

**Remarks on IDHR and IDPH Collaboration before the LIHEAP and Weatherization
Program Interim Study Committee
October 11, 2006**

1. In December, 2005 IDPH received a petition from the Bureau of Energy Assistance in the Department of Human Rights. The petition asked IDPH to adopt administrative rules to have utilities seek a public health finding of no adverse health or safety risks before disconnecting services.

After consulting with the Attorney General's Office, the petition was denied because IDPH doesn't possess the statutory authority to regulate utilities or to adopt administrative rules that regulate utilities, which is granted to the Iowa Utilities Board.

2. However, the department recognized that there are public health concerns related to the loss or threatened loss of electric or gas utility services, especially to low-income homes with children. Direct concerns such as medical illness suffered from the temperature of the home or indirect such as not paying for medication to pay for utility bill.
3. Therefore, in collaboration with the Department of Human Rights, IDPH over the next year will do the following:
 - Add two questions to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) beginning in January, 2007 to:
 1. Determine the number of households that had utility services disconnected because they could not afford the services;
 2. and if unsafe practices were done to heat or cool a home because a household could not afford utility services.
 - Subcontracting with the university of Iowa to develop a white paper that includes compiling a bibliography of current research focusing on topics such as fire safety risk, air quality risk, nutritional health impacts and prevalence of death, disease, and illness associated with indoor air temperatures and weather related health threats, including the public health impact of the disconnection of home energy service.

Notes:

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey is an ongoing telephone survey. It is jointly supported by the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2006 it will randomly survey 5,400 adults 18 years of age and older living in private households. It will ask about a wide range of health conditions, health-related behaviors, and health-related attitudes. Examples of some of these areas surveyed are presence of diabetes, asthma, and obesity; whether the person has recently had screening tests for breast, cervical, colorectal, or prostate cancer; had immunizations for influenza or pneumonia; and have healthcare coverage.