals:

1. To solve the client's home heating crisis.
2. To enroll the client in ongoing eligibility for seasonal fuel.
3. To preserve the client's single crisis fuel benefit.

Over-Arching Process

1. Based on the intake, the Community Action Agency must determine that the applicant is eligible crisis assistance and income eligible for seasonal fuel benefits before an expedited seasonal fuel request is submitted to the local ESD District Office.
2. The crisis fuel worker's and the client's responsibility is to make every effort to obtain seasonal fuel assistance in time to prevent the client's loss of heat.
3. In some instances, the client may be required to submit an application to the local ESD office or meet ESD program and/or procedural requirements.
4. Program and procedural requirements cannot be waived by the ESD District Office.
5. When, in the opinion of the crisis fuel worker, a client is unable to send over a completed application to the ESD District Office, a crisis fuel benefit can be given to solve the home heating crisis.
6. But the crisis fuel worker and the client must agree and document the client's responsibilities for obtaining seasonal fuel assistance.
7. When a client's seasonal fuel benefit cannot be expedited by the ESD District Office, the Community Action Agency should issue a crisis fuel benefit to solve the client's home heating crisis.
8. However, the crisis fuel worker **MUST** take into account the reason(s) why ESD could not expedite seasonal fuel assistance and re-determine if the client still meets eligibility criteria for crisis fuel assistance.

Criteria for Expediting Seasonal Fuel Applications

A seasonal fuel application may be expedited if:

1. The household completes the application and provides all documents to verify eligibility;
2. The household is eligible for seasonal fuel benefits;
3. The household hasn't received benefits during the heating season; and
4. The household has a home heating emergency, such as:

- the fuel tank is at 25% or less of its full capacity, or
- there is one week's supply (or less) of firewood, wood pellets, or coal (if those are the primary sources of heating in the home), or
- the household has received a disconnect notice from a metered utility.
 - The utility must provide heat to the home or must operate a necessary part of home heating equipment, like a furnace.

P-3104 APPLICATION PROCEDURES (continued)

P-3104B Worker Responsibilities Under Different Circumstances **(7/1/25, 25-14)**

Responsibility of Crisis Fuel Worker and Community Action Agency

Review for income eligibility for Seasonal and Crisis Fuel, use ACCESS system to verify specific information, status of Seasonal Fuel benefit, PERS/D/HIST where appropriate.

Active Seasonal Fuel Client

- If benefit paid as heated renter, wood/pellet benefit, or paid out as a vendor payment, client has “received” seasonal fuel benefit. Follow through with review for crisis fuel eligibility.
- If seasonal fuel benefit paid is \$21, assist the client in completing an application (201SF), ensuring that it is signed. Complete the Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form and make a copy for the file. Then email over Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form and signed application form (201SF) to the ESD local District Office Management Team.
- If the fuel client has been approved to receive benefits and if no seasonal fuel benefit has been paid yet, the client needs to contact the Benefit Service Center for resolution. If eligibility staff can’t resolve the problem, staff should refer the case to the Fuel and Utility Programs Team.

Pending Seasonal Fuel Application

- If no seasonal fuel benefit was paid, check on the status of the case in ACCESS, Read CATN's and determine if crisis fuel worker can assist the client in obtaining needed verification, so application can be processed. If you are able to obtain information, complete the Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form and email the form and verification to the ESD local District Office Management Team.
- If benefit paid as heated renter, wood/pellet benefit, or paid out as a vendor payment, complete review of crisis fuel eligibility.

Closed or Denied Seasonal Fuel Status

- Look at INQD to see if a benefit has been issued for the current season.
- If the benefit paid is \$21, complete Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form and copy for file. Complete Expedited Request form and the 201SF application and email them

to the ESD local District Office Management Team for processing.

- If benefit paid as heated renter, wood/pellet benefit, or paid out as a vendor payment, complete review of crisis fuel eligibility.
- If no benefit has been issued, review ELIG D SF for the denial/closure reason.
- If the reason is Over Income, screen for changes; determine if client should reapply for seasonal fuel assistance.
 - If there is no change in income, proceed with review for crisis fuel eligibility.
 - If income has changed and now falls below 185% FPL, complete the Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form and the 201SF application and email them to the ESD local District Office Management Team for processing.
- If Closed/Denied for any reason other than Over Income, refer the client to contact ESD to resolve as appropriate based on the circumstances. This may include the client calling the Benefits Service Center to discuss further the closure or denial. Afterwards, the client may need to complete the 201SF application form as well as an Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form. Once completed and reviewed, email them to the ESD local District Office Management Team for processing.

No Seasonal Fuel Application for Current Season

- Complete the Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form and the 201SF application and email them to the ESD local District Office Management Team for processing.

District Office Management Team Email Addresses

Dist. Office	Email address
ADO	AHSDCFESDADOManagement@vermont.gov
BDO	AHSDCFESDBDOManagement@vermont.gov
HDO	AHSDCFESDHDOManagement@vermont.gov
JDO	AHSDCFESDJDOManagement@vermont.gov
LDO	AHSDCFESDLDOManagement@vermont.gov
MDO	AHSDCFESDMDOManagement@vermont.gov
NDO	AHSDCFESDNDOManagement@vermont.gov

RDO	AHSDCFESDRDOManagement@vermont.gov
SDO	AHSDCFESDSDOManagement@vermont.gov
TDO	AHSDCFESDTDOManagement@vermont.gov
VDO	AHSDCFESDVDOManagement@vermont.gov
YDO	AHSDCFESDYDOManagement@vermont.gov

Responsibility of Benefit Program Specialist and ESD

Upon receipt of the Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request Form and emailed application, ESD will prioritize processing the application to determine eligibility for seasonal fuel assistance. The application and accompanying form will be processed within one hour by the assigned worker. It is requested that the client wait at the local Community Action Agency for a response in case additional information is needed.

Process for District Office Staff when expedited seasonal fuel eligibility has been reviewed/determined:

- If further information is needed, a 202V Form is provided and emailed to the Community Action Agency to give to the client.
- If seasonal fuel assistance is denied, the ACCESS Notice of Decision should be emailed to the local Community Action Agency to provide it to client. If ACCESS notice doesn't print, provide the client with a verbal explanation of the denial. Contact clients via the phone number provided on their application or call the local crisis fuel worker who is assisting the client if no phone number is provided.
- If seasonal fuel assistance is approved, the ACCESS Notice of Decision should be emailed to the local Community Action Agency to provide it to the client.
- If the client needs further crisis fuel assistance with delivery (electric disconnect, special trip charge, etc.), the Community Action Agency will review eligibility.
- Immediately document the specifics in CASE ACTION NOTES (CATN). This allows the Community Action Agency to further assist the client if necessary and provides a record of reference/resolution regarding the emergency need.

Dispute/Discrepancy Resolution

Staff at the Community Action Agency will refer specific case issues to their immediate supervisor and/or Crisis Fuel Coordinator. If necessary, the Supervisor/Coordinator will

communicate with the ESD District Office Supervisor and/or the senior worker at the Benefits Service Center for resolution.

ESD staff will refer specific case issues to the senior BPS or eligibility supervisor. If necessary, the ESD Supervisor or Senior Worker will communicate with the Community Action Agency Supervisor/Crisis Coordinator for resolution.

Should communications between respective offices fail to resolve the dispute, the Fuel and Utility Programs Team must be notified via email at ahs.dcfesdfuelmgmt@vermont.gov.

(See P-3112 for a client's appeal rights when the Community Action Agency denies crisis fuel benefits or otherwise issues an adverse decision.)

Expedited Seasonal Fuel Request by email ONLY if a Seasonal Fuel Application is Pending or Active

Applications for seasonal fuel assistance must be signed by the applicant, and ESD usually receives these applications through the mail. If the applicant is unknown to the Department, ESD must verify the applicant's identity.

Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3104(b) requires households to apply for crisis fuel assistance in person unless they meet certain exceptions. This allows the client to sign a seasonal fuel assistance application if one is not already on file with DCF-ESD. This rule also allows for verification of the client's identity if the client is not already known to DCF-ESD.

However, under certain circumstances, the in-person application requirement can be waived, and an applicant can apply for crisis fuel assistance by telephone, such as when the applicant is sick or elderly.

When a head of household applies for Crisis Fuel Assistance by phone, the crisis fuel worker may request DCF-ESD to expedite the processing of the household's seasonal fuel application. However, DCF-ESD cannot expedite processing of the seasonal fuel assistance application unless there is a signed application on file with DCF-ESD. (SF status in the ACCESS system must be Pending.)

No fuel benefits may be issued unless the applicant's identity has been verified or the applicant is known to DCF-ESD. Additionally, no seasonal fuel benefits may be issued unless ESD has a signed application.

P-3105 AFTER-HOURS CRISIS ASSISTANCE (Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3105) (7/1/25, 25-14)

FOR 2025-26 HEATING SEASON

After-Hours Crisis Fuel Assistance

After-hours crisis fuel assistance is available only on weekends and holidays, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., beginning 8:30 a.m. on November 24, 2025. After-hours assistance ends at 4:00 p.m. on April 10, 2026.

Applicants for after-hours assistance must call 1-866-331-7741. Applicants are screened by the call center agent based on the following criteria:

- The household has no heat in the home;
- The household is eligible for crisis fuel assistance;
- The household has at least one vulnerable member who:
 - Is age 60 or older;
 - Is age 5 or younger; or
 - Receives disability benefits from the Social Security Administration.

Applicants who meet these three criteria will receive a call back from an After-Hours Eligibility Specialist.

After-Hours Emergency Furnace Repair

If a household has no heat because of a problem with a furnace or heating system, then the household may be eligible to have its heating system repaired or replaced.

- The household must be otherwise eligible for crisis fuel assistance.
- The household does not need a vulnerable member to qualify.
- Repairs or replacements will not be made if the home has no heating fuel or energy to operate the heating system.

Applicants for emergency furnace repairs or replacements must call 1-877-295-7998.

Emergency applications are accepted beginning at 5:00 p.m. on November 24, 2025. No more applications will be accepted after 12:00 p.m. on April 30, 2026.

During this period, applications will be accepted every day from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. On weekends and holidays during this period, emergency applications are also accepted from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Applicants who meet the criteria will receive a call back from an After-Hours Eligibility Specialist.

Note

There is no direct link from the ESD Voice Response System to any after-hours crisis assistance. Anyone who calls the ESD Benefit Service Center (800-479-6151) will hear a message telling them to apply for assistance at a local community action agency during business hours. An applicant needing after-hours assistance must call one of the numbers above, depending on the circumstances.

P-3107 VERIFICATION (Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3107)

P-3107A Verifying Certain Information (7/1/25, 25-14)

Information that Must Always Be Verified

- All Income in the Past 30 Days:
 - Proof of income includes paycheck stubs, account statements, quick books, receipts, etc.
 - Self-declared income is not acceptable.
 - No verification is needed if income has been verified in the last 30 days and nothing has changed.
- Citizenship Status: Immigration documents must be requested & SAVES run.
 - Eligible non-citizens include: Parolees, Refugees, Asylees, Cuban/Haitian Entrants, Lawful Permanent Residents, Conditional Entrant, Iraqi & Afghan Special Immigrants, Victims of Trafficking, Immigrant with withheld deportation and Battered non-citizens.
 - Unlike other ESD benefits programs, qualified immigrants do not have to wait five years before applying for fuel assistance.
- ID: Identification if not known to DCF-ESD
- Medical Documentation: if there is a life-threatening home heating crisis.
- Anything Questionable: You may request further information on anything you deem questionable, however you must note why you find the information questionable.

Landlord Verification

For applicants residing in multi-living unit buildings and requesting assistance to avert a shut-off of electric service for the operation of a heating system (e.g., furnace) that is not located within the living unit, verification is needed, *even if the cost of heat is included in the rent*.

Procedure

With the applicant's permission, the worker may get verbal verification from the landlord, the

property manager, or the electric company, verifying that a shut off of electricity will shut off heat to the applicant's living unit. The worker should note all information from the conversation on Form 204VEF and place it in the client's file. Verbal verification from the applicant is **not** acceptable.

If the worker can't get verbal verification from the landlord, the property manager, or the electric company, then the landlord must complete Form 204VEF within five business days of assistance being granted. Failure of the client to submit the completed form will prevent all future crisis fuel assistance and may result in the Department's recoupment of the original grant.

See Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3107 for verifications requirements.

P-3107 VERIFICATION (continued)

P-3107B Waste, Fraud, and Abuse (7/1/25, 25-14)

Fraud Definition

Fraud occurs when someone:

- Purposely fails to disclose facts (or changes in circumstances), relevant to determining eligibility, in order to obtain or continue to receive benefits for which the person is not eligible, including benefits in an amount greater than they are eligible for.
- Purposely provides (or attempts to provide) false information relevant to determining eligibility, in order to obtain or continue to receive benefits for which the person is not eligible, including benefits in an amount greater than they are eligible for.
- Assists another person for the purpose of obtaining or continuing to receive benefits for which the other person is not eligible, including benefits in an amount greater than they are eligible for.

Questionable Changes or Situations

Below are some situations that may require collateral contacts and then may need to be discussed further with the DCF Fuel Team.

Household Composition

- Applicant or recipient gives suspect or contradictory information regarding the identity and/or whereabouts of the absent parent (AP).
- Absent Parent's address is consistent with the recipient's after separation is reported.
- The recipient is sanctioned for failure to cooperate with the Office of Child Support (OCS) but doesn't take actions to have the sanction lifted.
- AP has an occupation that would normally require absence from the residence for extended periods of time (such as a truck driver, salesperson, etc.).
- AP is reported to live at another address but provides care and support for the child on practically a daily basis. This in itself is okay but could indicate the AP is actually living in the home.
- Situations where the recipient may be concealing the marriage or common children with a person residing in client's household.

- Suspicion that a child(ren) do(es) not reside with the applicant or recipient.
- Recipient reports a household member has left the home after this member obtains countable income.
- Recipient adds a household member when this member loses income or resources.
- Household consisting of several adult members with no income.
- Varying reports of household member's SSN, date of birth, or relationships

Income

- Households where expenses are higher than reported income.
- Household has a member(s) with suspected self-employment income not available on computer matches (such as construction, agriculture, domestic work, childcare, etc.).
- The recipient presents employment wage verification that appears to have been altered. Unsigned or not authentic or fails to report tips or gratuities when such sources of income are routinely part of their compensation (such as waitress, bartender, dancer, hair stylist, taxi driver, bell-boy, delivery person, etc.).
- Recipient reports Unemployment Compensation (UC) will cease before (UC) is exhausted, but does not report employment, or reports the loss of steady employment, but does not apply for UC.
- Suspicion that child support is being paid directly to the recipient.

Residency

- The recipient presents verification of residency that appears to have been altered or completed by someone other than the appropriate verifier. Document has scribbled out information or areas have been written over.
- Suspicion that a recipient has moved out of the state.
- Suspicion that recipient is currently receiving benefits from another state.
- Recipient provides shelter statement signed by relative or AP is landlord.
- A shelter statement is unsigned, and recipient continually claims to be unable to reach the landlord or makes other excuses for not being able to provide the form.

Contact DCF Fuel Team

If after reviewing any of these questionable items you feel the application needs further review, then please contact the fuel team to discuss: ahs.dcfesdfuelmgmt@vermont.gov. The fuel team can make a referral to the Investigations Unit or do a “Front End Verification” or a “Suspected Fraud Investigation.”

P-3108 BENEFITS (Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3108)

P-3108A Payment For Authorized Services (7/1/25, 25-14)

Crisis workers should negotiate special trip charges because the expedited benefit would typically be a larger delivery than the minimum crisis delivery.

If the crisis worker authorizes other services (beyond primary heating assistance covered by expedited benefits) payment for such services will be rendered directly to the fuel or energy supplier under the Community Action Agency's usual and customary financial procedures.

P-3108 BENEFITS (continued)

P-3108B Client's Dealer of Record (7/1/25, 25-14)

The Dealer of Record is the certified fuel supplier identified in the household's ACCESS information on the Utility Panel. If no fuel supplier is identified in ACCESS, then no dealer of record exists, and this procedure does not apply.

The client's dealer of record should always be used to make a Crisis Fuel grant delivery. When the crisis fuel worker, *in consultation with the client*, determines that another dealer should be used, the crisis fuel worker **MUST** document the details of that decision. The crisis fuel worker *must* document the following information in the client's crisis fuel file maintained by the CAP:

- the reason another dealer was used, and
- discussions with the following people:
 - client,
 - the dealer of record, and
 - the other dealer(s) involved.

NOTE: under the new tank rules, utilizing a dealer other than the Dealer of Record will result in a mandatory tank inspection. This could delay benefits because not all delivery drivers are able to inspect tanks. Benefits could also be delayed if the fuel dealer red tags the tank, resulting in the inability to have fuel delivered.

P-3112 DECISIONS AND APPEALS (Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3112) (7/1/25, 25-14)

Notices

Crisis fuel workers must give a written Notice of the Right to Appeal a Decision to every client after a decision is made on any application, *especially* when an application is denied. The Notice must inform the client of when and how to appeal.

Request for Review

An applicant may ask for a review of the crisis fuel worker's decision or inaction. The applicant may ask for the review orally or in writing. The request to appeal can be made to any employee of the Community Action Agency where the crisis fuel application was submitted.

The applicant must notify the Agency of the appeal within two business days after the crisis worker's decision. If a crisis worker does not make a decision within one business day after an application is submitted, the applicant must notify the Agency of the appeal within three business days after the application was submitted. The Agency does not need to hear an appeal if the applicant does not ask for one within these time frames.

Review Procedure

The Director of the Community Action Agency can have any Agency employee (including the Director) hear the appeal, as long as it is not the crisis worker who decided the application. The Director (or designee) must listen to the applicant and review the file and application. The Director (or designee) must consider any of the following:

- The nature of the emergency
- The predictability of the emergency
- Extenuating circumstances
- The applicant's actions
- Whether a crisis benefit or something else will improve the situation.

The person who heard the appeal must give a written decision to the applicant within one day after the applicant requests an appeal. The written decision must inform the client of how and when to appeal the Agency's decision to the Human Services Board.

Consulting with DCF

The director or Agency employee hearing the appeal may consult with the Fuel Team at DCF-ESD at any time. If the agency intends to deny the appeal, the director or employee **MUST** consult DCF. The agency may not deny the appeal without approval from DCF. The agency must issue the crisis fuel assistance if directed by DCF. The Director (or designee) does not need to contact DCF if the Agency decides to issue a benefit.

Appeal to Human Service Board

If the applicant does not agree with the decision of the director, the applicant can request a hearing with the Human Services Board. Applicants should file their request to appeal directly with the Human Services Board, but if the applicant tells the community action agency that they want to appeal, then the Agency must inform the Board by emailing: contact.hsb@vermont.gov.

See Crisis Fuel Assistance Rule 3112 for more information about notices of decisions and appeal rights.