



# ABCD Press

From the Office of Public Information

Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.

178 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111

(617) 348 - 6241

Fax: (617) 482 - 4859

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:**

Susan Kooperstein

617-348-6241

617-875-3619 (cell)

Randy Miller

617-348-6244

## **State Announces Increase in Fuel Assistance Benefits; ABCD Urges Those Who Have Not Yet Applied to SIGN UP NOW!**

State officials announced an increase in fuel assistance benefits this week to meet stepped up demand for help with heating needs across the state.

So far this year fuel aid agencies across Massachusetts have received 173,000 fuel assistance applications, an increase of 40,000 applications and a 19 percent spike from last year at this time.

The poorest households whose benefit was previously capped at \$1,305 will now receive a total of \$1,495 in heating assistance. Those with slightly higher incomes who were eligible for a maximum of \$450 have their benefit raised to \$895. The new benefit levels combined with this year's expanded eligibility mean that a family of four with an income of \$53,608 or less can receive \$895 in fuel assistance.

Bob Coard, President/CEO of Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), thanked Governor Patrick for the state's astute management of this year's increased funding for the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The state increased eligibility levels so that more working families who once fell through the cracks of the heating aid system can get some assistance.

Coard urged Massachusetts residents who have not yet applied to sign up immediately for fuel assistance. "Now is the time to get help with your heating needs," he said. "If you have not applied for fuel assistance this year, it is imperative that you do so immediately and have access to every resource to stay warm in this long, cold winter."

The ABCD Fuel Assistance Hot Line is 617-357-6012. ABCD provides fuel assistance in Boston, Brookline and Newton.

For this 2008-09 winter, the nation-wide federal funding for LIHEAP doubled to \$5.1 billion, providing some heating cost relief to families who are beset by job loss, mortgage foreclosures, and high housing and food costs in one of the coldest winters in recent years.

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**ABOUT ABCD:**

ABCD serves more than 100,000 low-income Boston-area residents through its central offices and a decentralized network of Neighborhood Service Centers (NSCs), Head Start centers, Family Planning sites and Foster Grandparent sites. Programs and affiliations include Fuel Assistance; Head Start; Child Care Services; Child Care Choices of Boston; Education; Career Development; Housing and Homelessness Services; Health Services; Family Planning; Urban College of Boston; University High – an Alternative High School; Ostiguy High School for high school students in recovery; Weatherization; Foster Grandparents; Elder Services; Intergenerational Programs; Food Pantries in several Boston neighborhoods; management of the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employees Charitable Campaign (COBECC) and City of Boston Employees Charitable Campaign (COBECC); advocacy and consumer services.

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