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**LEAP TO KICK-OFF SEASON, PROVIDING FUNDS TO HELP ELIGIBLE COLORADANS WITH HOME HEATING BILLS**

DENVER – November 1, 2011 – Colorado’s Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), which provides financial assistance with home heating bills, will begin accepting applications Tuesday, November 1<sup>st</sup> and will continue to do so until April 30, 2012.

LEAP is a federally funded program that provides cash assistance to help families and individuals pay a portion of winter home heating costs. The program pays the highest benefits to those with the highest heating bills and lowest incomes by family size.

“Due to a decrease in federal funding, the Colorado Department of Human Services had to make the difficult decision to reduce the income criteria for the LEAP program from 185 percent to 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines,” explained Todd Jorgensen, director of LEAP.

According to Jorgensen, a family of four’s maximum household income may not exceed \$2,794 per month; previously that amount was \$3,400.

“Understandably this change to LEAP’s income eligibility levels may cause a hardship for many Colorado families and we encourage Coloradans not meeting the new criteria to call the HEAT HELP line, 1-866-HEAT HELP, to receive information on additional community resources.

According to Jorgensen, the average LEAP benefit is estimated to be \$325 per household. Last year, 149,199 Coloradans applied for LEAP, and 125,097 households received an average benefit of \$373.

To qualify for LEAP, applicants must be responsible for paying heating costs directly to an energy provider, fuel dealer or as part of rent; be a permanent legal resident of the United States and Colorado or have household members that are U.S. citizens.

LEAP applicants must provide a copy of valid identification and a completed affidavit indicating that they are lawfully present in the United States. Valid forms of identification include, but are not limited to:

1. Colorado Driver’s License or Colorado Identification card; or

2. United States Military Identification Card or Military Dependent's Identification card; or
3. United States Coast Guard Merchant Mariner card; or
4. Native American Tribal document.

As defined by the Colorado Department of Revenue, other forms of identification may be required as well. For more information on lawful presence requirements, contact the DOR or visit [www.colorado.gov/revenue](http://www.colorado.gov/revenue).

Completed LEAP applications can be faxed, mailed or delivered to the appropriate county office. Potential program applicants may obtain an application through the following:

- Call 1-866-HEAT-HELP (1-866-432-8435) to have an application mailed .
- Visit any county department of social/human services across the state. To locate your county's office, visit the program's Web site at [www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap](http://www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap).
- Download and print an application from [www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap](http://www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap).

LEAP eligible households may also qualify for the Crisis Invention Program [CIP] and the Governor's Energy Office's Weatherization Program. The CIP operates year-round and provides assistance with a home's primary heating source such as a furnace or wood-burning stove. The Weatherization Program improves the energy efficiency in homes throughout Colorado, thereby permanently reducing heating costs.

To find out if you qualify for LEAP, call toll free 1-866-HEAT-HELP (1-866-432-8435) or visit [www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap](http://www.colorado.gov/cdhs/leap) to view the most current program application requirements.