

Chapter 380

(House Bill 945)

AN ACT concerning

Human Services – Critical Medical Needs Program – Application for Assistance

FOR the purpose of ~~prohibiting~~ requiring the Office of Home Energy Programs ~~from~~ requiring to allow a certain amount of time for an individual to provide certain medical certification when an individual applies for assistance from the Critical Medical Needs Program if the applicant is at least a certain age and assisted by a navigator; and generally relating to the application for assistance from the Critical Medical Needs Program.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
 Article – Human Services
 Section 5–5A–08
 Annotated Code of Maryland
 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Human Services

5–5A–08.

(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

(2) “CMN Program” means the Critical Medical Needs Program established under this section.

(3) “Critical medically vulnerable individual” means an individual who:

(i) has a severe health condition that will be aggravated due to the termination or noncontinuation of electric or gas service or needs the use of life–support equipment as documented and certified in accordance with regulations on a certification of serious illness or life support form submitted to the appropriate electric or gas company;

(ii) has or will have their electric or gas service terminated for nonpayment; and

(iii) is unable to complete the energy assistance applications under available energy assistance programs, including energy efficiency programs offered by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

(4) “Navigator” means a representative from a medical facility or from a public or private assistance agency or organization who:

(i) is in personal contact with a critical medically vulnerable individual; and

(ii) assists the critical medically vulnerable individual in the energy assistance application process.

(b) (1) There is a CMN Program in the Office.

(2) The Office shall implement and administer the CMN Program.

(3) In administering the CMN Program, the Office shall partner with the Office of People’s Counsel, the Fuel Fund of Central Maryland, the Cancer Support Foundation, electric and gas companies, nonprofit organizations, other State agencies, the health care community, and any other organization that the Office determines appropriate.

(4) The purpose of the CMN Program is to reduce the barriers to the energy assistance application process for critical medically vulnerable individuals and their households in obtaining State and federal financial assistance for their electric, gas, or other energy source bills so that their electric, gas, or other energy source service continues or is restored.

(c) (1) The CMN Program shall facilitate assistance to critical medically vulnerable individuals and their households in obtaining State and federal financial assistance for their electric, gas, or other source energy bills through navigators.

(2) The Office shall determine qualifications and establish training requirements for navigators.

(3) The Office shall train navigators or facilitate the training of navigators by others.

(d) In accordance with the requirements set forth in the Code of Maryland Regulations, the Office shall work with electric and gas companies to implement, for critical medically vulnerable individuals:

(1) a medical hold on electric or gas service or an expedited process to grant the extension of electric or gas service for those who will have their electric or gas services terminated; and

(2) an expedited process for the restoration of electric or gas service for those who have had their electric or gas service terminated.

(e) **IF A CRITICAL MEDICALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUAL IS AT LEAST 60**

YEARS OLD AND ASSISTED BY A NAVIGATOR WHEN APPLYING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CMN PROGRAM, THE OFFICE ~~MAY NOT REQUIRE~~ SHALL ALLOW THE INDIVIDUAL 90 DAYS AFTER APPLYING FOR ASSISTANCE TO PROVIDE CERTIFICATION FROM A MEDICAL PROVIDER OF THE SEVERE HEALTH CONDITION.

(F) The Office shall establish a tracking system of the status of critical medically vulnerable individuals who participate in the CMN Program.

[(f)] (G) The Department shall adopt regulations to implement this section.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2021.

Enacted under Article II, § 17(c) of the Maryland Constitution, May 30, 2021.