

Steps to Take Before the Summer

Before we enter the summer months, your organization can take the following steps.

STEP

1

Identify Clients at Highest Risk for Heat-Related Illness

Clients who are highest risk have **both** a home environment risk factor **and** at least one health risk factor.

Answer the following to see if someone is at highest risk for heat-related illness:

1. Do they have a home environment risk factor?

- Lack of a working air conditioner
- Unable or unwilling to use air conditioning

2. Do they have a health risk factor?*

- Has a chronic medical condition such as respiratory condition, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure or obesity
- Has a serious mental health condition, such as schizophrenia
- Has a cognitive or developmental condition, such as dementia
- Misuses alcohol or drugs
- Lives alone, is socially isolated or cannot move on their own
- Uses medications that affect the body's ability to maintain a safe temperature**
- Unable to hydrate, including: limited access to water, unable to get water for themselves because they are bedbound or have decreased mobility, or refusal of older patients to drink regularly or more often during extreme heat (for fear of having to go to the bathroom)

***Black New Yorkers and older adults (ages 60 and older)** are more likely to have a combination of these risk factors due in part to social and economic disparities that contribute to poorer health which are in part rooted in past and present racist systems and policies.

****Always check with the prescribing physician or pharmacist to determine any risks. Medications that increase risks include: tricyclic antidepressants (including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, antipsychotic or neuroleptic medications, certain tranquilizers, some medications for Parkinson's disease, diuretics, beta blockers, calcium channel blockers and antihistamines.)**

STEP**2****Prepare Your Organization
for Heat Waves**

- Develop and communicate a **heat emergency outreach plan**.
- Identify family or caregivers who can **remotely check on clients** during a heat wave (such as through call, text and online messaging).
- **Educate clients and their caregivers** about symptoms of heat illness and prevention tips. Encourage clients and caregivers to check on their own family, friends and neighbors during heat waves.
- **Discuss medical conditions or medications** that could increase risk of heat illness during hot weather. If necessary, check with the client's doctor or pharmacist, or advise clients to do so regarding **precautions they should take during hot weather** and whether self-monitoring hydration is recommended.
- Assist clients who rely on **electrically-powered life-sustaining equipment to register with their utility company's priority power restoration program**. They can still get this service from utility providers even if utilities are included in the rent. Customers with life-sustaining equipment registered with utilities will receive notification of power problems in their areas. Power outages occur most often during the summer months, when residents run air conditioners and power usage is at its peak. In addition, help your client develop an emergency plan that includes:
 - An **alternative source of electric power**, such as a battery back-up system. If it takes more than a couple of days to restore power, it is important to have a back-up source of electric power, such as a battery.
 - **Charge all medical and communications devices** when it is known that there is a chance of a power outage.
 - Alternative **telephone options** (such as using a landline, cordless or cellular phone) if possible.

HEAT EMERGENCY OUTREACH PLAN

- ✓ Prioritize highest risk clients.
- ✓ Write a schedule for monitoring clients.
- ✓ Establish a protocol for documenting client checks.
- ✓ Write a client monitoring checklist, including:
 - Assessing access to a cool environment (such as having a working home air conditioner and nearby cool locations)
 - Explaining and detailing a regular hydration schedule, if appropriate
 - Describing a protocol for monitoring hydration status (such as through regular weighing), if recommended by a client's physician
- ✓ Create plan to move client to a cooler location, if needed.

Con Edison

800-752-6633

Visit [coned.com/specialservices](https://www.coned.com/specialservices).**PSEG Long Island**

800-490-0025

Visit [psegliny.com](https://www.psegliny.com) and search for **Critical Care Program**.

- If **using a generator**, become familiar with the manufacturer’s instructions and local building codes. Keep it outdoors, at least 20 feet from open windows or enclosed areas.
 - If you **rely on oxygen**, talk to your vendor about **emergency replacements**. If you do not have access to oxygen, call **911** for immediate assistance. For more information, visit: nyc.gov/site/em/ready/utility-disruptions.page.
- Instruct staff and clients **to monitor local weather alerts** for a heat wave or other heat emergencies and to pay attention **to official messaging around other alternative cooling spaces** available from the City.
 - Remind staff and clients to be aware of air quality-related respiratory problems. High levels of ozone*** (and other air pollutants) can occur during heat waves.
 - Distribute informational materials**. Provide clients with brochures issued by the NYC Health Department: “Keep Cool” or “Beat the Heat.” To order brochures, call **311** or visit nyc.gov/health and search for **beat the heat**.

STEP
3

Help Clients Prepare for Heat Waves

Does the client have a working air conditioner (AC)?

Yes, there is a working AC.

- Encourage clients to use an AC during hot weather and heat emergencies, even if only for a few hours. If they do not like using an AC, explain that a setting of 78 degrees F (or low cool) can provide a comfortable environment, help save on their electricity bills and conserve energy.
- Clean the AC filter if needed and insulate any spaces between the AC and window to make sure there is a tight fit.

No, there is no AC, AC does not work or AC does not provide cooling to at least 78 degrees F.

- Client may qualify for AC and cooling assistance. Help them obtain a working AC, if possible. See **Appendix A** for more information.
- If AC cannot be obtained, help the client identify a friend, neighbor or relative with home air conditioning they can visit during a heat wave even for a few hours.
- Encourage client’s family and contacts to plan to check in on them during heat emergencies.

Steps to Take Immediately Before and During a Heat Wave

Assess + Respond to Client Cooling Needs

STEP

1

Use this tool to quickly assess your client's ability to stay cool immediately before a heat wave and create a response plan.

Does the client have a working air conditioner (AC)?

Yes, there is a working AC that provides cooling to at least 78 degrees F.

- Remind clients to use an AC, even if only for a few hours. If they do not like using an AC, explain that a setting of 78 degrees F (or low cool) can provide a comfortable environment, help save on their electricity bills and conserve energy.

No, there is no AC, AC does not work, or AC does not provide cooling to at least 78 degrees F.

- Remind them to visit the home of the family, friends or neighbors with an AC previously identified, even if only for a couple of hours.
- Encourage them to pay attention to official messaging around other alternative cooling spaces available from the City.

If client has a working air conditioner, will they use it during a heat wave?

Yes, they will.

- Share other heat safety messages contained in this document.
- During a heat wave, suggest that client consider inviting a relative, friend or neighbor who is older or has a chronic health condition but does **not** have COVID-19 or its symptoms* to visit their home to get cool.

No, they will not.

- Ask "what are the reason for not using it" and provide assistance, such as explaining the importance of using one, how to save on utility bill, and demonstrating how to use it.
- Note: If the person is using a fan, put it in or next to an open window. Do not use a fan in a room with closed windows. Warn client that a fan does not provide enough protection in very hot weather and they should also turn on the AC.

Check on Highest Risk Clients

STEP

2

During heat emergencies, monitor clients identified as being at highest risk to heat-related illnesses. Direct staff to:

Check on **highest risk clients at least daily**. Assess if client:

- Has access to and is using air conditioning
- Has signs of heat-related illness
- Has enough water to drink
- Is wearing too many clothes

If a highest risk client has an air conditioner, encourage them to **USE IT** during periods of extreme heat. Suggest:

- Setting the air conditioner to 78 degrees F or “low”** to be comfortable
- Using air conditioning in the room client spends the most time in
- Closing off other rooms to contain the cool air

If highest risk client does not have air conditioning, ask if they can **visit the home of family, friends or neighbors with home air conditioning**. Spending even a few hours in an air-conditioned environment can be beneficial. **A fan alone may not be enough to stay cool**. Remind clients:

- Not to visit others for cooling relief during a heat wave if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19 and their isolation period has not ended
- To confirm that no one in the household they will be visiting for cooling relief during a heat wave is sick or isolating for COVID-19, or at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness
- To stay at least 6 feet apart and wear a face covering while visiting others for cooling relief during a heat wave
- Practice healthy hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Remind client to:

- Pay attention **to official government messaging** around other alternative cooling spaces available from the City

- Do the following while at home:
 - Wear light, loose-fitting clothing.
 - Take frequent cool (not cold) baths or showers for those able to do so safely.
 - Close curtains or shades.
 - Avoid using the oven and eating hot foods or heavy meals.
 - Use natural light when possible.
 - Turn off the lights and other electronics.

- **Drink plenty of water** both outdoors and indoors during hot weather, even if they don't feel thirsty. If they are unable to communicate thirst, make sure they are given water at regular intervals throughout the day.

- Avoid strenuous activity.

Appendix

Appendix A: Description of Air Conditioning Assistance Programs

Program	Description
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)	<p>From May 1 to August 30, clients who meet income and other criteria can apply for HEAP, the free purchase and installation of an air conditioner.</p> <p>Encourage heat-risk patients without air conditioners to call (212) 331-3126 to ask for a HEAP air conditioner application. The HEAP Cooling application can also be found at nyc.gov/site/hra/help/energy-assistance.page.</p> <p>Applications can be printed or mailed to clients. Completed applications must be mailed to Human Resources Administration (HRA). All HRA offices are closed. <i>At this time, HEAP funds cannot be used to pay electric utility costs.</i></p> <p>Clients who meet criteria will need written documentation from a healthcare provider indicating increased risk for heat-related illness due to a medical or psychiatric condition, or use of medication(s) that increases risk.</p>
New York City Air Conditioning Program	<p>This year, New York City is providing air conditioners to approximately 74,000 low-income households with a resident who is 60 years or older with air conditioning at home. New York City agency case managers are identifying and directly reaching out to income-eligible New Yorkers.</p>

Appendix B: Signs and Symptoms of Heat-Related Illness

Condition	Symptoms	Action Steps
Heat Stroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High body temperature (104 degrees F or higher) • Confusion, delirium, hallucinations or unconsciousness • Lack of sweating • Hot, red or dry skin • Rapid pulse and rapid, shallow breathing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 911 or get the victim to a hospital immediately. Delay can be fatal. • While waiting for emergency services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move victim to air-conditioned place, if possible. - Remove as much clothing as possible. - Try a cool bath, sponging or wet sheet to reduce body temperature. - Watch for breathing problems. - Use extreme caution. - Keep the victim lying down. - Do not give the victim any fluids.
Heat Exhaustion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy sweating • Weak or rapid pulse • Normal body temperature is possible, but temperature will likely rise • Fainting or dizziness, nausea, vomiting, exhaustion and headaches are possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get victim to lie down in a cool place. • Loosen or remove as much clothing as possible. • Apply cool, wet cloths to neck, face and upper arms. • Move victim to air-conditioned place, if possible. • Give sips of water if victim is conscious (a half glass every 15 minutes), ensure water is consumed slowly and discontinue if nausea occurs. • Seek immediate medical attention if vomiting occurs. • Watch carefully for changes in the victim's condition. If heat exhaustion is untreated, it may progress to heat stroke. Seek medical attention if symptoms do not improve or last longer than one hour.
Heat Cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painful spasms, usually in leg and abdominal muscles • Heavy sweating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the victim to a cooler location — air-conditioned, if possible. • Apply firm pressure on cramping muscles, or give a gentle massage to relieve spasm. • Give sips of water, up to a half glass every 15 minutes (do not give liquids containing caffeine or alcohol). • If nausea occurs, discontinue liquids and seek medical attention.
Sunburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin redness and pain, possible swelling and blisters • Fever, headaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a shower using soap to remove oils that may prevent the body from cooling naturally by blocking pores. • Apply dry, sterile dressings to any blisters and get medical attention.