

# **Limited Review of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program**

**Report by the  
Office of County Comptroller**

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July 21, 2015

Teresa Jacobs, County Mayor  
And  
Board of County Commissioners

We have conducted a limited review of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. The review was limited to evaluating whether the County complied with the provisions of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program funding agreement between the County and the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. The period reviewed was March 1, 2013 through May 31, 2014.

We conducted this review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the review to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our objectives.

We appreciate the cooperation of the personnel of the Family Services Department during the course of the review.

Martha O. Haynie, CPA  
County Comptroller

c: Ajit Lalchandani, County Administrator  
Dr. George A. Ralls, MD, Deputy County Administrator  
Lonnie C. Bell, Director, Family Services Department

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Executive Summary

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program that provides utility payment assistance to low-income families. The Federal money is passed through the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO) to the County. Low-income applicants can receive financial assistance to help pay their utility bills from one of three programs: Home Energy, Crisis Energy and Weather Related. LIHEAP personnel annually process approximately 10,000 assistance payments. The County was awarded approximately \$6.9 million in LIHEAP funding from March 1, 2013 to March 31, 2015. This award allowed the County to fund up to 15 positions to process the applications for assistance during the past two fiscal years. The County has received LIHEAP funding since 1992.

The scope of the review was to evaluate whether the Division complied with the provisions of the LIHEAP funding contract between the County and the FDEO. The review period was March 1, 2013 through May 31, 2014. The objectives were to evaluate whether sufficient documentation was retained to support that clients approved for assistance met program eligibility guidelines and Division personnel followed payment procedures in the FDEO agreement.

Based on the results of our testing, sufficient documentation was retained to support that clients approved for assistance met program eligibility guidelines and Division personnel complied with payment procedures in the FDEO agreement. We did not identify any reportable conditions and as such have no recommendations for improvement.

# INTRODUCTION

**Background**

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program designed to provide utility payment assistance to low-income families. The United States Congress provides annual appropriations to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which apportions LIHEAP monies to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the five U.S. territories, and over 150 Indian tribes and tribal organizations. In Florida, the secondary grantor is the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (FDEO). The FDEO annually awards the Community Action Division of the Orange County Department of Family Services with a contract to administer the program at the local level. The County has received LIHEAP funding since 1992.

LIHEAP has three assistance categories, Home Energy Assistance, Crisis Energy Assistance and Weather Related.

The review period spanned two overlapping annual contracts as follows: March 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014, for \$3.1 million; and March 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015, for \$3.8 million. The contracts funded 12 positions during fiscal year 2014 and 15 positions for fiscal year 2015 for LIHEAP activities. LIHEAP personnel annually process approximately 10,000 assistance payments. Clients are eligible for assistance if their household income and size does not exceed limits periodically adjusted by the Federal Office of Management and Budget.

The Community Action Division (Division) has 39 authorized positions in addition to the LIHEAP positions. For fiscal year 2014 the Family Services Department had 624 authorized positions with an approved budget of \$77,362,537.

**Scope, Objectives,  
and Methodology**

The scope of the review was to evaluate whether the Division complied with the provisions of the LIHEAP funding contract between the County and the FDEO. The review period was March 1, 2013 through May 31, 2014. The objectives were to evaluate whether sufficient documentation was retained to support that clients, approved for assistance, met program eligibility guidelines and Division personnel followed payment procedures in the FDEO agreement.

To achieve our objectives we examined 60 client files and verified the following:

- Caseworkers obtained applications for assistance from all of the sampled clients. The applications identify each member of the client's household, the circumstances resulting in financial need (e.g. loss of job, accident or disability), past LIHEAP or other energy program assistance and other information about the client's situation.
- Staff used drivers' licenses, passports, student identification cards, other photographic documents and social security cards to verify the identity of each member of a client's household listed on the application. Copies of these documents were included in the contents of each case file we examined.
- Caseworkers obtained documentation of household income from paystubs, entitlement program award letters, and/or employer letters for each individual on the client's application. Computations on worksheets and comment forms and entries to case notes supported caseworkers' calculations and were included in the contents of each file we examined.
- Clients' annual incomes and household sizes were compared to poverty level matrices to determine program eligibility.
- Caseworkers obtained utility bills from all of the sample clients and contacted utility vendors to confirm the amount of charges on the bills.
- Fiscal and Operational Support employees reviewed case files prior to requesting payment checks from the Comptroller's Finance and Accounting Department. Fiscal staff stamped and initialed files attesting to their review.



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## INTRODUCTION



Limited Review of the  
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

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### Overall Evaluation

Based on the results of our testing, sufficient documentation was retained to support that clients approved for assistance met program eligibility guidelines and Division personnel complied with payment procedures in the FDEO agreement. We did not identify any reportable conditions and as such have no recommendations for improvement.