

# ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



## YEAR IN REVIEW

- 2,259 households served
- 4,357 individuals assisted
- 56 air conditioners distributed to at risk households
- 404 households received crisis funding to avoid disconnection of services or to reconnect after disconnection
- 83% of households served were elderly and/or disabled



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# 2015 PROGRAM REPORT

## RUBY AND KENNETH'S STORY:

Ruby and Kenneth were getting by as best they could on a fixed income. But when their three young grandchildren came to live with them, it became significantly harder to make ends meet. In January, the family fell behind on their utility bills and were only days away from having their gas shut off. With temperatures in the teens, a night without heat for this family would be devastating. Kenneth contacted OVO to apply for the Energy Assistance Program. With their disconnection date quickly approaching, OVO staff sprung into action, setting Kenneth and Ruby up for an appointment for that very day. Once they came to the office to apply, staff were able to assess their application and determine their eligibility for the program. An emergency pledge was sent to their gas company as well as their electric provider, and Ruby and Kenneth were able to maintain heat and electricity for their family. Not only did OVO's assistance help them get caught up on past due bills, but they had a remaining credit on their account that was able to help them get through the following month as well. Additionally, OVO staff noticed that their bills were unusually high and were able to refer the family on to our Weatherization Assistance Program to get help with insulating their home and lowering their energy bills.

## WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

### Improved Client Experience

By reorganizing workspaces and client areas, we improved our client experience while visiting our offices. We created a new Energy Education Training Center (pictured at right), where clients can access energy conservation materials, view our Energy Education video, and complete the corresponding client survey. Relocated staff offices provide privacy during appointments and ensure confidentiality of client information. These improvements in organization provide our clients with the best possible customer service experience while applying for our services.



### Updated Technology

By updating technology utilized in this program, we were able to better serve our clients and improve program efficiency. Laptops now aid our staff in being mobile in order to travel out into the counties and process client applications. Tablets allow our clients to view our new Energy Education training video and complete client surveys during appointments out in the counties. A television at our Administration Office shows clients our new video in our Energy Education Training Center. These technology upgrades further improve our ability to provide superior client service and, in making our staff mobile, maximize accessibility to our program.

### Increased Access to our Program

With the release of the new OVO website, the Energy Assistance Program was able to customize the program's own page in order to increase client access to our services. On this new page, clients are able to view our income guidelines to see if they are eligible and can download our application. The new website has been especially helpful in helping those in a crisis situation by providing them with instant online access to the application. The launch of the OVO's Facebook page has also provided the community with important program updates such as start dates and program deadlines.

## WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT US

During our 2015 Client Satisfaction Survey, our Energy Assistance Program rated **100%** in client satisfaction. Our staff rated a **perfect score** in customer service, knowledge, and timeliness in processing applications. Additionally, our Energy Education Program rated 8 out of 10 for helpfulness.

## WHAT OUR STAFF ARE SAYING ABOUT US

During the 2015 Employee Satisfaction Survey, staff in the Energy Assistance Program reported **100%** satisfaction working in their department and for Ohio Valley Opportunities. Staff stated that what they liked best about working in the Energy Assistance Program was **"the people that I work with make our sometimes difficult jobs more enjoyable"** and **"easing the burden off families' shoulders."**

## SPOTLIGHT ON PROJECT JOULES

In 2015, OVO was excited to delve into new programming by providing an after school youth program for teens for the first time. Project **JOULES** (Jump On Using Less Energy Service) was a youth-led energy education initiative focused on educating the community on the incentives of energy conservation. The project also provided youth with meaningful work experience and educational workshops on teen issues, career planning, energy conservation and efficiency, and leadership development.

Youth participants in Project JOULES were recruited from families receiving Energy Assistance during the 2015 Winter Program. Through Project JOULES, youth were able to engage in community projects that focused efforts on energy education as well as developing valuable leadership and career skills. The youth were instrumental in creating, storyboarding, and providing talent for the updated Energy Education Training Video. This video is the project's primary legacy and stands as a permanent update to our Energy Education Program.

Project JOULES was also able to develop over 40 community partnerships that provided valuable resources and workshops for the youth. For example, Indiana Kentucky Electric Corporation (IKEC) provided a two day workshop on energy production that included an onsite tour of the power plant. Community businesses and public and private organizations provided workshops on entrepreneurship, public speaking, crime prevention, career exploration, health and fitness, and college preparation to assist these youth in planning for the future and getting involved in their community. By working with the City of Madison, the project was able to secure a Mayoral Proclamation of April 2015 as Energy Conservation Month. OVO is incredibly proud of the project's successes and the youth's hard work, dedication, and growth through the course of program.



## WHAT'S NEXT

### Client Flow

In 2016, we will continue progress made in making the best possible experience for our clients when visiting our office. In order to assist individuals and families applying for our services, we will focus on transitioning the majority of our applications to mailings. For many of our clients, transportation can be a barrier to accessing much needed services. Whether they are homebound due to a disability or do not have a vehicle or other reliable transportation, we want to make our application process as simple and accessible as possible to all those in need. By utilizing the mail in order to send and receive applications, we will assist more people in applying for our services. We will also guarantee appointments are available for crisis applicants, in order to process them quickly to avoid disconnection of services.

### Deployment of Energy Education Video

The new Energy Education Training Video was completed during the 2015 program year and was premiered at the Annual Energy Assistance and Weatherization Fall Conference hosted by Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. The video was only made available on a limited scale during this program year. Beginning with the 2016 Program Year, the video will be fully deployed with a DVD copy provided with each application and shown at our office for face-to-face applicants. We will also have videos available on flash drives as another excellent outreach tool.

### Partnerships

In order to increase access to services and to best serve our clients, we will be strengthening community partnerships. In the 2016 program year, we will be working with new potential partners in determining resources and opportunities for growth. We will be partnering with local housing developments to host enrollment events for residents. We will be strengthening existing partnerships with our utility providers to increase referrals of their customers in need to our services and to assist clients in securing necessary documents for eligibility. These improvements in our existing partnerships and the forging of new ones will increase access to our application, identify new clients, assist applicants in gathering necessary documentation, and increase access to other valuable community resources.