



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 10, 2011

For more information contact:

Carol Mattar, Public Relations Specialist

Phone: (708)383-0258

Cell: (708)601-3730

Email: carol.mattar@ageoptions.org

Winter Storm Preparedness Week is Nov. 13-19 in Illinois

Warm and Safe: Winter Safety Tips for Older Adults Plus How to Apply for Help With Heating Bills

The cold temperatures of winter are especially dangerous for older adults, a risk that increases for seniors who feel the need to save on heating costs by setting their thermostats too low. This news release from AgeOptions, the Area Agency on Aging of suburban Cook County has two parts: information on applying for help paying heating bills through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and links to tips for older adults on staying safe in cold weather.

Help Paying Heating Bills

Illinois residents who are concerned about being able to pay their heating bills may be eligible for assistance through the state's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The program has limited funding available to assist low-income residents with the cost of keeping their homes warm this winter.

LIHEAP eligibility is based on income. A single-person household may qualify with a monthly income up to \$1,361, and a two-person household with a monthly income up to \$1,839.

For the first time this year, some people eligible for LIHEAP will have a choice of two programs. The original LIHEAP Direct Vendor Payment (DVP) provides a one-time benefit payment to the recipient's utility company, to be applied directly to the household's energy bills. The amount of the payment is determined by income, household size and fuel type.

New this year is the LIHEAP Percent of Income Payment Plan (PIPP), which provides a monthly payment to the utility company based on household utility usage and monthly income. Customers are required to pay a reduced amount on their utility bills each month, and those who pay on time will receive credits toward their outstanding balance.

LIHEAP funds are limited, and AgeOptions urges older adults to apply as soon as possible to determine if they are eligible. To find the closest location taking applications, call the Energy Hotline at CEDA (the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County), (800)571-2332, or visit CEDA's website, www.cedaorg.net.

Information on LIHEAP, including determining whether you qualify and how to apply, is also available by calling AgeOptions at (708)383-0258 or (800)699-9043 (voice), or (708)524-1653 (TTY).

Safe and Warm: Winter Safety Tips for Older Adults and Those Who Care for Them

Older people may not be able to feel when they are getting too cold, or they may set their thermostats too low in an effort to save on heating costs. **To prevent hypothermia** (very low body temperature), a dangerous and potentially life threatening condition, the Illinois Department on Aging and the National Institute on Aging offer these tips: <http://www.ageoptions.org/newsandviews/documents/WinterSafety-linkfromLIHEAPrelease.pdf>

“**Stay Safe in Cold Weather!**” from the National Institute on Aging describes what it means to have hypothermia, how to prevent hypothermia and warning signs of hypothermia: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/NR/rdonlyres/D951D0BA-A9B3-42EF-A587-E661944685A2/0/StaySafeColdWeatherfinal.pdf>

Illinois Warming Centers by ZIP code: <http://www2.illinois.gov/KeepWarm/Pages/warmingcenter.aspx>

If you or an older family member, friend or neighbor may be at risk during severe winter conditions, call AgeOptions for information on how to get assistance: (708)383-0258, (800)699-9043 (voice) or (708)524-1653 (TTY).

Winter Storm Preparedness Week

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency has designated November 13 -19 as Winter Storm Preparedness Week. The campaign emphasizes the importance of preparedness and self-reliance in winter weather.

This link to “Cold Weather Can Be Dangerous to Your Health and Life” includes winter storm tips for the home and defines weather warning terms, including what to expect during those conditions: <http://www.ready.illinois.gov/during/winterstorms.htm>

Weather Warning Terms

- **Wind Chill Advisory** - dangerous wind chills of 15 below to 24 below zero are expected.
- **Wind Chill Warning** - potentially life threatening wind chills of 25 below zero or colder are expected.
- **Frost Advisory** - damaging frost is expected during the growing season.
- **Freeze Warning** - below freezing temperatures are expected during the growing season.
- **Ice Storm Warning** - dangerous accumulations of ice will occur and are expected to result in hazardous travel, extended power outages, and damage to trees.
- **Heavy Snow Warning** - snow accumulations of six inches or greater, which will result in hazardous travel conditions.
- **Winter Weather Advisory** - cold, ice, and/or snow (two to five inches) are expected.

- **Winter Storm Watch** - severe winter weather, such as heavy snow or ice, is possible within the next day or two.
- **Winter Storm Warning** - severe ice and/or snow (six inches or more) have begun or are about to begin.
- **Blizzard Warning** - heavy snow and strong winds will produce a blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep drifts, and life-threatening travel conditions.

AgeOptions and its network of community agencies are the principal source of information regarding senior services in suburban Cook County, Ill. A nonprofit organization located in Oak Park, AgeOptions has served the older adults of suburban Cook County and their caregivers as an Area Agency on Aging since 1974. For more information, please visit the Agency website at www.ageoptions.org.

AgeOptions connects adults age 60 and over with resources and service options so they can live their lives to the fullest and remain in their homes as long as possible. In 2010 we met the needs of more than 198,500 individuals in 130 communities within 30 townships that have a diverse population of 460,000 older adults. AgeOptions advocates, plans, develops and funds programs and coordinates a network of community-based senior service agencies to ensure an effective and efficient system of service delivery. Support is provided through the Older Americans Act, Illinois General Revenue Funds, local funds and individual contributions.