

(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 OFFICE, ~~EXCEPT THE COORDINATOR AND DEPUTY COORDINATOR,~~ 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 COMPENSATION OR RESPECTIVE AMOUNTS OF ACCUMULATED LEAVE OR SICK LEAVE, SOLELY AS A RESULT OF THIS TRANSFER.

(D) IN THE PERFORMANCE OF ITS DUTIES, THE OFFICE IS AUTHORIZED AND EMPOWERED TO MAKE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS AND TO ASSUME THOSE FUNCTIONS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBHEADING THAT ARE NOT INCONSISTENT WITH THIS OR OTHER ACTS. THE OFFICE MAY MAKE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS WITH OTHER BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AGENCIES, AND INSTITUTIONS OF THIS STATE, OTHER STATES AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, UPON SUCH TERMS AS MAY BE EVENTUALLY AGREED UPON, TO HAVE SUCH STUDIES AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AS MAY BE NECESSARY AND PROPER, AND IS AUTHORIZED TO PAY THE COST THEREOF OUT OF FUNDS WHICH MAY BE APPROPRIATED TO THE OFFICE.

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THE OFFICE OF ENERGY ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY SHALL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:

(1) AN EMERGENCY ENERGY CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM TO PREVENT LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS, INCLUDING THE NEAR POOR, THE ELDERLY, AND THOSE ON FIXED INCOMES FROM EXPERIENCING DANGER TO HEALTH OR SURVIVAL AS A RESULT OF A UTILITY DISCONNECTION OR A LACK OF FUEL. THE OFFICE SHALL ESTABLISH INTAKE PROCEDURES FOR THOSE EXPERIENCING AN ENERGY EMERGENCY AND GUIDELINES FOR THE INCOME ELIGIBILITY AND THE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY OF APPLICANTS. IN DEVELOPING THESE GUIDELINES, THE OFFICE MAY ADOPT THE PROCEDURES OF THE FEDERAL "EMERGENCY ENERGY CONSERVATION PROGRAM" IN § 222(A)(12) OF THE "COMMUNITY SERVICES ACT OF 1974." LOCAL OFFICES FOR ADMINISTERING THE CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM SHALL BE IDENTIFIED BY THE ENERGY ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION OFFICE. AN EMERGENCY FUND SHALL BE ESTABLISHED TO PAY FUEL AND UTILITY VENDORS WHO HAVE ~~DISCONTINUED~~ PROVIDED SERVICE TO PERSONS QUALIFYING FOR THE CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM. THE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE SHALL BE BASED ON NEED, WITH A MAXIMUM OF ~~\$450--PER-CALENDAR-QUARTER~~ \$250 PER YEAR TO ANY QUALIFYING HOUSEHOLD. WHERE POSSIBLE, ALL EXISTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS CONCERNED WITH ENERGY EMERGENCIES SHALL