**Section 100.230 Applicant Assistance**

a) Application and Enrollment

1) Applications for assistance shall be submitted to and processed on a full-time basis by LAAs during months specified by the Department. The dates will be set annually by the Department after consultation with the Policy Advisory Council and will be based on factors including, but not limited to, available funding, energy costs, weather and economic conditions. The Department will apply equal weight to each of the major items considered. Applicants that are elderly or disabled, and/or applicants that have been disconnected from their primary and/or secondary home energy provider, will have a priority application period designated specifically for them.

2) The LAAs shall either approve or disapprove a completed application within 30 days after its receipt and, in the event of approval, shall within the same 30 days notify the applicant and the applicant's home energy provider electronically or in writing of the applicant's eligibility. If the application is incomplete at the time of its receipt, the LAA shall notify the applicant in writing, at the time of its receipt of the application, of all the information required from the applicant to complete the application. The applicant shall submit the additional information necessary to complete the application within 15 days after the date of the notification letter. In the event an applicant fails to submit the application in a timely manner or fails to submit all information necessary to complete the application, the LAA may disapprove the application. If the LAA disapproves an application, it shall, within 30 days after receipt of the completed application, notify the applicant in writing of the disapproval and reasons for disapproval. The notification must also apprise the applicant of the dispute resolution procedures set forth in Section 100.90.

3) When the home energy provider receives written or electronic notice of a customer of record's eligibility for assistance (as described in Section 100.220), the home energy provider shall place the customer of record on the option within 30 days. During that period, the home energy provider shall not disconnect the applicant for nonpayment. If an applicant's service is disconnected during that period, service shall be restored without penalty as soon as is practicable, and in no event later than as provided in 83 Ill. Adm. Code 280.130(f).

4) A home energy provider may refuse to accept the notice of eligibility referred to above if it pertains to a person in the household who is not the customer of record or if it contains an incorrect account number. If the home energy provider does not accept the notice of an applicant's eligibility, the home energy provider must notify the applicant, the Department, and the LAA in writing within 14 days after the provider's receipt of the notice that the applicant's enrollment was rejected, the reason for the rejection and what the applicant must do prior to the home energy provider accepting the enrollment. The notification must also apprise the applicant of the availability of the dispute resolution procedures set forth in Section 100.90. The home energy provider's notice must give the applicant 14 days from the postmark date of the notification to eliminate the reason for rejection. During the 14-day period following the postmark date, the home energy provider shall not disconnect a customer of record for non-payment.

5) Each home energy provider shall inform all residential customers of record of the availability of the program provided for in this Part.

6) All written notices of discontinuance issued to residential customers of record pursuant to 83 Ill. Adm. Code 280 or the company's normal credit collection practices shall include information regarding the availability of the program provided for in this Part.

b) Payment Process

1) Eligible applicants pursuant to Option 1 (as described in Section 100.220(a)) will receive a direct cash payment for energy assistance in accordance with Appendix A. This payment will be made, in accordance with appropriate grant agreements, by either the Department or the LAA.

2) Eligible applicants pursuant to Option 2 (as described in Section 100.220(a)(2)) will receive assistance, provided on their behalf to the applicant household's home energy providers in an amount detailed in Appendix A. This payment will be made, in accordance with appropriate grant agreements, by either the Department or the LAA. The applicant's account shall be posted/credited with the payment within 30 days after the home energy provider's receipt of the payment. If the energy providers fail to sign a Vendor Agreement, then a two-party check will be sent to the applicant.

(Source: Section 100.230 recodified from 89 Ill. Adm. Code 109.230 at 33 Ill. Reg. 9466)