

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



2016 PROGRAM REPORT

Energy Assistance Program Director: Angela Spurgeon

OUR YEAR

- 2,110 households served
- 4,276 individuals served
- 364 households received Crisis Assistance
- 1,141 families received Energy Education
- 311 households avoided disconnection or had services restored

MEREDITH'S STORY: KEEPING IT COOL IN THE HEAT OF SUMMER

Meredith is 85 years old and was diagnosed with COPD, a lung disease that made it very hard for her to breathe. She was on oxygen and living in an un-air-conditioned home. It was August, and the temperature was sweltering. The weather had been well above 90 degrees throughout that week. Thankfully, OVO's Energy Assistance Program was there to help! We were able to provide her with \$220 towards her electric bill to cover cooling costs as well as approve her for an air conditioner. Meredith was not able to travel, so OVO delivered her unit directly to her home. Since it was late on a Friday afternoon, we were concerned about her ability to get it installed, and we didn't want her to have to spend another long weekend in the dangerous temperatures. So, OVO staff phoned a friend who volunteered to go to Meredith's home and install her air conditioner that very day. The air conditioner was a blessing for her and allows her to breathe a whole lot easier and live comfortably in her home. We are so happy we were able to make that happen for such a wonderful lady, and we are thankful for the support of the community and a network of volunteers that help us make stories like this possible every day!

WHAT OUR CLIENTS ARE SAYING ABOUT US

During our 2016 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 10 out of 10 for helpfulness. The most common energy savings tip was to turn off lights in unoccupied rooms.

"I am 74 years old, on a low fixed income. The Energy Assistance Program has helped me very much and left me extra money to pay other bills. Some months, I don't know how I would have made my bills without your assistance. Thank you very much. P.S. OVO Energy Assistance is a good program."

-William, Energy Assistance Program Client

"Without OVO, I don't think I could make it all the way through the winter months. I really appreciate OVO for what they do for me. I thank everyone at OVO for what they are doing. Keep on doing a good job. Thanks."

-Lola, Energy Assistance Program Client

"The Energy Assistance Program is a wonderful program for people like me that are on a fixed income and can't afford the real cold month's electric or the real hot ones. Without this help, I would have to decide which I needed most—heat and air or food and medicine. Thanks from the bottom of my heart."

-Vickie, Energy Assistance Program Client

WHAT OUR STAFF ARE SAYING ABOUT US

The 2016 Employee Satisfaction Survey showed that staff in the Energy Assistance Program were extremely satisfied with their work here at OVO. They reported **100%** satisfaction working in their department and for Ohio Valley Opportunities. They also had high scores in all other reported categories including employee benefits, their supervisor, and morale at the agency. Staff stated that what they liked best about working in the Energy Assistance Program was **"working with the customers and the complex ever changing situations that walk in the door"** and **"helping a lot of people this season in a newly remodeled department."**

OHIO VALLEY OPPORTUNITIES

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Mail-In Applications

During the 2016 program year, we focused on utilizing mail-in applications. By shifting the majority of our application process from appointments to mail-ins, we were able to increase access to our program, and our clients reaped numerous benefits. With the ability to complete an application through the mail, barriers due to transportation issues were resolved, and we decreased cost burdens on clients associated with transportation. With a reduced number of in-house appointments, our staff were able to dedicate more time to processing applications and therefore decreased processing time and got benefits out to clients quicker. For those clients that chose to come to our Administration Office or one of our county offices for a traditional appointment, we decreased wait times in our offices, and most clients were able to be seen immediately during office hours. We are incredibly pleased at the success of this process, the efficiency it has afforded our program, and the benefits to the families needing our assistance.



CELEBRATING SUCCESS

Deploying the Updated Energy Education Video

Following the creation of our updated Energy Education video in 2015, this year we were pleased to fully implement the video in our program. Every client applying for assistance this year received a DVD copy of the video. By giving each client their own copy, families were able to replay it in order to better learn the valuable energy savings tips or share it with friends and family to further spread the word. We also placed the video on portable flash drives and posted it to our website and social media platforms to give us additional convenient ways to share the video with clients and stakeholders. The video is also used by other Community Action Agencies throughout the state as part of their Energy Education Program as well.



Community Outreach

Over the past year, our Energy Assistance Program Director has been making the rounds throughout the community to get the word out about this excellent program! Outreach booths at community events and county fairs gave us the opportunity to distribute brochures and applications to new clients and provide education on program guidelines and the process to apply. We partnered with local housing developments to host enrollment events for residents, and local apartment complexes and management offices functioned as convenient pick up points for applications. We also provided additional resources and materials to existing partners, such as Township Trustees and other service organizations. Partnerships are key to our success, and we are fortunate for our amazing community support.



WHAT'S NEXT IN 2017

Efficiency of Mail In Process

We continue to strive to make our application procedure as easy and accessible to low-income individuals and families as possible. Over the next year, we will be making adjustments and perfecting the mail-in process. During 2017, we will be looking at ways to further streamline this process and utilize data tools to better track applications progress and capture necessary information. We will also be exploring ways in which to gauge client satisfaction for mail-in applications. It is our goal to ensure that our program is operating efficiently, providing excellent customer service, and meeting the needs of those applying for our services.

Increasing Public Awareness of the Program

With the focus on community outreach throughout this year, we are looking forward to serving new clients in 2017. We will continue to focus on outreach efforts that will target new clients, such as radio, social media, and newspapers. We will also be working on ensuring that our staff are knowledgeable in orienting new clients to the application process and providing information on OVO's other services as well.

Continuing to Strengthen Partnerships

As a Community Action Agency, involving businesses, organizations, and other community stakeholders is key to our mission in fighting poverty. In 2017, we look forward to building on this year's success and continuing to strengthen existing partnerships with Township Trustees, utility providers, other nonprofits, and housing developments to create referrals to our program as well as to connect our clients with other valuable community resources. We will continue to actively seek new partnerships that can raise awareness of our services, increase access to our assistance, and provide additional information and services for the individuals and families coming to us for help.



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