



Investing in our Neighbors Improving Lives Strengthening Communities



For more information
on Weatherization
and Housing Programs
contact Housing Director
Gin Christiansen
402-862-2411 ext. 110
www.senca.org
www.facebook.com/Senca

SENCA Weatherization Energy Saving Solutions for Qualifying Households

To create more awareness of the Weatherization Assistance Program, and the energy saving benefits the program provides to qualifying households, October 30th is recognized each year as National Weatherization Day. SENCA has been weatherizing homes of eligible, low-income households since 1975.

With above normal temperatures throughout much of October most of us are not ready, or even thinking about, freezing temps and higher utility costs that will soon be a reality. While this is an inconvenience for many households, the colder winter months are more challenging for low-income households who fear they won't be able to pay the higher utility costs.

Thankfully Southeast Nebraska Community Action Partnership, Inc. (SENCA) provides a Weatherization program to qualifying residents throughout the seven county service area of: Cass, Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson and Sarpy. Weatherization enables low-income families, whether they own or rent their home, to reduce energy costs by helping to make their homes more energy efficient.

Potential Weatherization services may include: insulation to the attic, walls and/or floors; replacement of broken glass in primary windows; installation or adjustment of door weather-stripping, thresholds and/or door sweeps; in addition to an efficiency inspection on natural gas, propane and fuel oil furnaces, or boilers. Hot water heater repair and/or replacement is also available. After improvements are completed households generally experience an increase in comfort, reduced drafts, more even temperatures throughout the home and a reduction in heating and cooling costs.

A typical residence who has benefitted from Weatherization services may experience an average of 18.7% reduction in heating costs. Additional savings can also be achieved in cooling costs. Energy conservation helps reduce Nebraska's dependence on imported energy in addition to being a major contribution to the self-sufficiency of low-income households. A reduction in energy costs can help economically challenged households stretch their available income to better meet the family's basic needs. During the 2021 fiscal year, October 1st – September 30th, SENCA provided 29 adults, residing in 24 homes, with energy saving improvements and energy conservation training, thereby improving lives and strengthening southeast Nebraska communities.



To receive free weatherization services combined household incomes must fall below 200% of the federal poverty level, which is revised annually. In 2021 a family of four could earn up to \$53,000 and qualify for assistance. Households with persons receiving either ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are automatically eligible for weatherization services.

A Sarpy County Family Shares Their Story

When Bryant and Tricia purchased their Sarpy County home in June 2018 it seemed like the perfect home to meet their family's needs. However, they soon discovered the home was in need of costly repairs to help ensure it was safe, comfortable and energy efficient. Unfortunately, like many home owners, especially those with limited income, they could not afford to do the repairs.

Tricia stated that the handicapped accessible addition of their two story home, where their foster son and elderly parent stayed, had little if any insulation. "The lack of insulation resulted in higher than expected utility costs and the on-going effort of trying to keep the space somewhat comfortable. We had to utilize additional fans during the hot summer months and space heaters during the cold winter months," shares Tricia. Then, if things weren't already challenging enough, members of their household started having 'flu like' symptoms such as tiredness and headaches. This was an added concern as COVID-19 had started impacting Nebraska in the spring of 2020. While the family didn't have COVID-19, some of their symptoms were similar, to what was then a family of nine, including foster children, were experiencing.

As per her mom's suggestion, Tricia began searching for a local agency that might be able to help them and she was referred to SENCA. Within six months of submitting their application the actual process began. Josh Ninceheler, SENCA's Quality Control Inspector (QCI)/Radon Mitigation Specialist, completed the initial inspection of the home and discovered high carbon monoxide levels. Josh also performed a test for radon. As suspected, the test revealed the home contained high levels of radon, thereby qualifying the home to be mitigated, the process to help eliminate the trapped radon gas from their home.

SENCA utilized funding from Weatherization and Radon Mitigation programs, in addition to funding provided by Omaha Public Power District (OPPD), to complete the necessary work. The home received much needed insulation in the floor of the handicapped accessible addition, along with insulation in the attic and garage. An exhaust fan was installed in the bathroom and two of the existing entry doors were replaced.

A year after receiving SENCA's help Tricia shares "Our home is more comfortable, the air conditioner and heater run less often, not continuously as before we received assistance, which helps reduce utility costs." Tricia adds "SENCA was great to work with and completed the project in a professional and respectful manner. Our home is now more energy efficient, healthier and safer for our family."

