

Weatherization Works!

Everyone deserves to live in housing that is safe, decent, and affordable. However, low-income families often live in homes or rental units that are not energy efficient, with poor indoor air quality and environmental qualities. These families statistically pay a substantial percentage of their income on utility costs as they struggle to meet their daily needs. One program that provides services to make homes energy efficient, safer and more comfortable, and improve indoor air quality is the Weatherization Assistance Program.

Since its inception in 1976, the U.S Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) has been providing weatherization services to increase the energy efficiency of dwellings owned or occupied by people with low income, especially those who are particularly vulnerable such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, families with children, high residential energy users, and households with high energy burdens. The goal is to reduce their total residential expenditures, and improve their health and safety. Nationwide, the program supports 8,500 jobs and provides weatherization services to approximately 35,000 homes every year using DOE funds. Through weatherization improvements and upgrades, these households save an average of \$283 or more every year.

In cold weather states, like Wisconsin, Weatherization can reduce heating costs an average of 30%.

Weatherization in Action

Here in the Coulee Region, Couleecap operates the WAP in Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon counties. Funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), State of Wisconsin Public Benefits Program, and the Riverland Energy Cooperative. This program is available to households that qualify and have received heating assistance through Wisconsin's Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) during the current heating season. Homes that are weatherized are identified using the State of Wisconsin's High Energy Users Priority list. Weatherization services are available to homeowners and renters. The work is done at no cost for income qualified households.

Typical weatherization measures include:

- **Mechanical Measures**, such as replacement or repair of inefficient/unsafe heating and hot water systems.
- **Building Shell Measures**, such as installing attic, wall and floor insulation, and performing air sealing.
- **Health and Safety Measures**, such as performing heating system and water heating safety testing, installing mechanical ventilation to improve indoor air quality, and evaluating mold/moisture hazards.
- **Baseload Measures**, such as installing low-flow faucet aerators and showerheads as well as replacing inefficient refrigerators with energy-efficient models.
- **Client Education Activities**, such as discussing the benefits of using energy-efficient products and demonstrating the key functions of any new mechanical equipment or appliances.



In 2016, Couleecap's Energy Services team completed weatherization services on 204 homes at an average cost of \$4,900 per home. The average annual cost savings per home is \$640 or \$13,180 over the life of the measures installed. This means that the annual energy cost savings on those 204 Couleecap weatherized homes is \$129,700 a year or \$2,816,300 over the life of the measures installed. Lifetime savings are amortized over an average of 20 years for all measures completed on homes served with the Weatherization Assistance Program.

*"I can't say enough good things about your program. Your program made the most difference in my life by providing the new natural gas furnace. That easily will save me hundreds of dollars on fuel costs this winter. Thank you to your staff. It's been a huge blessing in my life.
~Weatherization Client, 2017*

Impact on Low-Income Americans and Communities

Weatherization not only helps households, it also helps revitalize communities. For every \$1.00 invested in weatherization, \$1.72 is generated in energy savings benefits and \$2.78 is generated in non-energy savings benefits.

Low-income households carry a larger burden for energy costs, typically spending 16.3% of their total annual income on energy costs versus 3.5% for other households. Often, these households must make the difficult decision to cut back on healthcare, medicine, groceries, or childcare in order to pay their energy bills. Weatherization can directly increase household disposable income through decreases in their overall energy burden through cost-effective energy efficiency improvements such as insulating attics and sidewalls, air sealing the structure, furnace replacements or repairs, installing low-flow showerheads, and baseload measures such as lighting and refrigerator replacements. After weatherization measures are completed, homes are more livable and the physical condition of homes is improved. Weatherization measures continue to save money and energy year after year and increase household incomes so funds can go towards key living expenses.

Non-energy benefits generated through weatherization provide tremendous advantages for families. After weatherization, families experience a wide range of health and well-being benefits. Weatherization recipients report fewer missed days of work because of illness or doctor's visits, reduced asthma symptoms, reduced stress associated with having an increased ability to pay utility bills, and decreased out-of-pocket medical expenses by an average of \$514. Recipients also report fewer incidences where they paid their utility bill instead of buying food, decreased worry that household members would not have nutritious food, decreased need for food assistance, and decreased need for short-term, high-interest loans to meet their needs.

Weatherization also has a positive impact on the environment, by reducing the amount of energy used in clients' homes, emissions associated with the production and consumption of energy is also reduced.

Health Benefits of Weatherization

After Weatherization...

- Residents with asthma reported fewer hospitalizations and ER visits
- Residents experienced fewer "bad" physical and mental health days
- Children in the household missed fewer days of school
- Household members reported fewer allergy and cold symptoms

Source: Oak Ridge National Laboratory- weatherization.ornl.gov

For more information, visit this website: <http://homeenergyplus.wi.gov/docview.asp?docid=28278&locid=25> and read Wisconsin Department of Administration's report on the Assessment of Energy and Cost Savings for Homes Treated under Wisconsin's Home Energy Plus Weatherization Program.

Call to Action

Everyone should be able to live in decent, safe, affordable housing. Here are some ways you can get involved to help with housing needs and issues in your area:

- Encourage low-income households to apply for heating assistance, so that they may also benefit from the WAP. To apply for heating assistance, households should call for an appointment between October 1st and May 15th to receive a regular benefit. Applications are accepted year round. Heating assistance offices are located in each of the four counties that Couleecap serves. Contact information is below:
 - Crawford County: 608-326-0248
 - La Crosse County: 608-785-6001
 - Monroe County: 608-487-9356
 - Vernon County: 608-637-5210
- [Donate](#) to Couleecap's housing and homeless assistance programs. Your donation will provide rent, utility bill, and home repair assistance to low-income households in Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, and Vernon counties.
- Support and vote for local, state, and federal elected officials who are committed to continued funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program and other housing related programs.
- Educate yourself about housing needs and issues in your area. Visit your local library or websites on the Internet. Some good websites are Couleecap – www.couleecap.org; Community Action Partnership – www.communityactionpartnership.com; National Association for State Community Services Programs – www.nascsp.org; National Community Action Foundation – www.ncaf.org; National Center for Healthy Housing – www.nchh.org; National Low Income Housing Coalition – www.nlihc.org; National Council of State Housing Agencies – www.ncsha.org; and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – www.hud.gov.
- Increase affordable housing by joining a local housing coalition.



Couleecap, Inc. is a private non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization created in 1966. Our mission is to fight poverty and promote self-sufficiency, economic development, and social justice. We are People Helping People, and every day our actions make a difference in the lives of people and families throughout the Coulee Region. We currently implement more than 50 contracts in the areas of housing, emergency assistance, child and family development, business development, employment, transportation, and health services. Each year, Couleecap helps more than 27,000 people work towards self-sufficiency and realizing a better tomorrow. Visit our website at www.couleecap.org or like us on [Facebook](#).

Prepared by: Shelly Teadt, Director of Planning, Couleecap, Inc., Westby, WI 54667

Sources:

Community Action Partnership, 2017; www.communityactionpartnership.org.

Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 2014; www.ornl.gov.

U.S. Department of Energy, Weatherization Assistance Program, 2017; <https://www.energy.gov/eere/wipo/weatherization-assistance-program>.

Special thanks to Tom Mayne, Energy Services Director - Couleecap, and Derek Schroeder, Policy Advisor/Technical Project Officer II – U.S. Department of Energy, for their review of this paper.