

~~Program. The Executive Director of the Maryland Office of Economic Opportunity shall also appoint a deputy coordinator who shall be the principal assistant to the coordinator. Both appointees shall be selected because of their known experience and interest in the development and implementation of economic opportunity programs.~~

~~(b) [The] EXCEPT AS OTHERWISE PROVIDED UNDER THIS SUBTITLE, THE exercise of all authority, duties, and functions vested, or to be vested, in the office of Energy Assistance and Information or in the coordinator or the deputy coordinator by the provisions of this subtitle or by any other laws of this State is subject to the authority of the Secretary of the Department of Human Resources as set forth in Article 41 of this Code or elsewhere in the laws of Maryland.~~

~~6-405.~~

~~(a) The Office shall maintain liaison with both the Maryland and the federal offices of economic opportunity, county and city offices concerned with energy programs, citizen groups, and all other agencies of the State, federal, county, and municipal governments and it shall consult with and advise these local groups on their energy assistance programs and shall work at all levels of government to administer and implement the Energy Assistance and Information Act and program. In addition, the Office shall establish liaison with all utility and major fuel vendors in the State and shall seek their advice when developing and implementing the energy assistance program.~~

~~(b) The Office shall collect and assemble pertinent information and data available from other departments and agencies of the State and federal governments and shall disseminate information in the interest of energy assistance. The Office shall adopt the following information collection and dissemination procedures:~~

~~(1) Identification of all utility vendors and major fuel vendors within the State, followed by efforts to obtain their voluntary cooperation with the energy assistance program.~~

~~(2) A State information service that utilizes a toll free telephone number to provide the public with program information and the location of the nearest local energy assistance office.~~

~~(3) A mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of the energy assistance program to determine if eligible households are aware of and have access to the local program offices.~~

~~(c) The Office may employ professional, technical, clerical, stenographic, and other personnel to carry out its duties and functions within the limits of budgetary appropriations from time to time. The employees of the program shall be subject to the provisions contained in Article 64A of the Code, title "Merit System." Any employee of the Office who is eligible for transfer to the State Merit System, and who has held this position for at least 6 months, shall be so transferred without further probation, examination, or qualification. An employee transferred to the State Merit System, pursuant to this subsection shall be transferred in the respective job classification under which he is employed at the time of transfer and shall not receive any diminution in~~