



City of Cambridge

Department of Human Service Programs

51 Inman Street Cambridge Massachusetts 02139 498-9076

To: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

January 13, 1983

From: Jill Herold *JH.*
Assistant City Manager for Human Services

Isabella Hinds
Deputy Director

In the fall of 1981, the Department of Human Service Programs assumed responsibility for the Low Income Fuel Assistance Program for Cambridge (and Somerville). The credibility of that program with clients was low -- and its reputation with local oil dealers and the two utility companies serving the Cambridge area - Com Gas and Com Energy was so poor that there was a substantial risk some would refuse further participation in the program. In just 18 months, we have made great strides. For the current season, applicants have been notified of eligibility within 9 days of application; the average period between presentation of a bill for payment and issuance of a check has been reduced to 15 days; and the FY 82 program has just received an excellent audit report from Peat, Marmick and Mitchell. As gratifying as these statistics are even more so is the correspondence received from clients.

"This is the second time I have received aid from the fuel program and this year there wasn't any stress or anxiety."

"I just wanted to send you a brief note thanking you for your prompt action on my fuel assistance appeal, and for the courteous letter you sent. I have a lot of dread about dealing with government agencies, based partly on experience, partly on mythology. I just want you to know that I felt treated with attention and respect by your agency through all parts of the process. Thanks again."

There are of course, areas which have been targeted for continued improvement in the operation of the program. The most critical for clients in continuing education as to the nature and limits of the program. The Fuel Assistance Program has been designed in Massachusetts as an assistance program; for most households, the maximum benefit level represents only 40% of actual energy costs. Moreover, the program

regulations authorizes payments only for actual energy use for the period of October 1 - April 30 (with a modest provision for paying overdue bills prior to October 1). One of our continuing challenges is to help clients keep sufficiently abreast of energy bills during non-program months to avoid threat of termination. This responsibility will grow more difficult as energy costs particularly those of natural gas, continue to rise. For the 1982-83 season, the DPU awarded Commonwealth Gas rate increases totalling 30%. Testimony by Fuel Assistance staff was a factor in the DPU's decision to adjust the increase requested by the company. In response to rising costs, 1983 program regulations have been changed and currently fuel assistance benefits can be applied to primary heat costs only. In previous years clients have been able to split benefits among all their energy costs.

At the same time, the program must continue to provide such services as advocacy and negotiation with oil dealers and particularly utility companies; in some instances, advocacy with the Department of Public Utilities, often in conjunction with Cambridge/Somerville Legal Services; negotiations for restoration of shut-off services, for resolution of billing problems, payment plan arrangements, and meter reading problems. In addition, the Fuel Assistance staff work closely with the staff of the C.A.S.H. (Cambridge Action to Save Heat) program of the Community Development Department to arrange the distribution of weatherization materials and to provide installation instructions and conservation information to clients.

A second focus of this year's program will be increased outreach to those eligible households whose heating costs are paid through their rent. Though state program regulations are cumbersome for this population, a significant portion of potentially eligible households in Cambridge pay their heating costs in this way and need the assistance offered by the program.

Detailed below are some specific statistics on the clients served last year and some trends for the current program year.

1981-82 Fuel Assistance Clients. During the 1981-82 season, the Cambridge Fuel Assistance Program served 2300 eligible households. (Ninety-seven per cent of all applicants proved eligible for the program). For those households, distribution of primary heat source was as follows

Source	% of households <u>in Cambridge</u>
Gas	69%
Oil	18%
Electricity	10%
Rental Assistance	3%

Of the \$2.77 million paid out on behalf of all clients in 1981-82, \$1.33 million was paid for gas, 1.0 million for oil, .38 million was paid for electricity, and .0519% for rental payments.* The average expenditure per client was \$522.**

There are three possible benefit levels for eligible households. That level is determined by income and household size (see attached charts). In 1981-82, benefit levels were distributed as follows:

<u>Benefit level</u>	<u>% of clients</u>
\$750	74%
500	14%
325	11%

One of the goals of the program in 1981-82 was to increase accessibility of the program for all residents of the city. To that end, nine different intake sites were established in addition to those at COPA, Concilio and CHAMA. Over half of those who applied to the program were able, then, to do so in their own neighborhoods. The following breakdown identifies each site and the proportion of the total applications that were taken there:

Cambridge Community Center	10%
Fletcher Community School	5%
Haggerty Community School	1%
Kennedy Community School	10%
Lincoln Community School	3%
Rindge Shelter	5%
Roberts Community School	5%
Tobin Community School	2%
COPA	7%
Concilio	5%
CHAMA	less than 1%
SCES	4%
	57% sub-total
51 Inman St./Cambridgeport Problem Center	43%
	100% total.

Elderly applicants made up a disproportionate number of the applicants at the Rindge Shelter, the Lincoln School, and the Haggerty School, confirming the particular necessity for easy access for that population in North and West Cambridge.

* Somerville customers are more likely than Cambridge to rely on oil heat thus influencing somewhat the total expenditures.

** Given program regulations, actual payments in relation to benefit levels are influenced by date of applications, rate of energy use, and type of energy source.

Particular client populations have been targeted for the program at the federal level. Specifically these include elderly and handicapped individuals. In Cambridge thirty-five percent (35%) of eligible households were elderly headed households and twenty-one (21%) had a handicapped member. Seventy-five per cent (75%) of all households were female-headed. Other demographic statistics collected include race of the head of the household. Eighteen percent (18%) were black, and eight percent (8%) were Hispanic. Though the state mandated application does not gather statistics on the Portuguese, 6% of all eligible clients applied at C.O.P.A. with which the program contracted for outreach services. Similar contracts were in place with Concilio Hispano, CHAMA, and Somerville/Cambridge Elder Services.

As the list indicates, the cooperation of several private agencies, particularly the Cambridge Community Center and Cambridgeport Problem Center, has been a valuable component of outreach efforts. In 1983, the East End House was added to that list.

Distribution of households served by neighborhoods of residents is as follows:

<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>% of all Households</u>
1	17%
2	0
3	12
4	23
5	8
6	2
7	15
8	1
9	8
10	3
11	8
12	1
13	2
	100%

1982-83 Trends

As indicated earlier, several changes at the state level in program regulations have affected this year's clients. First, the program is intended to pay primary heating costs only (there is a one time only exception for situations in which a shutoff of electricity would interrupt heat). Second, residents of public housing are no longer eligible for assistance, though residents of publicly subsidized housing (primarily so-called Section 8 Tenants) are. Benefit levels have remained constant but eligibility guidelines have altered slightly (see attached charts).

The flow of applicants this year has been, in Cambridge as it has elsewhere around the state, decidedly heavier earlier. The total number of applications to date is running about 20% higher than the number at this time last year. Moreover, of the applicants in 1983, twenty five percent had not participated in last year's program. These statistics are even more significant, given relatively warm weather to date. Given a level funded program, we remain concerned about the available resources in the face of a growing need.

1982 -- 1983

INCOME ELIGIBILITY LEVELS

F E D E R A L P R O G R A M

STATE PROGRAM

FAMILY SIZE	<u>\$750</u> (SUBSIDIZED - \$375)	<u>\$500</u> (SUBSIDIZED - \$250)	<u>\$325</u> (SUBSIDIZED - \$162.50)
1	0 - 5,850	5,851 - 7,020	7,021 - 8,190
2	0 - 7,775	7,776 - 9,330	9,331 - 10,885
3	0 - 9,700	9,701 - 11,640	
4	0 - 11,625	11,626 - 13,950	
5	0 - 13,550	13,551 - 16,260	
6	0 - 15,475	15,476 - 18,570	
7	0 - 17,400	17,401 - 20,880	
8	0 - 19,325	19,326 - 23,190	
OVER 8 MEMBERS	1,925/each additional	2,310/each additional	

1981-1982

ATTACHMENT A

BENEFIT LEVELS BY INCOME AND FAMILY SIZE

-----IF THE HOUSEHOLD'S INCOME IS LESS THAN-----

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Income Range#1</u>	<u>Income Range#2</u>	<u>Income Range#3</u>
1	5,000	6,100	7,543*
2	6,500	8,000	9,953*
3	8,000	9,900	11,988
4	9,500	11,800	14,272
5	10,900	13,800	16,556
6	12,400	15,600	18,839
7	13,900	16,600	19,267
8	15,400	18,200	20,955
FOR EACH OVER 8, ADD:	1,500	1,600	2,070
ELIGIBLE FOR MAXIMUM FUEL ASSISTANCE OF:	750	500	325

*NOTE: The maximum income limit for one and two person households under the state program (using state funds) only; the federal limits are \$7,421 and \$9,605 respectively.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS
LOW INCOME FUEL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
1982-1983

TITLE	NAME	ADDRESS	DURATION	TOTAL WAGES	AFFIRMATIVE ACTION INFORMATION
Operations Manager	Raymond Palmer	Somerville	10/1-7/31/83	\$18,681.00	White Male
Processing Coordinator	Louise Sullivan	Cambridge	10/1-6/30/83	\$13,081.00	White Female
Assistant Processing Coordinator	Paula Jones	Cambridge	10/1-5/31/83	\$ 9,333.00	Black Female
Emergency Specialist	Kathleen Mitchell	Cambridge	10/1-4/30-83	\$ 7,519.00	White Female
Verification Specialist	J. Michael Reynolds	Cambridge	10/13-3/1/83	\$ 4,597.60	White Male
Verification Specialist	AnneMarie Hackett	Cambridge	10/13-3/1/83	\$ 4,792.60	Black Female
Verification Specialist	Donna Stevves	Medford	10/18-2/25/83	\$ 4,367.72	White Female
Verification Specialist	Anne Charles	Cambridge	10/13-2/1/83	\$ 3,678.08	White Female
Clerk	Ann M. Allosso	Cambridge	10/13-3/29/83	\$ 4,599.12	White Female
Clerk	Dalma Cartagena	Cambridge	10/13-3/29/83	\$ 4,599.12	Hispanic Female
Clerk/Receptionist	Susan Morris	Cambridge	11/15-3/31/83	\$ 3,833.40	White Female
Cambridge Coordinator	Linda Williams	Ashland	10/1-4/30/83	\$10,197.00	Black Female
Assistant Cambridge Coordinator	Paul Schlaver	Cambridge	10/1-4/30/83	\$ 8,565.20	White Male

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICE PROGRAMS

LOW INCOME FUEL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

1982-1983

TITLE	NAME	ADDRESS	DURATION	TOTAL WAGES	AFFIRMATIVE ACTION INFORMATION
Intake Worker	Lucy Asamoah	Cambridge	10/13-2/11/83	\$ 3,236.64	Black Female
Intake Worker	Helene Corry	Cambridge	10/13-1/14/83	\$ 1,667.36	White Female
Intake Worker	Pearline Hines	Cambridge	10/18-2/1/83	\$ 3,126.30	Black Female
Intake Worker	Maria Rivera	Cambridge	10/13-1/14/83	\$ 2,501.04	Hispanic Female
Intake Worker	Jackie Sparks	Cambridge	10/13-1/14/83	\$ 1,667.36	White Female
Intake Worker	Karen Perry	Somerville	11/1-2/11/83	\$ 2,758.50	White Female



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

January 17, 1983

To the Honorable, the City Council:

As requested by City Council, I enclose herewith a report
on the Fuel Assistance Program and the Fuel Assistance staff.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

Re: report on the Fuel Assistance Program and
the Fuel Assistance staff.

In City Council,

January 17, 1983

1/17/1983

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