

HELP HELP HELP

“WHY IS JOE GETTING HEAT ASSISTANCE, AND I HAVE BEEN DENIED”?

The HEAT Program is in the process of creating a data base of all apartment complexes in Utah. The data base will indicate if the complex tenants are eligible for HEAT assistance. If the utility bills are in the tenant's name, the tenant is eligible for HEAT assistance, if they are income eligible. Tenants must apply at a local HEAT office, or in some cases, they can mail in an application. Call 211 for locations of the HEAT offices throughout the State.

The HEAT program would like to request all owners of apartment complexes, especially if the complex serves the low income population, to make sure your on site managers are aware of how the utilities are handled for the complex. If the utility bills are not in the tenant's name, usually the tenant is not eligible for HEAT assistance. However, if a utility allowance is part of the rent, and the rent is receipted in as part rent and part utilities, the tenant is eligible for HEAT assistance. The HEAT program would like to request that you check the lease that you are currently using to make sure that if there is a utility allowance associated with the tenants rent, the amount of the utility allowance is identified in the lease.

The last two to five years, there have been several hundred households statewide that have received HEAT assistance that are not eligible. The tenant must be directly responsible for paying “out of pocket” the utility bills (the utilities are in the tenant's name); or are indirectly responsible for paying their heating costs by a utility allowance that is part of the tenants rent. The tenant must get a “Landlord Statement” signed by the landlord indicating who is responsible for paying the utility bills and submit the statement with their HEAT application. Because the on site managers are sometimes not aware of how the utilities are handled, landlord statements are being signed indicating the tenant is responsible for paying their utilities, when in fact, they are not responsible. Some of the leases we have seen show “the utilities are included in the rent”. In many cases, the on site manager has made the decision that the tenant “pays” indirectly the utilities, when in fact, the tenant is not responsible for any utility payments. If you have any questions concerning this, please call the HEAT office at 801-583-8644. Please do not give this number to your tenants. Refer them to 211 for assistance. The HEAT office appreciates your work in serving the low income households of Utah by providing affordable housing.

Sherie Brinkerhoff,
Department of Community and Culture