



MEMORANDUM

TO: Low Income Consumer Advisory Task Force

FROM: Liz Jambor, Manager, DABI

DATE: 12/11/2014

SUBJECT: Addendum to Questions

Attached is an addendum to the data responses dated 12/01/2014. For questions 15 and 16, the originally provided answers were based on weatherization-only programs, those solely managed by the Energy Efficiency Services group. The answers did not capture the process as it applies to the Customer Assistance Program and its role in the weatherization process. The addendum provides answers from CAP.

**Addendum
12/11/2014**

**QUESTIONS TO AUSTIN ENERGY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE
LOW-INCOME CONSUMER ADVISORY TASK FORCE
(Information effective as of December 1, 2014)**

15. It is my understanding that to be eligible for CAP-funded low income weatherization programs, a CAP customer must have less than a certain level of past due bills.

Yes, this is a true statement for the CAP Weatherization customers.

If this is true, in whole or in part, please provide the following information

a. The public policy goal for this eligibility criterion;

The Discount Steering Committee (DSC) was established in February 2012 to support AE in providing program recommendations for all discount related programming funded through the 2012 rate case. During the design of the weatherization program, the DSC wanted AE to ensure that any customer who was receiving weatherization services was not in jeopardy of being disconnected while weatherization measures were being provided to the customer. The steering committee determined that a customer could potentially tap into several community resources (Plus 1, BSS, CEAP, etc.) to pay down their debt through emergency assistance. If a customer reached out to those funding mechanisms, they could receive up to \$5,700 in utility assistance. The administrators of those funds sit on the DSC so they were agreeable to work with AE on referrals to ensure these customers could get support in paying down their debt and ensuring these customers could move forward with weatherization. The customers who have over \$5,700 in debt and do not attempt to make arrangements to pay down the debt are still eligible for weatherization as soon as the debt comes below that level. These customers are evaluated quarterly to determine if their status has changed and if so, they are then moved to the weatherization program. Austin Energy proactively provides referrals to these customers to get them started on the path of debt reduction and ultimately weatherization.

b. The legal basis for this eligibility criterion;

The Discount Steering Committee felt that since these funds are collected from all rate payers, they wanted to design a program that reached the households that were heavily impacted by the new rate structure. This focus would hopefully mitigate the impact of the new rates by the low income customers with the highest use. They considered many aspects of our current utility regulations and state laws to make sure the program design did not create conflict. We did not find any regulations or laws prohibiting us from moving forward with such a design. We give every customer the same opportunity and no one is omitted. The program design only determines who goes first and what mechanisms to put in place to make sure we are reaching out to the highest energy users first and working our way down the list.

c. Whether non-CAP customers participating in the free weatherization program funded with energy efficiency dollars also are subject to the eligibility criterion involving the applicant's level of past due balances?

No, this requirement does not apply.

d. Can a CAP customer apply for the free weatherization program funded with energy efficiency dollars, and if so, does AE apply the same eligibility criterion to that applicant as for an applicant for CAP-funded weatherization services or for a non-CAP customer applicant for the free weatherization program funded with energy efficiency dollars?

No, this requirement does not apply.

16. It is my understanding that to be eligible for CAP-funded low income weatherization programs, a CAP customer must first take an educational course.

Yes, this is a true statement for the CAP Weatherization customers.

If this is true, in whole or in part, please provide the following:

a. The public policy supporting this eligibility criterion;

During the design of the weatherization program, the DSC voiced their concerns that many of their customers continue to have high usage even after weatherization measures have been provided at their premise. AE evaluated programs across the country to determine if education curriculums were successful. The DSC reviewed local and national curriculums and determined that an education class was a good way to engage the customer in weatherization as well as assist them in understanding the measures being provided. The education class was designed and shared with all community advocates at the 2013 Low Income Energy Summit. The 150-plus participants representing over a 100 local non-profits, churches and local government gave overwhelming support of the curriculum. The education component was designed to enhance the CAP weatherization program and not designed to omit customers. Customers are not removed from the weatherization program if they do not complete the program. They are moved to a wait list until they are able to attend the full class. Customers are given the option to break the class into two sessions or one half day. Homebound customers receive the curriculum one-on-one in their home. Children are included in the education as they are provided their own class on energy efficiency. Classes are provided on Wednesdays and Saturdays with alternating times, morning and evening.

b. The legal basis for this eligibility criterion;

The Discount Steering Committee felt that since these funds are collected from all rate payers, they wanted to design a program that reached the households that were heavily impacted by the new rate structure. This focus would hopefully mitigate the impact of the new rates by the low income customers with the highest use. They considered many aspects of our current utility regulations and state laws to make sure the program design did not create conflict. We did not find any regulations or laws prohibiting us from moving forward with such a design. We give every customer the same

opportunity and no one is omitted. The program design only determines who goes first and what mechanisms to put in place to make sure we are reaching out to the highest energy users first and working our way down the list.

c. A description of the program including the amount of time involved, the location of the classes, and the number of AE employees involved, the estimated cost of providing the educational course, and if other City of Austin employees are involved, the number of non AE COA employees and the estimated cost involved for these non AE COA employees?

It is a four-hour class with an eight-part curriculum that includes pre- and post-test assessment. Topics include “understanding your bill” to “safe homes”. There is a follow up component to ensure that the customer is retaining the information taught and assisting them with reviewing their usage on a quarterly basis. The classes are taught at our North Branch Walk-In Service Center or in customers’ homes. Travis County provides bus passes for those who do not have transportation. We are currently conducting a cost analysis since FY2014 is our first full year of providing this service.

d. Whether non-CAP customers participating in the free weatherization program funded with energy efficiency dollars also are subject to the eligibility criterion involving the applicant’s level of past due balances?

No, this requirement does not apply.

Can a CAP customer apply for the free weatherization program funded with energy efficiency dollars, and if so, does AE apply the same eligibility criteria to that applicant as for an applicant for CAP-funded weatherization services or for a non-CAP customer applicant for the free weatherization program funded with energy efficiency dollars?

No, this requirement does not apply.

e. Whether any other of AE’s energy efficiency programs requires as a criterion for eligibility that the applicant first complete an educational program?

No, this requirement does not apply.