

Exploratory Review of Grantee, Subgrantee and Client Experiences with Deferred Services under the Weatherization Assistance Program



Approved for public release;
distribution is unlimited.

Erin Rose
Beth Hawkins
Lauren Ashcraft
Carolyn Miller

February 2015

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

Reports produced after January 1, 1996, are generally available free via US Department of Energy (DOE) SciTech Connect.

Website <http://www.osti.gov/scitech/>

Reports produced before January 1, 1996, may be purchased by members of the public from the following source:

National Technical Information Service
5285 Port Royal Road
Springfield, VA 22161
Telephone 703-605-6000 (1-800-553-6847)
TDD 703-487-4639
Fax 703-605-6900
E-mail info@ntis.gov
Website <http://www.ntis.gov/help/ordermethods.aspx>

Reports are available to DOE employees, DOE contractors, Energy Technology Data Exchange representatives, and International Nuclear Information System representatives from the following source:

Office of Scientific and Technical Information
PO Box 62
Oak Ridge, TN 37831
Telephone 865-576-8401
Fax 865-576-5728
E-mail reports@osti.gov
Website <http://www.osti.gov/contact.html>

This report was prepared as an account of work sponsored by an agency of the United States Government. Neither the United States Government nor any agency thereof, nor any of their employees, makes any warranty, express or implied, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights. Reference herein to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not necessarily constitute or imply its endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the United States Government or any agency thereof. The views and opinions of authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the United States Government or any agency thereof.

Environmental Sciences Division

**EXPLORATORY REVIEW OF GRANTEE, SUBGRANTEE AND CLIENT
EXPERIENCES WITH DEFERRED SERVICES UNDER THE
WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Erin Rose, Oak Ridge National Laboratory
Beth Hawkins, Oak Ridge National Laboratory
Lauren Ashcraft, APPRISE
Carolyn Miller, Carolyn Miller Consulting

February 2015

Prepared by
OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831-6283
managed by
UT-BATTELLE, LLC
for the
US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
under contract DE-AC05-00OR22725

CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
ACRONYMS	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	xiii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. WEATHERIZATION DEFERRAL OVERVIEW	3
3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE REVIEW OF THE WAP DEFERRAL PROCESS	7
4. NATIONAL EVALUATION DEFERRAL FINDINGS	9
4.1 GRANTEE AND SUBGRANTEE SURVEY FINDINGS	9
4.2 WEATHERIZATION STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS	10
4.3 BASELINE OCCUPANT SURVEY FINDINGS	14
4.4 CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS	16
4.5 KEY DEFERRAL FINDING FROM THE SERC GRANT	17
5. SPECIAL STUDY: IN-DEPTH AGENCY AND CLIENT INTERVIEWS ON DEFERRALS	19
5.1 INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY	19
5.1.1 Data Collection	21
5.2 FINDINGS FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS	22
5.2.1 Sampled State Deferral Guidelines	22
5.2.2 Impact of State Deferral Guidelines on Deferral Patterns	24
5.2.3 Sampled Agency Characteristics	24
5.2.4 Client Interview Results	26
5.2.5 Agency/Client Interactions	29
5.2.6 Low-deferral and High-Success Agencies	31
5.2.7 Analysis and Key Findings from In-depth Interviews	35
6. CONCLUSION	37
REFERENCES	39
APPENDIX A. AGENCY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ON DEFERRALS	A-3
APPENDIX B. CLIENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ON DEFERRALS	B-3

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 2.1 Deferral Action Tree.....	4
Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework for the Review of the WAP Deferral Process	7
Figure 5.1 States Selected for Inclusion in the Deferral Study, in Gray	19

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 4.1 Frequency of Recommendation to Walk Away / Defer Services	9
Table 4.2 Re-Audits for Walk-away / Deferrals	10
Table 4.3 Standard Walk-Away / Deferral Policy	10
Table 4.4 Frequency of Recommendation to Walk Away / Defer Services	11
Table 4.5 Reasons for Walk-Away / Deferral.....	12
Table 4.6 Communication of Walk-Away / Deferral.....	13
Table 4.7 Refers Walk-Away Households to Other Providers	13
Table 4.8 Re-Audits for Walk-away / Deferrals	14
Table 4.9 Percent of Served and Deferred Households by Household Income Category	15
Table 4.10 Self-reported Characteristics of the Served and Deferred WAP Population	15
Table 5.2 Agencies Selected For Inclusion in the Deferral Study Compared To National Agency Deferral Rates.....	20
Table 5.3 Agencies Selected for Inclusion in the Deferral Study Compared to National Agency Success Rates	20
Table 5.4 Follow Up Interviews with 90-Day Deferred Clients	27
Table 5.5 Client Understanding of Deferral.....	30
Table 5.6 Client Notification Policy	30
Table 5.7 Communication of Referral Information	32
Table 5.8 Has In-House Resources Available to Address Home Repairs	33
Table 5.9 Agency Follow Up with Deferred Clients	33
Table 5.10 Agency Referral/Network Relationships	34

ACRONYMS

ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
CAP	Community Action Partnership
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO	Carbon Monoxide
DOE	Department of Energy
ECM	Energy Conservation Measure
IRM	Incidental Repair Measure
NES	Non-English Speaking
ORNL	Oak Ridge National Laboratory
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OWIP	Office of Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs
PY	Program Year
SDC	Social Development Commission
SERC	Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers
SIR	Savings-to-Investment Ratio
SJHP	St. John's Housing Partnership
WAP	Weatherization Assistance Program
WPN	Weatherization Program Notice

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research study was funded by the Office of Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs (OWIP) within the U.S. Department of Energy. This report summarizes the findings from the Deferral Study of the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) Evaluation. In this study, the evaluation team contacted 43 WAP Subgrantees and 119 WAP clients in 19 states to collect information to better understand the deferral of weatherization process; i.e. deferral reasons, rates of occurrence and success with weatherization post-deferral. The study included semi-structured phone interviews with the Subgrantees included in the sample and with clients who had been deferred weatherization by the agency. Statistics generated by survey responses from WAP Grantees (states) and Subgrantees (agencies), and from weatherization staff are presented within this report.

The original design for the study was developed by staff from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) as one component of the National Evaluation of the Weatherization Assistance Program. (*National Evaluation of the Weatherization Assistance Program: Preliminary Evaluation Plan for Program 2006 – ORNL/CON-498*). As part of the evaluation plan development, the design team consulted with and received feedback from the Network Planning Committee (41 individuals from the weatherization network).

ORNL contracted with the research team of APPRISE Incorporated. The members of the APPRISE Evaluation Team who contributed to the design and implementation of this survey included:

APPRISE

David Carroll
Jackie Berger
Carolyn Miller
Colleen Driscoll
Lauren Ashcraft
Nicolas Cavallo

This study could only be completed with the cooperation and contributions of the Subgrantees who responded to the requests for interviews and to the weatherization clients who completed the survey.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2009, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) formally tasked Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) with conducting two impact and process evaluations of DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), known as the retrospective and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) period evaluations, respectively. The former focused on WAP Program Year (PY) 2008, which covers the period from April 2008 to June 2009. The latter focused on PY 2010. This report provides descriptive statistics for estimated deferral rates and reasons, and assesses interview responses received from a sample of Subgrantees and weatherization recipients describing their experiences with deferrals or 'walk-aways' from homes resulting in either suspended or final deferment of WAP.

Home weatherization includes such measures as sealing air leaks, adding wall or attic insulation, and replacing or repairing furnaces. During the weatherization process income-eligible households enter the program; energy audits are performed on the homes; energy-efficiency measures that meet a savings-to-investment ratio (SIR), along with appropriate health and safety measures, are installed in the homes; and final inspections are conducted. However, agencies defer weatherization for a myriad of reasons. This report: (1) provides descriptive statistics for estimated deferral rates and reasons for occurrence as reported through surveys administered to WAP Grantees, Subgrantees, weatherization staff, and occupants; and (2) assesses interview responses received from a sample of Subgrantees and weatherization recipients describing their experiences with the deferral process. This review utilized quantitative and qualitative data collected through research studies conducted as part of ORNL's national evaluation of WAP (state and agency program information surveys, weatherization staff surveys, occupant surveys, and case studies).

Findings reported herein suggest deferral of weatherization can be categorized into two areas; health and safety hazards, and repair requirements (e.g., roof replacement). Other reasons involve situations where a home is being remodeled or is condemned, client refusal of measures, or observations of illegal activities. Agency, regional, state and federal field guides or manuals provide guidance for when a deferral of weatherization is required and acceptable reasons for deferment. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for health and safety for weatherization auditors, contractors, and crew members are adhered to and are often referred to within the health and safety sections of the field manuals. Categories of acceptable reasons for deferred treatment serve to ensure health and safety precautions are taken for both weatherization staff and occupants while adhering to the overarching cost-effective energy saving mission of WAP.

An additional analysis of deferral-related records was performed with 43 participating weatherization agencies in 19 states; in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 Subgrantees that had reported a deferral rate of over 5%, 10 agencies that reported low-deferral rates (5% and below) and 10 agencies that reported high-success with completing weatherization in over 50% of the homes previously deferred. Open-ended guided questionnaires were developed and conducted with staff from the sampled agencies to capture causes of deferrals; assessment of impact of accessibility to standard deferral plans; utilization of standard forms; auditor knowledge and utilization of intra- and inter-agency resources and referrals targeting the specific cause(s) for the deferral; innovative techniques for addressing potential deferral situations; range of subjective or ethnocentric responses to home conditions or client behavior; as well as other characteristics of the homes and weatherization personnel. Process evaluation interviews were completed with 119 clients engaged in the deferral process. Interviews with these sampled agencies and clients were conducted between January 2013 and September 2013.

The overall goal of the special study was designed with two primary objectives. The first objective aimed to identify patterns across estimated deferral incidence rates and success with weatherization post-

deferral. The second aimed to identify both strengths and weaknesses within the deferral process at the local agency level from the agency and client perspective and to explore the impacts on clients and the overarching WAP agenda – to improve the energy efficiency in the housing stock occupied by income eligible households. This study is unique as it involved in-depth interviews with deferred clients to better understand their experience with the process and to better characterize this population compared to the WAP-eligible population served.

Data Sources and Key Findings:

Program Characterization Results

Program characterization surveys were administered to all WAP Grantees as part of the ARRA period evaluation for PY 2010¹. WAP Grantees included all states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories. All Subgrantees (agencies) in all states, and 350 weatherization auditors were also surveyed. Unfortunately, because deferred weatherization cases are often not tracked by the local Subgrantees, and therefore not tracked at the Grantee level, broad categories to determine approximate deferral rates were used. A low weatherization deferral rate of 1-5% was the most frequent response provided by Grantees (53%), Subgrantees (47%), and weatherization staff (68%). Over 20% of Subgrantees reported deferral rates over 11%; 4% of Grantees and 10% of Subgrantees reported that more than 21% of homes in their service territories are deferred services. The surveys then asked for the approximate percentage of homes that were successfully weatherized after the deferral of services. The majority of Grantees and Subgrantees reported weatherizing up to 25% of homes after households re-entered the queue upon addressing all reasons for deferred services. The top five reasons for weatherization auditors frequently or very frequently deferring homes involved: (1) excessive mold or moisture; (2) unsanitary conditions; (3) excessive repair that is beyond the scope of WAP; (4) structurally unsound or dilapidated unit; and (5) unsafe electrical, plumbing, or mechanical equipment. Overall, Grantee, Subgrantee and weatherization staff responses describing the weatherization deferral process were fairly consistent.

Occupant Survey

A national occupant survey² of randomly sampled pre-weatherized (treatment) and comparison group (one year post-weatherization) households was administered as part of the larger WAP national evaluation. Findings from the survey revealed that 30% of those on the agency audited list, and then called for pre-weatherization survey responses, had been deferred. This appeared inconsistent with the most frequent response for deferral rates (1-5%) given by Grantees, Subgrantees and weatherization staff. However, it is possible that the 20% of Subgrantees that reported deferral rates over 11% are the agencies with larger populations to serve and higher production, and therefore provided the majority of the occupant survey sample. Interviews conducted with case study agencies and with participants in the deferral special study attributed higher deferral rates during ARRA to pressure on agencies to increase production, and new health and safety guidelines preventing weatherization work from occurring where it might have in the past. Pressure on production levels may have limited time previously spent on attempting to bundle resources necessary to address housing rehabilitation³ needs. Lastly, this national deferral rate derived from the occupant survey might differ from the most frequently reported rates given by Grantees, Subgrantees, and staff as a result of lack of tracking or monitoring of this occurrence leaving these entities and individuals to estimate the rates rather than provide accurate rates with more precision.

Despite the majority of homes being deferred for dwelling quality issues, the percentage of households deferred was fairly evenly distributed across household income. This evidence alleviates concerns that

¹ See retrospective evaluation report, Bensch et al. (2014).

² See retrospective evaluation report, Carroll et al. (2014).

³ For the purposes of this report the terms home rehabilitation (home rehab) and home repair will be used interchangeably.

WAP does not serve those in greatest need because the homes they reside in are in such poor quality compared to homes in other income brackets⁴. For example, of those deferred, 26% reported income of less than \$10,000 versus 21% of households that reported income greater than \$30,000.

The deferred households were also similar to the served households in many other ways, as indicated in Table 4.10. For example, the temperature and draftiness inside the home was similar. Housing issues are also comparable between the pre-served and deferred group, as indicated by a similar percentage of homes with broken heating or cooling equipment. Served and deferred households were similar in how hard they found it to pay their energy bills. The physical health of the main respondents between the two groups was also similar with a slight increase in percentage (by 4%) of those with asthma in the deferral group. Households that contained elderly persons, children, and persons with disabilities were deferred at higher rates (43%, 36%, and 36% respectively) than single parent households (at 13%).

WAP Case Studies Task and Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers (SERC) Report

The Case Study⁵ and SERC⁶ assessment reports assisted with characterizing the deferral process from the agency perspective. These reports contribute to the overall understanding of when and why WAP income-eligible homes might be deferred and how innovative approaches and technologies might address home rehab needs alongside the weatherization process, such as the use of social workers (refer to Community Action Partnership, Lewiston in the Case Study report) and the installation of cool roofs (SERC report). Although the primary intent of WAP and SERC was to improve home energy efficiency, there are multiple co-benefits and opportunities for bundling resources if necessary and available.

Special Study: Agency Interviews

All of the 43 agencies interviewed used very similar deferral guidelines, regardless of whether they based their standards on state, federal, and/or other deferral guidelines. The most common causes for deferral across all agencies in this sample were roof leaks and structural deficits in the home. Agencies that did not mention either roof leaks or structural deficits as common causes for deferral were in the West and Midwest, and their most common causes for deferral were similar to those stated by the weatherization staff survey; vermiculite, mold/moisture, excessive CO readings, unsanitary conditions, and that the home is too new (nothing to weatherize). Hoarding was also mentioned as a common cause for deferral.

All agencies stated they provided clients contact information for outside referral sources (if available) either during the application process or once the deferral has been made. Outside referral sources included any agency, program, or organization which is not part of the interviewed agency itself. Referral information was provided to clients either in the form of a list at the time of the application or audit, as a pamphlet or list mailed with the deferral letter following the audit, or in a phone call to the client following the audit. Some agencies also directly referred clients to in-house resources when those resources are available. In-house resources included resources available within the WAP services agency, such as low-interest loan programs available to clients, home rehab programs, and funding from private sources used by the agency to help clients work through home repair issues. Among agencies with in-house funding available to assist with home repairs, there was variation as to the success with which these funds were used to resolve deferral issues.

The majority of Subgrantees stated they never followed up with clients after the clients were deferred services, and only a few agencies indicated that they followed up with clients after making referrals to

⁴ This assertion does not take into account cost of living for particular areas, or household size, but helps to characterize the WAP eligible population deferred weatherization from an income perspective.

⁵ See retrospective evaluation report, Tonn, Rose, and Hawkins (2014).

⁶ See ARRA period report, Tonn (2015).

services to address the cause(s) for the deferral. Follow up with the client after a referral was made appeared to be associated with higher success at resolving deferral issues. The agencies that followed up with clients reported that many deferred clients resolved the issues that led to deferrals and returned to seek weatherization services. In contrast, the agencies that never followed up with clients after a referral, almost never saw clients return to seek weatherization services. The majority of high-success agencies (weatherized over 50% of homes previously deferred) had in-house resources to refer to. Defunded in-house home rehab programs contributed to an increase in deferral rates. Having a cross referral partnership with other service organizations did not correlate with high-success for weatherization post-deferral.

Special Study: Client Interviews

A total of 119 in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with clients in order to discover the way in which they understand and experience the deferral process and to identify the facilitators and barriers to resolving deferral issues and ultimately receiving weatherization services. Review of these interviews revealed some patterns in client deferrals and client response to deferral. Client responses were categorized into three themes: agency-related problems; client-related problems; and resolved deferrals (or clients in the process of resolving their deferrals). Agency-related issues included such problems as: lack of deferral notification, agency not following through with process after client resolves issue, agency does not return client calls, referral agencies do not follow through, agency told the client he/she was eligible for weatherization and the agency never followed through, agency did not explain the process in a way that the client can understand, or the agency ran out of funding and denied the client after addressing the initial deferral reasons. Some clients in this category did not attempt to follow up because of health problems, losing agency contact information, or were told from the agency to wait to hear back from them.

Client-related issues included: lack of money or physical ability to complete repairs; landlord not allowing repairs to be made; client no longer interested; or client's home is already up-to-date. The majority of clients in this category mentioned that they did not have the funds necessary to complete the repairs and move forward with the process. The third category involved clients who received full or partial weatherization and considered the process complete, or were currently working to resolve the issue and expected to move forward with the process soon. This was the least common result amongst the three main categories identified in the review of client responses. This group of clients was reviewed in greater detail in an effort to identify specific characteristics or practices of the clients or agencies that might be associated with higher or lower levels of client success at resolving their deferral issue and receiving weatherization. If the issue was less severe and the client understood and was capable of addressing the minor issue, there was greater chance for success with weatherization.

When asked about their support network for assistance with financial, home repairs, or other problems, the majority of clients (62%) said they have no such support networks, formal or informal. The remaining 38 percent of clients had a person or an organization to turn to for financial support or for help with home repairs. The majority of these clients turned to specific family members such as parents or children, in-laws, or significant others for financial support, help with daily tasks, or to complete home repairs. It was also common for clients to turn to friends for help with home repairs. It was less common that they turn to members of their informal social networks for financial support, but depended more on formal resources for help with repairs or finances such as another local agency or church. A few clients reported a more formal support network to turn to such as another community action agency or other local agency to assist with home repairs. The study revealed that the majority of clients relied on the agencies and their potential referral sources in order to move forward with the weatherization process and that they had no one else to turn to for assistance.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is part of the Recovery Act period national evaluation of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). The evaluation is being managed by Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) on behalf of DOE. The pages that follow present findings from one of several components of the WAP evaluation, an exploratory study of local weatherization agencies' policies, procedures, and incidence rates, as well as client experiences regarding deferrals or "walk-aways" from homes. These deferrals resulted in either suspended or final deferment of weatherization of low-income homes served by WAP.

WAP was created by Congress in 1976 under Title IV of the Energy Conservation and Production Act. The purpose and scope of the Program as currently stated in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 10 CFR 440.1 is "to increase the energy efficiency of dwellings owned or occupied by low-income persons, reduce their total residential energy expenditures, and improve their health and safety, especially low-income persons who are particularly vulnerable such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, families with children, high residential energy users, and households with high energy burden." (Code of Federal Regulations, 2011)

WAP provides grants, guidance, and other support to Grantees: weatherization programs administered by each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, territories and several Native American tribes. The Grantees, in turn, oversee a network of 900+ local community action agencies (CAAs), nonprofit organizations, and local government agencies that are eligible to receive weatherization funding from DOE (Subgrantees). These Subgrantees qualify income-eligible households, assess their homes' energy efficiency opportunities, install energy-saving measures, and inspect each home post-weatherization. Common weatherization measures include: air sealing, wall and attic insulation, duct sealing, furnace repair and replacement, as well as home improvements needed to ensure the health and safety of household occupants. The work is done at no cost to the eligible participants.

This report contains: (1) descriptive statistics on estimated deferral rates and reasons as reported by WAP Grantees, Subgrantees, weatherization staff, and occupants; and (2) a special study assessing responses received from a sample of Subgrantees and weatherization recipients describing their experiences with the deferral process. The overall goal of the special study was designed with two primary objectives. The first objective is to identify patterns across deferral incidence rates and success with weatherization post-deferral. The second was to identify both strengths and weaknesses within the deferral process at the local agency level from the agency and client perspective and to explore the impacts on clients and the overarching WAP agenda – to improve the energy efficiency in the housing stock occupied by income eligible households. This study is unique as it involves in-depth interviews with deferred clients to better understand their experience with the process and to better characterize this population compared to the WAP-eligible population served.

The next section of this report (Section 2.0) presents an overview of the WAP deferral process with Section 3.0 containing the conceptual framework for review of this topic. The report then explores national evaluation research findings from the Grantee, Subgrantee, staff and occupant surveys, case study interviews, and from the Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers (SERC) evaluation (Section 4.0). Results from these reports are used to provide context for the targeted special study conducted with a sample of agencies and clients. A description of the methodology and findings from the special study (In-Depth Agency and Client Interviews on Deferrals) are provided in Section 5.0. Lastly, conclusions are contained in Section 6.0.

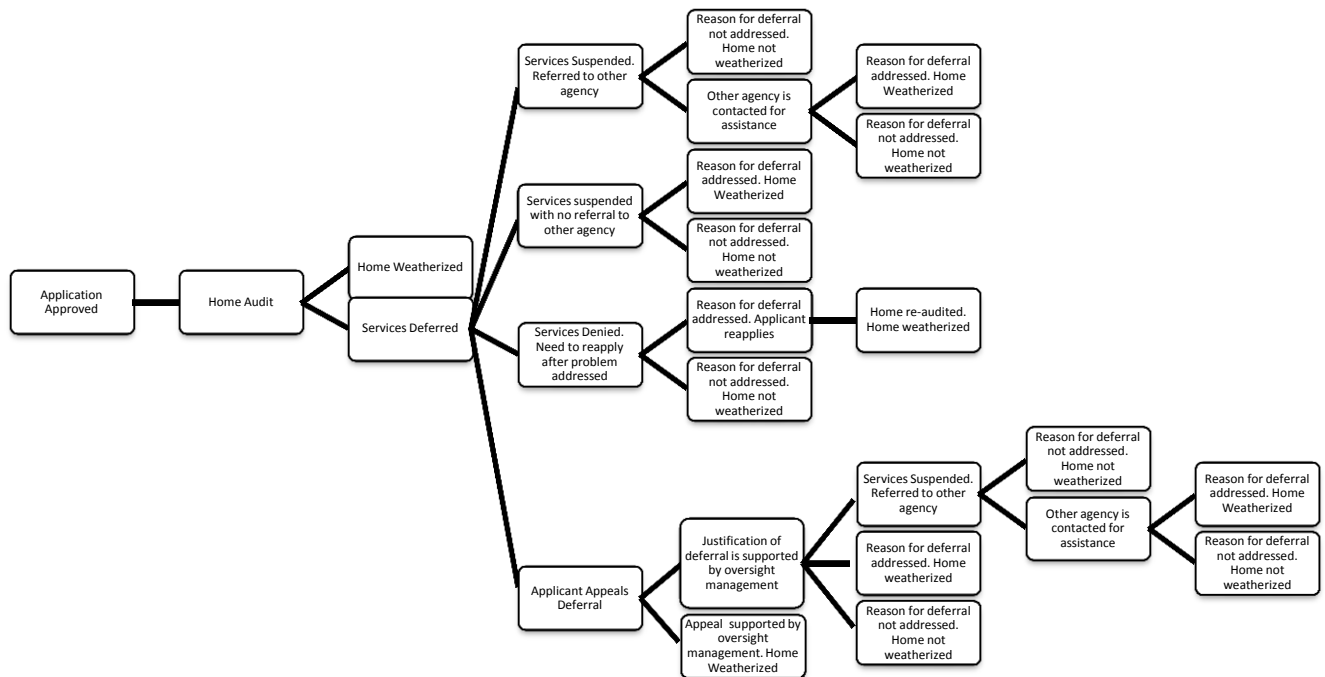
2. WEATHERIZATION DEFERRAL OVERVIEW

Weatherization services are cost-effective energy efficiency measures for residential housing provided to income-eligible residents. Services include providing energy efficiency measures to: the building envelope; its electrical system; its heating, cooling, and domestic hot water systems; and its electric appliances.⁷ Weatherization service providers view the entire house as an integrated system, the energy efficiency of which can be impacted by changes in various points in the system. There is also an understanding that energy efficiency measures may not be expected to perform satisfactorily if the entire house-as-a-system is not diagnosed and repaired appropriately. If a client's application is approved, a home energy audit will be conducted, during which the entire home will be examined as a complete system. During this home inspection and audit, the auditors may identify problems that could negatively impact the efficacy of weatherization services provided to the client (e.g., a hole in the roof allows water to leak onto newly installed insulation, rendering it ineffective). In some cases, agencies are able to provide minor home repairs. However, home repairs are limited based on DOE regulations regarding "allowable" expenses, if the required repair is not deemed allowable then the home will be deferred.

Reasons for deferral of weatherization are generally categorized into two areas; health and safety hazards, and repair requirements. Other reasons might involve situations where the home is being remodeled or is condemned, client refusal of measures, or illegal activities. Agency, regional, state and federal field guides or manuals provide guidance for when a deferral of weatherization is required and acceptable reasons for deferment. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for health and safety for weatherization auditors, contractors, and crew members are adhered to and are often referred to within the health and safety sections of the field manuals. Categories of acceptable reasons for deferred treatment serve to ensure health and safety precautions are taken for both weatherization staff and occupants while adhering to the overarching cost-effective energy saving mission of WAP. Figure 2.1 illustrates the potential actions within the deferral process.

⁷ "Weatherization Services," U.S. Department of Energy, accessed 4/2/2013, <www1.eere.energy.gov>

Figure 2.1 Deferral Action Tree



Allowable Expenses

WAP funding for Grantees originates at the federal level with DOE. Grantees provide funding to local agencies throughout the state. Due to the origin of this funding, these Subgrantees must follow DOE and/or state funding restrictions and deferral policies when deciding which services they can provide to customers and what circumstances lead to deferrals. Occasionally, local agencies secure private unrestricted funding⁸ that can be used for home repair programs, but this type of funding is infrequent nationwide.

Additionally, agencies can combine funding from agency partners or with various intra-agency funding sources in order to maximize resources to address problems in the home so that weatherization services can be provided. In order to maximize resources, local agencies develop and maintain a strong network of public and/or private partnerships in the community.

Following are some examples of DOE deferral standards.

- 1) The client has known health conditions that prohibit the installation of insulation and/or other weatherization materials.
- 2) The building structure or its mechanical systems, including electrical and plumbing, are in such a state of disrepair that they cannot be repaired reasonably.

⁸ Private funding in this study generally comes from a local philanthropic individual, sometimes of celebrity status, or another local corporation or private entity/company.

- 3) The house has sewage or other sanitary problems that would further endanger the client and weatherization installers if weatherization work is performed and repair is beyond the scope of reasonable cost justification.
- 4) The house has been condemned or electrical, heating, plumbing, or other equipment has been "red tagged" by local or state building officials or utilities.
- 5) Moisture problems are so severe that they cannot be resolved.
- 6) Dangerous conditions exist due to high carbon monoxide levels from combustion appliances and cannot be reasonably resolved.
- 7) The client is uncooperative, abusive, or threatening to the crew, subcontractors, auditors, inspectors, or others who must work on or visit the house.
- 8) The extent and condition of lead-based paint in the house would potentially create further health and safety hazards were it to be disturbed.
- 9) Illegal activities are being conducted in the dwelling unit.⁹

DOE issued a weatherization program notice (WPN) in January of 2011 which states that building rehab is beyond the scope of the weatherization program and those homes with conditions that require more than incidental repairs measures (IRM) should be deferred.¹⁰

The main goal of the WAP is to reduce the home energy usage and improve the health and safety of the occupants. Agencies must be able to justify the cost of each IRM and how each IRM is necessary for the performance or preservation of an energy conservation measure (ECM). These justifications must always be documented in the client file by the agency. ECMs must have a calculated SIR of 1.0 or greater to be eligible for DOE funding. For each weatherized building, the cost of the total package of ECMs, added to the cost of all IRMs for the building, must have a calculated SIR of 1.0 or greater.¹¹ It is rare that the SIR in a home with a significant roof problem would be 1.0 or greater due to the high cost of such repairs. Therefore, it is often the case that homes with significant roof problems are deferred, because they cannot achieve the required SIR.

⁹ "Deferral Standards", Weatherization Assistance Program Technical Assistance Center, accessed 4/4/2013, <<http://www.waptac.org>>

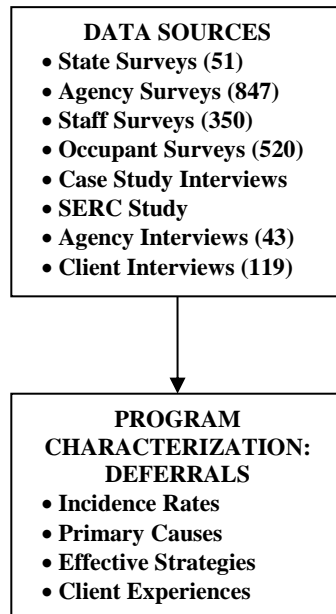
¹⁰ Weatherization Program Notice 11-6 Effective Date: January 12, 2011, Department of Energy, accessed 4/4/2013, <<http://www1.eere.energy.gov>>.

¹¹ Weatherization Program Notice 12-09 Effective Date: June 27, 2012, Department of Energy, accessed 4/4/2013, <<http://www.waptac.org>>.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE REVIEW OF THE WAP DEFERRAL PROCESS

This review explored national evaluation research findings from the Grantee, Subgrantee, staff and occupant surveys, case study interviews, and from the SERC evaluation. These data sources were mined for information on deferral rates, reasons, and other characteristics illuminating factors influencing the incidence of deferrals. Conditions for deferral determinations varied from state to state, and from agency to agency. Reasons to walk-away from a housing unit were initially categorized by the evaluators based on the list of deferral conditions posted by WAPTAC¹² and additional conditions located in regional protocols. Upon interviewing weatherization staff and clients, and collecting data from state or agency survey instruments, other deferral reasons were added. Due to the wide variation in incidence and process for deferrals across WAP Grantees and Subgrantees (as described in previous studies and reports¹³) an additional special study was designed to assess the deferral process at the agency and client levels. This special study was unique as it matched the agency reports on the reason(s) for the deferral, agency actions post-deferral, and the client experience with the process. Figure 3.1 captures the data sources and intended outcomes from the review of these sources.

Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework for the Review of the WAP Deferral Process



Surveys utilized in the ARRA Period evaluations, the S1 - All States Program Information Survey and S2 - All Agencies Program Information Survey, were modified from their versions in the retrospective evaluation to include data requests designed to specifically capture tracking mechanisms of deferral rates and confirmation of sources for deferral policies and procedures nationally.

Data for analysis was collected post-deferral from the sampled local weatherization agencies. Organization of deferral documentation varied across selected agencies as there is no national

¹² Weatherization Assistance Program Technical Assistance Center; <http://www.waptac.org/>

¹³ National Renewable Energy Laboratory (2011). Healthy housing opportunities during weatherization work. Retrieved from www.nrel.gov

requirement to use a standard client file format or to track deferrals. The weatherization staff survey, conducted as part of the retrospective evaluation, was administered nationally to 350 auditors between Spring 2011 and Summer 2011. Questions specific to deferral policy, procedure, and frequency of specific conditions or reasons for deferring services were included in a revised version of this staff survey. Responses collected from the survey were compared to Grantee deferral protocol standards and incidence rates reported for PY 2010.

4. NATIONAL EVALUATION DEFERRAL FINDINGS

Program characterization surveys were administered to all WAP Grantees as part of the ARRA period evaluation for PY 2010. WAP Grantees include all states, the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories. All Subgrantees (agencies) in all states were also surveyed. Additionally, 450 agencies were requested to complete detailed program information surveys. Weatherization staff surveys were administered to 350 auditors. Clients who had been deferred services were surveyed on housing and household characteristics as part of the national occupant survey. Information gleaned from agencies where involved in the Case Studies of WAP and a key finding from the SERC evaluation is provided.

4.1 GRANTEE AND SUBGRANTEE SURVEY FINDINGS

All 50 states and the District of Columbia, and 867 weatherization agencies responded to the program information survey. All 51 records for the Grantee survey reported having a standard deferral policy for the state. However, 16% of those Subgrantees that responded to the question stated they did not know of a deferral policy for their agency. The majority of Grantees (53%) and many Subgrantees (47%) estimated deferring WAP income-eligible homes 1-5% of the time (Table 4.1). This is also the most reported frequency across climate zones. Fifteen percent of Subgrantees reported never deferring homes compared by 2% of states.

Table 4.1 Frequency of Recommendation to Walk Away / Defer Services

<i>How often do you recommend walking away from homes or deferring services?¹⁴</i>		
	WAP State (PY10)	WAP Agency (PY10)
Never	2%	15%
1-5% of Time	53%	47%
6-10% of Time	21%	15%
11-20% of Time	16%	10%
21% or More of Time	4%	10%
No Answer	4%	3%
Total	100%	100%

Grantees and Subgrantees recorded similar responses to the survey question that inquired about an estimated¹⁵ rate for deferred homes that “will eventually be weatherized” (Table 4.2). The majority of entities suggested that between 1-25% of deferred units eventually receive weatherization; very few estimated rates over 50%.

¹⁴ Although states do not directly recommend deferring a home for weatherization, survey respondents estimated how often WAP subgrantees within their state recommended the home be deferred.

¹⁵ Wide ranges were offered as response categories to capture estimates and to give WAP leadership some rate of occurrence.

Table 4.2 Re-Audits for Walk-away / Deferrals

<i>State and Agency Surveys: Please estimate what percentage of units where weatherization was deferred during PY 2010 will eventually be weatherized?</i>		
	WAP State (PY10)	WAP Agency (PY10)
0%	6%	26%
1-25%	76%	55%
26-50%	14%	6%
51-75%	0%	3%
76-90%	2%	2%
91-100%	0%	4%
No Answer	2%	4%
Total	100%	100%

Although the majority of both Grantees and Subgrantees reported no change in deferral frequency between PY 2008 (Pre-ARRA) and PY 2010 (ARRA), approximately 30% of Grantees and 40% of Subgrantees reported an increase in deferrals during the ARRA period of WAP. An overwhelming majority of Subgrantees (88%) reported a high or very high priority on health and safety upon assessing the clients' homes despite production expectations for the ARRA period; new health and safety regulations might have contributed to this estimated increase (See Case Study report findings).

4.2 WEATHERIZATION STAFF SURVEY FINDINGS

The weatherization staff survey was administered nationally to 350 auditors between Spring 2011 and Summer 2011. Questions specific to deferral policy, procedure, and frequency of specific conditions or reasons for deferring services were included in a revised version of this staff survey. Responses collected from the survey were compared to state deferral protocol standards and estimated incidence rates for PY 2010.

Of the auditors surveyed, 90% reported knowing if their state or agency had a standard walk-away or deferral policy written in a program manual or field guide; 81% responded in the affirmative when asked if a policy was in place (Table 4.3). This compared to 100% of Grantees and 84% of Subgrantees that reported having such manuals.

Table 4.3 Standard Walk-Away / Deferral Policy

<i>Does your state or weatherization agency have a standard walk-away or deferral policy written in a program manual or field guide?</i>	
	Auditor
Number of Respondents	350
Yes	81%
No	9%
Don't Know	9%
No Answer	<1%
Total	100%

The majority of auditors surveyed (68%) estimated recommending the agency walk-away or defer services 1-5% of the time compared to the Subgrantee estimated response of 47%. Within the other rate categories, auditors and Subgrantees responses were fairly consistent (within 5%) (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Frequency of Recommendation to Walk Away / Defer Services

<i>How often do you recommend walking away from homes or deferring services?</i>		
	Auditor (n=350)	WAP Agency (PY10)
Never	10%	15%
1-5% of Time	68%	47%
6-10% of Time	11%	15%
11-20% of Time	5%	10%
21% or More of Time	5%	10%
No Answer	1%	3%
Total	100%	100%

Weatherization auditors were asked how frequently or infrequently they defer homes for the reasons found in DOE guidelines and field guides or policies. Table 4.5 displays the results with the most common reasons reported first. Of those surveyed, 32% of weatherization auditors reported deferring or “walking away” from a home for excessive mold or mildew either very frequently or frequently. This was the most common auditor reported reason for either very frequently or frequently deferring a unit followed by unsanitary conditions, excessive repair that is beyond the scope of WAP, and then reasons stemming from structurally unsound or dilapidated units.

Table 4.5 Reasons for Walk-Away / Deferral

<i>How frequently do you walk away or defer services for the reasons listed below?</i>							
Auditor (n=350)							
Frequency of Reasons for Walk-away or Deferred Services	Very Frequently	Frequently	Infrequently	Very Infrequently	Not at All¹	No Answer	Total
Excessive Mold/Moisture	8%	24%	26%	25%	15%	1%	100%
Unsanitary Conditions	7%	23%	30%	25%	13%	1%	100%
Excessive Repair	6%	22%	27%	26%	17%	2%	100%
Structurally Unsound or Dilapidated Unit	5%	21%	25%	31%	15%	2%	100%
Unsafe Equipment	5%	15%	30%	28%	20%	2%	100%
Infestation of Rodents, Insects, or Other Vermin	2%	12%	27%	33%	23%	3%	100%
Friable Asbestos	3%	9%	19%	34%	31%	4%	100%
Client Health	2%	5%	11%	32%	47%	3%	100%
Other Unsafe IAQ Issues	1%	6%	22%	37%	29%	5%	100%
Client Uncooperative or Threatening Behavior	2%	5%	20%	42%	28%	3%	100%
Illegal Activities or Drug Abuse in the Home	2%	4%	16%	36%	39%	3%	100%
Excessive CO Levels	3%	3%	20%	31%	40%	3%	100%
Unsecured Pets	1%	3%	19%	34%	39%	3%	100%
Extent/Condition of Lead-Based Paint	2%	3%	21%	29%	42%	3%	100%
Improperly Stored Hazardous Materials	1%	1%	14%	35%	44%	4%	100%
Other Reason(s) ²	0%	0%	3%	5%	53%	39%	100%

¹“Not at all” includes respondents for whom this question was not applicable. These are respondents who answered “Never” to the previous question: “How often do you recommend walking away from homes or deferring services?”

² Respondents were asked to specify the other reasons if applicable. Nine percent of all respondents mentioned that clients were “Not Eligible” as one other reason for walk-aways and one percent reported other reasons.

The majority of auditors reported at least verbally communicating the reason for deferral in person after completion of the initial inspection or audit of the home. Many of the auditors (66%) reported sending written communication to the client. Other communication practices involved the use of a standard deferral form (39%); verbal communication by phone (24%); or someone else in the agency delivering the information (18%) (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Communication of Walk-Away / Deferral

<i>How do you communicate to the clients when you conclude that the home will not be weatherized?¹ (Select all that apply)</i>	
	Auditor
Number of Respondents	314
Verbal Communication in Person after the Inspection	76%
Written Communication in Letter Form	66%
Standard Deferral Form	39%
Verbal Communication after the Inspection by Phone	24%
A Different Agency Person Communicates the Decision to the Client	18%
Other Method	1%

¹This question was only asked to auditors who recommend walk-aways or deferrals at least 1% of the time.

For reasons previously discussed, WAP providers might have been unable to address issues in the home leading to the deferral. If this was the case, most agencies (88%) reported completing intra-agency or inter-agency referrals to programs that can address the issue. The majority of auditors (66%) reported referring households to other community service providers (Table 4.7) but estimated a low-percentage of those deferred and referred to other programs eventually received weatherization (Table 4.8). These responses were similar to agency survey responses.

Table 4.7 Refers Walk-Away Households to Other Providers

<i>Does your agency refer walk-away households to other community service providers?¹</i>	
	Auditor
Number of Respondents	314
Yes	66%
No	11%
Don't Know	23%
Total	100%

¹This question was only asked to auditors who recommend walk-aways or deferrals at least 1% of the time.

Table 4.8 Re-Audits for Walk-away / Deferrals

	Auditor
Number of Respondents	314
0%	9%
1-5%	43%
6-10%	9%
11-25%	9%
26-50%	10%
51-75%	12%
76-100%	7%
No Answer	2%
Total	100%

¹This question was only asked to auditors who recommend walk-aways or deferrals at least 1% of the time.

Weatherization auditors were requested to respond to a series of questions within the weatherization staff survey as they are very often the first staff members in the field; the determination of whether to defer or not most often occurs during the auditing phase of the weatherization process. Overall, weatherization auditors estimated that accounts of deferral practice concur with agency responses.

4.3 BASELINE OCCUPANT SURVEY FINDINGS

In PY 2008 DOE furnished WAP Program funding to Grantees that then distributed funds to over 900 Subgrantees. The evaluation team selected a sample of 220 Subgrantees and requested client lists in the summer of 2011; one list of clients that had been income-qualified for the WAP program and was scheduled for a home energy audit (treatment group) and a second list of clients that had received weatherization services during PY 2010 (comparison group). The target lists included households in single-family site built homes, mobile homes, and small multifamily buildings. Interviews were conducted with 1,094 clients from the treatment group and with 803 clients from the comparison group¹⁶. Findings from the survey revealed that 30% of those contacted that had been deemed eligible and scheduled for an energy audit had been deferred. Of those that had received an energy audit at the very least, 23% reported having been deferred weatherization services. Despite the majority of homes being deferred for poor dwelling quality issues, the percentage of households deferred is fairly evenly distributed across household income. This evidence alleviates concerns that WAP does not serve those in greatest need because the homes they reside in are in such poor quality compared to homes in other income brackets. For example, of those deferred, 26% reported income of less than \$10,000 versus 21% of households that reported income greater than \$30,000 (Table 4.9).

¹⁶ National Weatherization Impact Evaluation; Baseline Occupant Survey; <http://weatherization.ornl.gov/>

Table 4.9 Percent of Served and Deferred Households by Household Income Category

	Number	Served	Deferred	Total
Number of Respondents	520	398	122	520
Less than \$10,000	50	74%	26%	100%
\$10,000 to less than \$20,000	191	77%	23%	100%
\$20,000 to less than \$30,000	100	73%	27%	100%
\$30,000 or more	77	79%	21%	100%
Refused/Don't Know	102	78%	22%	100%
Total	520	77%	23%	100%

The deferred households were also similar to the served households in other ways, as indicated in Table 4.10. For example, the temperature and draftiness inside the home was similar. Housing issues were also comparable between the pre-served and deferred group, as indicated by a similar percentage of homes with broken heating or cooling equipment. Served and deferred households were similar in how hard they found it to pay their energy bills. The physical health of the main respondents between the two groups was also similar with a higher percentage (by 4%) of those with asthma in the deferral group. However, it appeared that there were some notable household characteristics within the deferred group captured here. Households that contained elderly persons, children, and persons with disabilities were deferred at higher rates (43%, 36%, and 36% respectively) than single parent households (at 13%).

Table 4.10 Self-reported Characteristics of the Served and Deferred WAP Population

Questions asked Pre-Weatherization	Served	Deferred
How often kept home at unsafe or unhealthy temperature some or almost every month	10%	18%
Needed medical attention because home was too cold	3%	7%
Needed medical attention because home was too hot	2%	3%
Home is too drafty all the time or most of the time	29%	35%
Frequent mildew or musty smell	30%	28%
Never observe standing water in the home	67%	66%
Observed mold in the home	27%	33%
Very hard or hard to pay energy bills	75%	74%
Paid less than amount owed on utility bill some or almost every month	27%	32%
Household member went without food in the last 4 weeks	7%	10%
Broken heating equipment	15%	15%
Broken central air equipment	10%	10%
Number of days physical health not good (0-30)	10	11
Single parent household	10%	13%
Elderly household (60+)	47%	43%
Household with children	35%	36%
School-aged child missed >11 days of school due to illness or injury	21%	22%
Had healthcare coverage in the past 12 months	84%	80%
Needed prescription medicine but couldn't afford	33%	31%
Currently have asthma	14%	18%
Employed for wages	29%	30%
Physical, mental, or emotional problem prevents working at a job	38%	36%
Renter	12%	14%

4.4 CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

As part of the national evaluation of WAP, a case study analysis was conducted and a report titled “Weatherization Beyond the Numbers” was drafted by the evaluation team. The report documents 14 high-performing and diverse, local weatherization programs across the U.S. and its territories. The purpose of the report was to show, both in narrative and illustrations, how weatherization efforts under the program actually work on the ground in different contexts.

The weatherization process itself is straightforward: income-eligible households enter the program, energy audits are performed on the homes, energy efficiency measures that meet a savings-to-investment ratio test, along with appropriate health and safety measures, are installed in the homes, and final inspections are conducted. Sometimes agencies need to defer weatherization if homes pose health and safety risks to their personnel. Within this general program space a very active, diverse, and innovative national weatherization network has evolved. The following agencies included in the case study report offer insight into the WAP deferral process:

The Community Action Partnership–Minot Region is located in North Dakota. This CAP’s service territory suffered massive flooding during the 2011 Souris River flooding, which displaced nearly 12,000 people and created \$1 billion in local damage. Because of DOE’s policy regarding “Acts of God” and the allowability of re-weatherizing damaged homes, the Minot WAP was able to go back and re-weatherize flood-affected housing. However, many units could not be re-weatherized because field tests indicated that remaining moisture levels were too high for successful re-weatherization. This precautionary measure resulted in the agency having to walk-away from many units. An estimated 75% of the houses in the flooded valley had basements into which sewage had backed up; the agency had to walk-away from those as well.

Community Action Partnership, Lewiston is located in western Idaho. At the implementation level, the agency philosophy is simple: get the job done without complaints. Veteran staff takes pride in their jobs and in helping households in need, while implementing the weatherization program efficiently. Although the Lewiston CAP is a non-profit, it is run like a private-sector business, continually working to keep both federal and leveraged funds for weatherization in the pipeline. One result of this two-pronged philosophy (addressing client needs and efficiency) is that this weatherization program rarely has to walk-away from a home. If an auditor encounters a client with needs beyond their scope, this CAP brings in a social worker to work with the client and ensure that the weatherization process moves smoothly. The CAP also has the capability to work with clients with disabilities. Other resources are regularly tapped to repair roofs and deal with other issues in the home prior to weatherization.

The Opportunity Council, serving three counties in the most northwestern area in the state of Washington, implements a program to conduct pre-audit in-home visits. These visits are conducted by trained energy assistants. Each energy assistant spends two to three hours in the home with the client(s), addressing energy use issues as they walk through the home. The energy assistants provide energy education to the clients and install some simple energy efficiency measures, such as CFL light bulbs. This education specialist identifies the top three energy savings priorities and works with the client to set realistic goals for their family. Then the energy assistant may or may not refer the home to the weatherization program, depending on the condition of the home. About 20% of the homes audited do not need further weatherization assistance and are “weeded out” at this stage. Of the 80% remaining, another 20% might be deferred services by the WAP energy auditor.

Housing Resources of Western Colorado is a non-profit organization that provides both weatherization and housing rehab. This agency reports that deferrals rarely occur and generally only when roof or structural damage is present. In these cases Housing Resources (HR) still runs an audit to establish if any

WAP money can be used, contingent upon cost-effectiveness, to match other funds. HR's Housing Rehabilitation program offers loans for homeowners; the loan maximum is dependent on amount of equity the homeowner has in the house. This process can cause some delays while approvals are pending. If the loan does not go through, the landlord or owner must assume financial responsibility for the required repairs before weatherization services can begin. When funds are available to access, critical home repairs are completed by HR crew and immediately launch into weatherization without any lag time. In more minor repair cases, such as fixing a simple roof leak, weatherization funds are often able to be used. Walk-aways were reported to be rare, but may occur when weatherization work cannot be performed because of health and safety issues related to excessive clutter or lack of cleanliness.

HELP of Southern Nevada very rarely (2% or less) encounter a project where a walk-away or deferral is required. Of the deferrals that do happen, almost all are due to severe mold or moisture issues. HELP does not have a home rehab program to help clients with major structural damage but they refer their clients to another program called Building a Better Tomorrow. Upon completion of the repairs, HELP will return to begin the weatherization although it was not made clear if the client's application returns to the waiting list or not. The agency walks away from projects in the following circumstances: when duct work or cooling systems are nonexistent, if the home has insect infestations, or where there are signs of illegal drug use.

St. Johns Housing Partnership (SJHP), located in St. Augustine, Florida has a near non-existent deferral rate as it also runs a housing rehab program. SJHP crews are cross-trained to rehabilitate homes that cannot be immediately weatherized, and similar to HR, will immediately begin weatherization when repairs are completed. SJHP initially screens clients over the phone to assess whether a home is likely to be a candidate for weatherization; this avoids spending resources on a site visit to a home that may need rehab first. In addition, SJHP's ability to creatively and effectively use multiple sources of funding through philanthropists, private foundations, and corporate donors, as well as blending a dedicated workforce of individuals and community volunteer support groups for repairs, demonstrates its dedication to serving WAP clients.

Social Development Commission (SDC) located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin is on the opposite side of the spectrum with a very high deferral rate (estimated 50%) due to a large substandard housing stock within its service area. A question that was unresolved by SDC at the time of the site visit was where on the waiting list a home should be placed when it overcomes its deferral status. For example, in one case, it took a homeowner two years to repair the home to the point where it could be considered for weatherization. Obviously, this was a tremendous effort on the part of the homeowner. But, technically, the home was not on the waiting list because it had been deferred. Would it be fair to bump it up on the list to avoid another long wait? Or should the home have been added at the end of the waiting list? Another issue arises when a home is identified for joint services, but the partner agency needs to deliver its services before SDC can resolve, for example, a health and safety problem. To make the collaboration work in these situations, homes may need to be pushed up to the top of the waiting list. SDC was working to build strong relationships with other service providers in Milwaukee County to develop a more consistent approach.

4.5 KEY DEFERRAL FINDING FROM THE SERC GRANT

This segment describes DOE's SERC grant.¹⁷ In June, 2010, Office of Weatherization and Intergovernmental Programs (OWIP) requested funding proposals for projects focused on energy efficient and renewable energy technologies, as well as innovative or evidence-based interventions aimed at

¹⁷ A total of \$90 million of ARRA funds was awarded for SERC as authorized by the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA) Pub. L. 110-140, Section 411(b).

reducing home energy consumption. SERC afforded 101 high-performing local weatherization providers in 27 states the opportunity to employ alternative measures in the residential sector that may have otherwise been deemed lower priority as a result of low cost-efficiency, or that may have been considered unallowable under current WAP standards due to the inherent risks involved with innovation.

The selected technologies for this grant were not expected to meet the SIR of 1.0; SIR calculations were intended to initiate discussion on future potential for cost-effectiveness and under what conditions, such as buy-downs created with secondary funding sources. One such approved technology, selected by five of the 27 Grantees, was a ‘cool roof’.¹⁸ Approximately 810 single-family homes and mobile homes received a cool roof through SERC. During interviews with Subgrantees it was reported that some homes selected for this technology would otherwise have been deferred due to existing roof damage. WAP guidelines only allow a small investment in home repairs that are not a necessary component of a cost-effective energy measure. However, the problem remains that homes needing assistance with energy costs are often the very homes that need weatherization *and* repair. Holes in the roof create “leaky,” energy-inefficient structures. While the primary purpose of SERC was to offer innovative, renewable and energy efficient options for the residential sector, for cases that necessitated a replacement or repair of an existing roof, cool roofs unintentionally acted as a means for deferral prevention.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cool roofs are designed to maintain a lower roof temperature than traditional roofs as they have reflective surfaces and emit heat more efficiently than hot or dark roofs, keeping them cooler in the sun. There are several different types of cool roofs (i.e., coatings, pre-fabricated sheet membranes, spray foam, shingles, metal, tiles) that most often do not entail removal of the existing roof.

¹⁹ An energy impact and cost-effective analysis of all SERC technologies is being completed through the ARRA evaluation. At the time of this report, data analysis is currently underway. See Tonn (2015).

5. SPECIAL STUDY: IN-DEPTH AGENCY AND CLIENT INTERVIEWS ON DEFERRALS

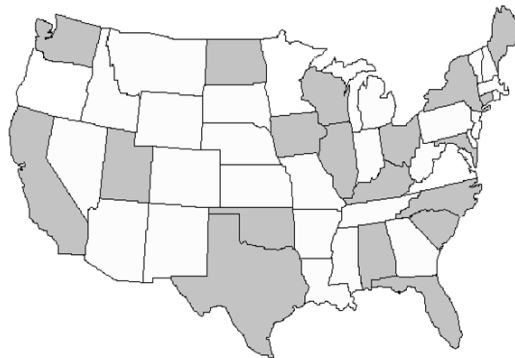
The overarching goal of this component of the deferral study was to understand why weatherization clients are deferred and what can be done to ameliorate the issues leading to deferrals and ultimately provide weatherization services to WAP eligible clients. More specifically, the study aimed to examine the deferral process from both the client and agency perspective, to evaluate the client-agency interactions throughout the process and to identify program strengths and challenges related to deferrals. Interviews with sampled agencies and clients were conducted between January 2013 and September 2013.

This study is distinguished from previous examinations of the deferral process in its focus on the client. It sought to identify and highlight situations in which clients were capable of addressing the reasons for deferral, identified the strategies necessary to empower them to do so, and explored conditions requiring additional agency involvement necessary for successful implementation of weatherization.

5.1 INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

In order to execute this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a purposively selected sample of local WAP agencies (See Appendix A) and with clients (See Appendix B) who were deferred within these agencies' service territories. The client samples were provided by the sampled agencies. For the records collection portion of the study, 23 of the 43 agencies were selected to be interviewed, having been stratified by geographical diversity and estimated deferral statistics.²⁰ Agencies were excluded if they did not respond to the deferral questions in the national evaluation's agency program information survey administered during the ARRA period of WAP, or if they mostly conducted weatherization in large multifamily buildings. In total, 43 agencies and 119 clients within 19 states (Figure 5.1) were interviewed; the results provide the data for this in-depth analysis.

Figure 5.1 States Selected for Inclusion in the Deferral Study, in Gray



Of the 43 sampled agencies, 10 were identified as low-deferral (5% incidence and below) agencies and 10 agencies with a high-success rate (over 50%) with completing weatherization post-deferral based on their responses to the national agency information survey (Tables 5.2 and 5.3). The remaining 23 agencies provided both interviews and client deferral documentation and weatherization records if available. This allowed analysts the opportunity to identify tracking mechanisms, referrals to other service providers, and examine any discrepancies between client and agency statements pertaining to the deferral.

²⁰ Three replacement agencies were needed, as one agency could only provide half of the requested client list, and two other agencies were unable to provide any client list. However, not all 23 agencies included in the agency analysis provided linkable client interviews due to their inability to provide client samples.

Table 5.2 Agencies Selected For Inclusion in the Deferral Study Compared To National Agency Deferral Rates

Deferral Rate	Agencies Sampled (PY 2010)	WAP Agencies (PY 2010)
1-5%	5%	47%
6-10%	26%	15%
11-20%	32%	10%
21%-30%	21%	6%
>30%	16%	4%

*15% of agencies reported 0% deferrals

*3% of agencies did not answer on the national survey

Table 5.3 Agencies Selected for Inclusion in the Deferral Study Compared to National Agency Success Rates

Deferred Units That Were Weatherized	Agencies Sampled (PY 2010)	WAP Agencies (PY 2010)
0%	11%	26%
1-25%	63%	25%
26-50%	16%	6%
51-75%	5%	3%
76-90%	5%	2%
91-100%	0%	4%

*2% of agencies did not answer on the national survey

The semi-structured, open-ended, interview protocol was developed and conducted with staff from the sampled agencies to capture causes of deferrals; assessment of impact of accessibility to standard deferral plans; utilization of standard forms; auditor knowledge and utilization of intra- and inter-agency resources and referrals targeting the specific cause(s) for the deferral; innovative techniques for addressing potential deferral situations; range of subjective or ethnocentric responses to home conditions or client behavior; as well as other characteristics of the homes and weatherization personnel.

The 23 agencies not identified as being low-deferral rate or high-success rate agencies were asked to provide a sample of 10 clients who were deferred within the last 90 days, and 10 clients who were deferred in Quarter 1 of 2012. Clients from each sample provided by the agencies were mailed an advance letter which mentioned a \$25 incentive to complete the interview, and were then contacted via telephone for the interview. In total, 119 client interviews were completed. The client interview gathered information about the client's experience with the application, the audit, the deferral notification, any referral information provided to the client, the results of the process (whether the home has since been weatherized or will be in the near future), and the overall client experience.

The 10 low-deferral rate agencies and 10 high-success rate agencies were identified by examining agency self-reported descriptive statistics on deferral rates gathered from the national agency information survey. Employees from the 10 agencies with low-deferral rates and 10 agencies with high-success rates of resolving deferrals and providing weatherization services were interviewed to gain an understanding of characteristics and any effective agency practices that minimize deferrals or resolve deferral issues. Also, data from these agency interviews were examined in order to determine whether practices in these agencies could be replicated nationally, which could potentially help to minimize deferrals, or increase the ability of agencies and clients to resolve deferral issues so that weatherization services can be provided.

5.1.1 Data Collection

Unit or Agency Attributes

Evaluators retrieved documents detailing deferral forms or deferral notes in individual applicant files or in collective data collection files organized by the agency either electronically or in paper form. Oversight and tracking processes, if observed, were also documented. Evaluators followed the deferral process in real time. The study aimed to receive a list of ten clients from each agency; five clients who were deferred one year ago, and five clients deferred within the last 90 days. This process assessment involved phone interviews with occupants and weatherization staff, and records collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone.

The following information was collected from the sampled agencies and the 119 sampled households:

- Standard or informal deferral policy or protocol
- Documentation of deferral process
- Reasons for suspended and deferred treatment
- Incidence of suspended and deferred treatment
- Communication efforts with applicant
- Appeal process for deferred applicant
- Incidence of appeals
- Incidence of treated home post-deferral
- Tracking mechanisms imposed by local agency or state officer

This study was designed to explore the varying deferral strategies across agencies and states and the limitations and the impact these differences have on deferral frequency, success on moving forward with weatherization post-deferral and on the overall experience of the client. The following attribute data were collected and factored into the analysis of results across local, state, and federal systems:

- Differences in health and safety standards used in deferral protocols and field guides
- Determination of what is deemed to be cost ineffective
- Accessibility of state or regional field manuals and whether or not these field guides are used in practice at a local agency level
- Lack of a streamlined documentation and tracking strategy to effectively capture incidence of these walk-away homes on agency to agency and state to state levels
- Subjective determinations made by auditors, contractors and crew members
- Cultural influence on home condition
- Cultural or language barriers between auditor or crew members and occupant
- Prevalence of health and safety barriers specific to geographic areas
- Other attribute and relational data discovered through process assessment

Due to observed and reported lack of a current tracking system, data collected to provide insight into frequency of deferral occurrence is reported as an estimation of incidence. Incidence estimates within the 19 states providing the agency sample could assist with determining need for policy and standardized procedure aimed at minimizing deferral rates at a state level if deemed necessary. The objectives of the data collection and analysis included:

- Calculate estimates of incidence rates of interrupted or suspended weatherization as a result of health and safety issues or cost effective concerns

- Provide estimates of final deferral of treatment with the recommendation for the applicant to reapply after addressing extensive concerns observed in the home
- Assessment of policy and protocols for deferral of treatment as defined in regional, state, and local field manuals or guides
- Comparison between deferral protocols and OSHA standards
- Assessment of impact of standard deferral forms on incidence and documentation
- Review of quality assurance within the deferral or suspended work phase to ensure fair treatment of applicant
- Assess the potential benefit of streamlining the deferral process and documentation on a national level to ensure the health and safety of weatherization auditors, contractors and crew members
- Inform policy and procedure with regards to documentation, tracking, and monitoring of individual deferral occurrence and collective incidence at Grantee and national levels
- Identify effective model strategies for tracking interrupted production of weatherization treatment for future studies aimed at seeking more accurate incidence of deferrals on a national level
- Determine incidence of referrals made to alternate resource(s) for assistance with reasons(s) for deferred services
- Provide discussion of needed resources from government, private, and non-profit sectors to better address underlying causes for home deferrals unearthed through the data collection and analysis.
- Ascertain if acceptable reasons for deferrals are being exercised with appropriate management oversight
- Determine how “user-friendly” the appeal process is for deferred applicants.
- Determine impact of limitations of weatherization funds allowable for health and safety conditions of the home

An important and unique component of this study was that it provided the opportunity to link agency and client experiences and perspectives. For example, differences between agency policies gathered from speaking with agency employees and client experiences were examined (i.e. an agency's referral policy and a client's referral experience, or the deferral reason provided by the agency versus the client's understanding of the deferral reason). An analysis of these differences allowed us to identify patterns of agency practices which positively and negatively impacted client experiences.

5.2 FINDINGS FROM IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

This segment of the report provides findings from the in-depth interviews with the 43 sampled agencies, a records analysis from 23 of those 43 agencies, interviews with 119 clients, and a detailed look at those agencies with reported low-deferral and high-success rates. The analysis attempted to identify characteristics and themes within and across agencies with varying deferral rates, and unveiled experiences with deferred services as described by WAP clients.

5.2.1 Sampled State Deferral Guidelines

This section describes three samples of existing state deferral guidelines in order to provide additional context for interpreting information collected in the agency interviews. Deferral guidelines from states represented in our sample of agencies were reviewed with particular concentration on states in which the interviewed agency indicated that they follow state deferral guidelines only. These three particular states' guidelines are described in detail because they represent diverse geographic locations in the United States. States will be labeled State A, State B and State C.

State A's Deferral Guidelines:

- Subgrantee must implement specific actions to assure clear communication with the client.
- The results of the dwelling inspection may indicate a hazardous or non-hazardous situation that must be rectified before weatherization services may be provided. Two scenarios are possible: 1) A hazardous situation exists (i.e. high Carbon Monoxide (CO) reading, gas leak, structural or electrical safety), which necessitates that the client is immediately informed and recommendations for corrective action may be provided to the client. 2) A non-hazardous situation will be discussed with the client.
- Written notification will be sent by certified letter to the dwelling owner, which will include: results of the dwelling inspection and reasons that prohibit work from proceeding, whether a hazardous or non-hazardous situation exists, details of what needs to be done before weatherization can proceed, a statement notifying that the situation may not be addressed in the program, and a request that the agency be contacted after the situation has been rectified.
- The client's file will remain in a pending status until a response is received from the client. If the client responds that a situation has been resolved, a re-inspection is scheduled as soon as possible to determine if work can proceed.
- Health and Safety work must be related to the installation of weatherization measures.

State B's Deferral Guidelines:

- Local agencies may defer weatherization work if they encounter problems that are beyond the scope of WAP.
- Deferral guidelines may include the following:
 - 1) The client has known health conditions that prohibit the installation of insulation and other weatherization materials.
 - 2) The building structure or its mechanical systems are in such a state of disrepair that failure is imminent and conditions cannot be resolved in a cost-effective manner.
 - 3) The house has sewage or other sanitary problems that would further endanger the client and the weatherization installers if weatherization work is performed.
 - 4) The house is condemned.
 - 5) Moisture problems are so severe that they cannot be resolved under existing health and safety measures and minor repairs.
 - 6) Dangerous conditions exist due to high CO levels from combustion appliances and cannot be resolved under existing health and safety measures.
 - 7) The client is uncooperative or abusive.
 - 8) The extent and condition of lead-based paint in the house would potentially create further health and safety hazards.
 - 9) In the judgment of the energy auditor, conditions exist which may endanger the safety of the work crew or contractor.
- Local agencies must actively pursue all alternative options on behalf of the client, including referrals, and use good judgment in dealing with difficult situations.
- The local agency must provide clients with deferral documentation. If the property is a rental, property owners must receive a copy.

State C's Deferral Guidelines:

- Subgrantees may defer or delay providing service to an otherwise eligible unit, until an unsafe or ineligible condition is corrected. Some of the common situations which defer or delay services are:
 - 1) structure is for sale
 - 2) legal dispute over the building
 - 3) demolition is scheduled on the building
 - 4) structural problems in the home which make weatherization impractical or impossible
 - 5) infestation
 - 6) health or safety hazard (which endangers work crew or subcontractor)
 - 7) unsafe or inoperable heating appliance
 - 8) uninhabitable
 - 9) conflict of interest (e.g. building is occupied by Subgrantee employee)
 - 10) extensive work-scope
 - 11) seasonal employment (worker is

seasonably unemployed but expects to return to full-time work, while others on the list may have more pressing needs) 12) owner intransigence 13) potential lead hazards, and 14) potential mold/moisture problems.

- If the home was deferred for a health and safety concern, clients must be presented with the Health and Safety Form of the state, which must be completed by the agency and shared with building owners if they differ from the applicants.
- Applicants must be informed throughout the entire process and provided with the Health and Safety Notification for documenting the issues or concerns discovered during the audit along with an explanation that weatherization would be inappropriate, or that the weatherization work-scope must be modified or changed. The Subgrantee must document its concerns in writing along with pictures and other relevant information and secure them in the applicant file.

5.2.2 Impact of State Deferral Guidelines on Deferral Patterns

All of the 23 agencies interviewed and included in the records analysis portion of this special study used very similar deferral guidelines, regardless of whether they based their standards on state, federal, and/or other deferral guidelines. While State A's deferral guidelines were left open for agency interpretation for best practice, all three states mentioned deferring for health and safety concerns that would endanger agency employees and/or the client. DOE deferral examples do suggest deferring when there are health and safety hazards which may endanger the worker and/or client. States A, B and C all mentioned that non-hazardous situations can also lead to deferrals. For instance, State B mentioned that deferrals can occur if the client is uncooperative, and State C noted that conflicts of interest (i.e., the structure is for sale, a legal dispute over the building, scheduled demolition, owner intransigence) can lead to deferrals. DOE deferral examples do suggest that deferrals can occur when clients are uncooperative or if there is illegal activity in the home at the time of the audit. Finally, State B, State C and DOE deferral examples all specifically mentioned cost-effectiveness when determining whether to defer or not. State A mentioned making decisions regarding cost-effectiveness in other sections of the state plan as well.

Review of these state deferral guidelines and procedures indicated that agencies in States A, B, and C each appeared to act outside their state guidelines. Two out of five clients interviewed from an agency in State A indicated that they never received a notification of deferral. These clients were both non-English speakers (NES). State A's deferral guidelines mentioned that the "Subgrantee must implement specific actions to assure clear communication with the client", implying that the agency should have ensured that the clients understood their deferral statuses even though they did not speak fluent English. An agency in State C had one client (out of two interviewed clients) who said she never received a deferral notice and thought that she was still under consideration to receive services. State B's plan specifically mentioned that "local agencies must actively pursue all alternative options on behalf of the client, including referrals." However, only one out of five interviewed clients in an agency in State B said that they were referred to another resource for assistance. Also, one client from State B's interviewed agency listed a different deferral reason than the agency, indicating that either the client did not understand the deferral reason or the reason was not clearly communicated to the client. The problem of clients not understanding the reason for deferral will be discussed in greater detail in later sections of this report.

5.2.3 Sampled Agency Characteristics

Just over half of the participating agencies in the records collection task (13 out of 23) based their deferral standards on state deferral guidelines, while three agencies based their deferral standards on both state and federal guidelines and four on federal guidelines only. However, many of the agencies that based their guidelines on state and/or federal guidelines also added additional deferral guidelines. One agency noted

that it added extra precautions to protect its employees' health and safety while in client homes.²¹ Three agencies either wrote their own standards or were unsure about the origin of their deferral standards.

Most (19 out of 23) agencies worked with housing stocks which are primarily single family units. The remaining agencies serve a variety of housing types including a larger proportion of multifamily units. Of the 23 interviewed agencies, 16 agencies said that their housing stocks include mobile homes, including 2 agencies that have mostly mobile homes.

Geography significantly influences the housing stock of the agencies. For example, housing stocks in New England tend to be much older than in other parts of the country, and the prevalence of mobile homes increases in more rural areas. On average, housing stocks were built in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. However, a few agencies, particularly in New England, noted that many of their homes were built as early as the 1800's.

The most common causes for deferral as reported by these sampled agencies are roof leaks and structural deficits in the home. Ten agencies mentioned that roof leaks were common causes for deferral, while eight agencies mentioned that structural or foundation issues were common causes for deferrals. The three agencies that did not mention either roof leaks or structural deficits as common causes for deferral were in the West and Midwest, and their most common causes for deferral were vermiculite, mold/moisture, excessive CO readings, sanitary conditions, and that the home is too new (nothing to weatherize). Hoarding was also mentioned as a common cause for deferral. This ordering of common deferral causes differs from the list generated from the national Grantee and Subgrantee surveys provided earlier in this report.

Referrals

All 23 agencies said they provide clients contact information for outside referral resources (if available) either during the application process or once the deferral has been made. Outside referral sources include any agency, program, or organization which is not part of the interviewed agency itself. Referral information was provided to clients either in the form of a list at the time of the application or audit, as a pamphlet or list mailed with the deferral letter following the audit, or in a phone call to the client following the audit.

Six out of 23 agencies also directly referred clients to in-house resources if available. In-house resources are available the agency's service umbrella, such as low-interest loan programs available to clients, in-house home rehabilitation programs, and funding from private sources which can be used by the agency to help clients work through home repair issues. Among agencies with in-house funding available to assist with home repairs, there was variation as to the success with which these funds are used to resolve deferral issues. One agency with in-house resources reported no success with resolving deferrals, and one agency reported that approximately 50% of deferred clients resolve issues through these referrals and ultimately receive weatherization services.

Three agencies indicated that referring clients to other agencies or resources often solves the clients' problems but six agencies said it is rare that referrals help, mostly because the funding for referral agencies is also limited. Two agencies noted that clients "never" come back to receive weatherization and that referrals do not seem to help clients resolve their home issues.

²¹Information on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) can be retrieved at <https://www.osha.gov/>

Follow up

Only three agencies indicated that they routinely follow up with clients after making referrals. One of these agencies specifically mentioned that their auditors want to make sure the time they spent on certain clients was not wasted so they follow up to be sure clients take the next steps. Additionally, four agencies said that they sometimes or occasionally follow up with clients after the deferral has been made. The remaining 16 agencies never follow up with clients.

Follow up after referral appears to be associated with success at resolving deferral issues. The three agencies that regularly follow up with clients reported that 25%, 50%, and 90% of deferred clients resolve the issues that led to deferrals and return to seek weatherization services. In contrast, the two agencies which almost never see clients return to seek weatherization services never follow up with clients once clients have been referred to other sources.

Additional Resources Needed to Reduce Deferral Rate

Agency staff was asked to indicate what types of additional resources they thought could further reduce client deferrals. While almost all agencies (18 out of 23) said they could use more funding (in general or to mitigate specific home issues), other resources were also identified. The most common requested alternatives and additional resources, besides additional funding, are described below:

- Many (9 out of 23) agencies would like the regulations on how they spend funds to be less strict, because they believe that current regulations prevent them from being as efficient as they could be. Among these agencies, some noted that they would like the state-imposed spending thresholds for repairs to be raised. Others noted that they would like to spend some of their funding on roof repairs, which they are currently not allowed to do unless the roof repairs, when lumped in with the overall cost of the related ECMs, do not cause the SIR to drop below 1.0.
- Two agencies noted that they would like more, or stronger, local partnerships for their referral networks.
- Three agencies said that they would like more funding for, or a more efficient way to address, the problem of hoarding, as this often leads to deferrals in these particular agencies.

5.2.4 Client Interview Results

This section will discuss the results of the completed client interviews. Client interview responses were divided into three categories. A total of 119 client in-depth telephone interviews were conducted in order to more fully understand the way in which clients understand and experience the deferral process and to identify the facilitators and barriers to resolving deferral issues and ultimately receiving weatherization services. Review of these interviews revealed some patterns in client deferrals and client response to deferral. The client responses were then sorted into three categories: agency-related problems, client-related problems, and resolved deferrals (or clients in the process of resolving their deferrals). These three categories are described in more detail below.

1) Agency-related issues included such problems as: lack of deferral notification, agency not following through with process after client resolves issue, agency does not return calls, referral agencies do not follow through, agency told the client he/she was approved and never followed through, agency did not explain the process in a way that the client can understand, or agency ran out of funding and denied the client.

- There were 50 clients in this category (42% of all client interviews conducted), and was the most common category.

- Of the 50 clients in this category, a small proportion of clients mentioned that they have attempted to follow up with the agencies to inquire about their status or to move forward and often the agencies do not return calls. The remainder of clients in this category did not attempt to follow up because of health problems, losing agency contact information, directions from the agency to wait to hear from them, or other difficulties due to their age.

2) Client-related issues included: lack of money or physical ability to complete repairs, landlord did not allow repairs to be made, client no longer interested, or client's home was no longer in need of services.

- There were 43 clients in this category (36% of all client interviews conducted). The majority of clients in this category mentioned that they do not have the funds necessary to complete the repairs to move forward with the process.

3) Client received full or partial weatherization and considered the process complete, or was currently working to resolve the issue and expected to move forward with the process soon.

- There were 26 clients in this category (22% of all client interviews conducted), making it the smallest of the three main categories we identified in our review of client responses. This group of clients was reviewed in greater detail in an effort to identify specific characteristics or practices of the clients or agencies that might be associated with higher or lower levels of client success at resolving their deferral issue(s) and receiving weatherization. This analysis will be described in Section 5.2.6.

In September of 2013, follow up interviews were conducted with 90-day deferred clients to confirm whether they had received weatherization services or other assistance. Evaluators were able to interview 45 of the 61 households who had initially been interviewed during Spring 2013, had not received services at that time, and speak English (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Follow Up Interviews with 90-Day Deferred Clients

Progress	Weatherization status	Action taken	# of households	Total # of households
Completed interview	Did not receive weatherization	No action taken	25	45
		The client or someone else is taking action regarding their deferral	19	
	Received weatherization	Took action regarding their deferral	1	
Not contacted	Not applicable		4	16
	Unable to contact		12	
TOTAL				61

It is important to note that some clients had not received weatherization services due to exogenous factors (i.e. client owes property taxes and cannot obtain home improvement loan, hospitalization, lost their home). There were also clients that indicated that they either ‘cancelled’ the work or they were told that

there were no cost-effective weatherization measures possible for the home. Of the 44 households that did not receive weatherization there were seven households with such non-agency related difficulties.

Client formal/informal support networks

When asked about their support network for assistance with financial, home repairs, or other problems, the majority of clients (62%) said they have no such support networks, formal or informal. Two clients specifically mentioned that they are elderly and that the family members they once considered to be their main support have passed away. The remaining 38% of clients have a person or an organization to turn to for financial support or for help with home repairs. The majority of these clients turned to specific family members such as parents or children, in-laws, or significant others for financial support, help with daily tasks, or to complete home repairs. It was also common for clients to turn to friends for help with home repairs. However, it was less common that they turn to friends for financial support. Some clients also sought assistance from churches for help with repairs or finances. A few clients reported a more formal support network to turn to such as another community resource agency to assist with home repairs.

These findings indicate that the majority of clients rely on the agencies and their potential referral sources in order to move forward with the weatherization process, and that they had no one else to turn to for assistance if they are not able to address the deferral issues on their own.

Language barriers

Initial client contact attempts revealed a number of NES clients in the sample received from agencies. In order to represent NES deferred clients in this analysis, APPRISE contracted with a local translation company to conduct the in-depth telephone interviews with these clients. One additional NES interview was conducted with the help of an English-speaking family member to interpret during the interview. A total of six NES interviews were completed in three agencies with high proportions of NES clients. In two out of the six NES client interviews, it was clear to the interviewer that the client thoroughly misunderstood the audit process and the reasons for deferral. One client indicated that she thought the agency would pay her the money necessary to weatherize her home, and was upset that she never received this money. Another client in the same agency understood that she was deferred but could not understand why. In both of these cases, the agency communicated with the client in English.

Another client in a different agency acknowledged that she refused to allow the agency to waterproof her roof but seemed to understand that she was deferred for roof leaks. She did not, however, understand why she was not able to move forward with weatherization and thinks the agency will eventually come back to complete the repairs necessary for her to move forward. The client did not understand the relationship between waterproofing the roof, roof repairs, and moving forward with the weatherization process. The second client interviewed from this agency mentioned the same reason for deferral as the agency mentioned, but she was under the impression that she would hear from the agency after the audit to more explicitly understand the steps she needs to take to move forward with the process. She never heard from this agency and has attempted to call, but the employees are only able to speak with her in English and are unable to communicate the process to the client effectively.

In the third agency with NES clients, one client indicated that she thoroughly understood her reason for deferral. The second client from this agency noted similar reasons for deferral as the agency mentioned, but he seemed to not understand what needed to be done next in order to move forward with the process. In both cases, neither the client nor the agency followed up after the audit, but both clients mentioned that the auditors communicated with them in Spanish.

In summary, some NES clients understood their deferral reasons and subsequent steps they needed to take

in order to move forward with the process, and some did not. However, as discussed later in this analysis, many English-speaking clients also did not understand their reasons for deferral.

5.2.5 Agency/Client Interactions

Just over half of the agencies represented had at least one client who listed a different reason for deferral than was provided to us by the agency. In each of these 12 agencies, between 5 and 12 interviews were conducted. In total, across these 12 agencies, there were 26 clients (22% of all client interviews conducted) who reported a different deferral reason than the agency or who did not know they had been deferred. By agency, the percentage of interviewed clients who did not understand the reasons they were deferred ranged from 20% (1 out of 5 interviewed clients) to 83% (5 out of 6 interviewed clients). This misunderstanding indicated a lack of effective communication between the agency and the client.

Of the 26 clients where there appeared to be a misunderstanding between the client and the agency, 18 said they were never notified that they were deferred and were under the impression that they were still being considered for weatherization services (15% of all client interviews conducted). For example, one of the clients unaware of her deferral was NES and did not seem to understand the audit or weatherization process in general. Many clients reported that they never received a deferral notice from the agency. There were two additional clients in two different agencies that were told that they were approved but never received weatherization services, while the agencies documented the deferral reasons of mold and water in the basement in the client files.

Of the 26 clients where there appeared to be a misunderstanding between the client and the agency, 6 clients (in 5 agencies) listed different reasons for deferral than the agency provided in the client sample (5% of all client interviews conducted). For example, one client noted that he was told that he needed to upgrade his heating system to move forward with the process, while the agency noted that no major energy conservation measure was needed. Another example is that the client thought she needed to fix holes in the ceiling and was currently working on this issue, but the agency listed that the client had too much clutter in the home. Additionally, another client noted that her home was audited twice and she was given different sets of home issues after each audit. None of these home repair issues matched the deferral reasons provided by the agency. The final client in this category was also NES, and while she understood she was deferred for having cockroaches and too many occupants, the agency listed that the client refused services. These 6 clients that thought the deferral was for different reasons than the agency are causes for concern, because clients may attempt to complete the wrong home repairs and waste their already limited resources.

Of the 26 clients who experienced miscommunications with the agency regarding their reasons for deferral, one received partial weatherization services and was unable to resolve the remaining issues due to a lack of understanding of the deferral reason/miscommunication with the agency, and one client noted that she is working on resolving the deferral issues by having her brother-in-law repair holes in her ceiling (this is what she understood to be the deferral reason) even though the agency listed the deferral reason as clutter.

The following table (Table 5.5) shows how many clients understood their deferrals and the actions they took to move forward/address the issues. Of the 119 client interviews completed, almost 1/4 indicated that they either received full or partial weatherization services or are working on resolving home repair issues and hope to move forward with the process shortly. Almost another 1/4 indicated that they perhaps would have been able to move forward with the process if it were not for agency-related issues.

Table 5.5 Client Understanding of Deferral

	Total
Did not Know They Were Deferred	20
Did Not Follow Up With Agency	15
Followed Up With Agency	5
Did not Understand Reason for Deferral	6
Not Working on Resolving Issue	4
Has Worked on or Reported Working on Resolving Issue*	2
Understood Deferral Reason	93
Client Not Able to Address	41
Agency-Related Issues Preventing Further Action	27
Client Reported Working On Issue	19
Complete (Received Full or Partial WX)	6
Total Client Interviews	119

*One of these clients has worked on resolving the issue but is unable to move forward due to agency-related reasons.

Agency Characteristics and the Client’s Understanding

This section identifies particular agency policies or procedures that appear to be associated with increased client misunderstanding of their deferral status or the reason for their deferral.

The agency with the highest proportion of deferred clients who did not understand the reasons for their deferral (83%) had some noteworthy procedures that set it apart from other agencies that did not have as many confused clients. Firstly, these clients noted that they were never told about their deferrals and still thought they were under consideration for weatherization. The agency reported that clients are only told about the deferral at the time of the audit and would not receive any type of letter thereafter detailing the deferral. This agency also reported that clients may be deferred in a pre-audit, pre-screening process. Five out of six clients from this agency stated they never heard back from the agency after the application, or they were never directly told that they were deferred at the audit. It appears that verbal communication of deferral at the time of the audit only may not be an effective communication strategy. It should be noted that this is the only agency that only notifies clients of their deferral status at the time of the audit and does not require additional follow up from the agency in the form of a letter, deferral form, or phone call following the audit.

The following table (Table 5.6) illustrates interviewed agencies' client notification policies. As described, only one agency notified clients of their deferral statuses verbally at the audit (only), and this agency had the highest proportion of clients who were unaware of their deferrals.

Table 5.6 Client Notification Policy

How Clients Were Notified of Deferrals	National Sample Agencies	High-Success Agencies	Low-Deferral Agencies
Verbal Notification at Audit Only	1	0	0
Official Letter Following Audit	8	4	0
At Audit Verbally and/or in Deferral Form and in a Letter/Phone Call Following the Audit	14	5	7
No answer	0	1	3
Total	23	10	10

Agency Characteristics and Success with Weatherization Post-Deferral

Out of the 20 agencies which were able to provide client lists for this study, seven (14%) did not have any clients in the sample they provided who were able to resolve their deferral issue and receive at least some weatherization services. In each of these seven agencies, between two and seven interviews were conducted.

These seven agencies did not have in-house resources available to clients to either work through deferral issues or avoid deferrals. The remaining agencies in the regular sample as well as the supplemental agencies were much more likely to have in-house resources available to clients.

Another important note is that of these seven agencies with no clients moving forward or finished with the process, only two agencies (29%) stated that employees sometimes or occasionally follow up with clients after they have been deferred. As a comparison, 44% of all high-success agencies at least sometimes follow up with their clients in some way after clients are deferred.

Finally, five of the seven agencies (71%) with no client successes noted being in need of additional funding for roof repairs, for health and safety, or for asbestos abatement. In contrast, only one low-deferral (14%) agency said that it could use additional resources to reduce its deferral rates. In other words, their funding levels were adequate for the populations they served.

5.2.6 Low-deferral and High-Success Agencies

In this section of the analysis, trends of agencies low-deferral rate (5% or less) and high-success (over 50% success with weatherization post-deferral) were examined in order to understand any potential linkages between characteristics and/or best practice procedures and high-success rates/low-deferral rates. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 low-deferral and 10 high-success rate agencies to better understand the underlying reasons for their reported incidence rates.

One high-success agency which was contacted for an interview noted that they classify walk-aways and deferrals differently, and that walk-aways (the more severe issues which are usually never resolved) are not counted in deferral statistics. They noted that if they grouped walkaways with deferrals, they would have a lower success rate, and they were unable to estimate exactly what this rate would be. This means that this particular agency is not eligible to be considered a high-success agency in this study.

Also, two low-deferral agencies noted that after PY 2010²², their state imposed new vermiculite, exposed foam insulation, and crawlspace access regulations. Prior to these regulations, neither of these agencies had any such regulations and they audited and weatherized homes which had these issues often. After these new regulations, their deferral rates rose exponentially, and vermiculite, exposed foam insulation, and lack of crawlspace access became top reasons for deferrals in these agencies.

The third ineligible low-deferral agency does not count clients who resolved their deferral issues in their deferral statistics. Rather, they only counted those who are permanently deferred in their deferral statistics. This agency was unable to estimate how many clients are deferred and later receive weatherization services, but their deferral rate, including clients who are deferred and later received weatherization services, is likely higher than 5%. This made them ineligible to be deemed low-deferral for the purpose of this study.

²² PY 2010 deferral and success rate statistics were analyzed in order to identify best practices.

Housing stock

The majority of agencies in the supplemental agency sample have housing stocks which consist mostly of single family homes, similar to the agencies in the regular sample. Two high-success agencies, both of which have at least some extremely urban territory, had a fairly even mixture of single family and multifamily homes. Four low-deferral agencies mentioned having at least some multifamily homes. There was one high-success agency with a housing stock consisting mostly of mobile homes; this agency is located in a very rural area.

On average, the housing stocks these agencies serve were built in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, similar to the housing stocks of the 23 national sample agency interviews. The housing stocks with an older average vintage tended to be in the Northeast, while younger housing stocks tended to be in the Midwest and West. Two low-deferral agencies mentioned that their housing stocks were in good shape, which they also noted had a significant impact on their deferral rates. One high-success agency noted that their housing stock is in fairly good shape and that they rarely see any severe structural deficiencies in the homes they audit. They noted that the home problems they do run into are usually simple to fix, which impacts their success rate.

In contrast, only one out of the 23 interviewed national sample agencies reported that their housing stock was in very good shape, and this agency's main causes for deferral were excessive CO in the home and mold/moisture. None of the 23 national sample agencies reported relatively new housing stocks.

Most common reasons for deferral/trends

The most common cause for deferral in the supplemental agency interviews, similar to the national sample of 23 agencies, was a leaky roof, followed closely by structural deficits in the home. Four supplemental agencies also reported hoarding as a common reason for deferral. One high-success agency, which often deferred clients for hoarding issues, referred these clients to an education program that addresses the issue, and often this referral helped clients resolve the issue and return for weatherization services.

Referrals

All supplemental agencies noted that they at least attempted to provide clients contact information for other programs and agencies that can help them address the deferral issue. However, one low-deferral agency noted that they do not have much information about the agencies they refer clients to and that clients almost never return once they are deferred and referred to other sources. There was also a difference in how and when agencies communicated referral information to clients. Table 5.7 illustrates that none of the high-success or low-deferral agencies communicated referral information to clients at intake only.

Table 5.7 Communication of Referral Information

How Referral Information is Communicated to Clients	National Sample Agencies	High-Success Agencies	Low-Deferral Agencies
At Intake Only	3	0	0
At Audit Only	7	2	0
Phone Call and/or Information Sent with Deferral Letter and/or in an Email	13	7	7
No answer	0	1	3
Total	23	10	10

An important difference between the high-success agencies and the 23 sampled agencies for records analysis was that the majority of high-success agencies (and some low-deferral agencies) have in-house resources available for clients to work through deferral issues. Eight high-success agencies (89%) and three low-deferral agencies (43%) noted that they had at least some in-house repair funds or an agency home repair or loan program available for clients. In contrast, six out of 23 (26%) sample agencies had in-house resources available to help clients avoid or work through deferral issues or avoid deferrals.

One of the high-success agencies with in-house resources available stated that they used to have a home repair program along with the loan program they still have, but the home repair program was defunded by the state. They said that this home repair program, when paired with their weatherization program, worked quite well in keeping their success rate extremely high. Their success rates have since dropped, but they are still considered high-success according to this study. It appears that having access to in-house resources which can specifically address home repair problems is associated with higher success rates. This concept is illustrated in the following table (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Has In-House Resources Available to Address Home Repairs

Resource Availability	National Sample Agencies	High-Success Agencies	Low-Deferral Agencies
Has In-House Resources Available	6	8	3
No In-House Resources Available	17	1	4
No answer	0	1	3
Total	23	10	10

Low deferral and High-success Rate Agency Follow up

Another significant difference between high-success and the agency sample interviews was that a much larger proportion of the high-success agencies follow up with clients on a regular basis once they are deferred and referred to other sources. Three high-success agencies noted that they regularly follow up with clients to ensure that they are taking the necessary steps to move forward with the weatherization process. One high-success agency noted that they sometimes follow up with clients to ensure that they are taking the necessary steps to move forward. Two additional high-success agencies said that they do not follow up with clients because their clients are so responsive and active in addressing deferral problems. More consistent follow up was associated with higher success rates as illustrated in the table below (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9 Agency Follow Up with Deferred Clients

Follow Up with Deferred Clients	National Sample Agencies	High-Success Agencies	Low-Deferral Agencies
None	16	5	6
Sometimes	4	1	0
Always	3	3	1
No answer	0	1	3
Total	23	10	10

Reasons for high-success/low-deferral rate

High-success agencies listed a variety of reasons for their high-success rates including availability of in-house resources, strong case management, and a strong referral network. Strong case management included providing clients with thorough explanations of the steps they need to take in order to move forward with the process and following up with the client/forming a relationship with them throughout the process. Other common reasons for high-success rates include:

- a housing stock which is in good condition,
- a general attitude within the agency of not turning the client away.

Of the eligible low-deferral agencies, there were a variety of reasons which the agencies listed as the causes for their low-deferral rates. Two agencies noted that their auditors and employees are willing to work in conditions which many other agencies would walk away from (unsanitary), while still following the rules and regulations for their agency. Two agencies reported that their homes are generally in good shape and are newer than many other agencies and two agencies said their in-house resources assist clients in avoiding deferrals in the first place.

Other common reasons for low-deferral rates were:

- a high proportion of homeownership in the area (no landlord issues to work around),
- active code enforcement in the region (homes which are severely substandard are condemned before the agency would work with them),
- adequate funding levels.

Multiple best practice agencies cited strong referral networks as a reason for their high-success or low-deferral rates. The following table (Table 5.10) illustrates how many agencies indicated that they at least have a cross-referral system in place with outside agencies (they send clients to these agencies and also receive clients from them). It appears that there was not necessarily a strong relationship between having a cross-referral system in place and higher success rates.

Table 5.10 Agency Referral/Network Relationships

Type of Referral Relationship	National Sample Agencies	High-Success Agencies	Low-Deferral Agencies
Agency Has Cross-Referral Partnership With Local Agencies	18	4	4
Non-Partner Referral	5	4	3
No answer	0	2	3
Total	23	10	10

Additional Resources

Of the nine eligible high-success agencies, six stated that they or their referral partners could use additional funding. Two of these agencies specifically noted that they could use additional funding to specifically cover roof repairs, as these were the most common causes for deferrals in these agencies. Two agencies noted that they do not need additional resources, as their deferral rate is already as low as possible. One agency said that it used a home repair program as it had in the past, because this program, when combined with the weatherization program, helped keep the success rates extremely high. Of the

seven eligible low-deferral agencies in this study, six said that they do not require any additional resources to further lower their deferral rates. The remaining eligible low deferral agency stated that it would like to have more funding to specifically address roof repairs.

5.2.7 Analysis and Key Findings from In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews with 23 local weatherization agencies, 10 low-deferral and 10 high-deferral rate agencies, and 119 deferred clients revealed important information regarding agency practices which can impact weatherization clients' ability to resolve deferral issues and ultimately receive weatherization services.

Deferral Reasons

The most common causes for deferral across the sampled agencies participating in the in-depth interviews were roof leaks and structural deficits in the home. Agencies that did not mention either roof leaks or structural deficits as common causes for deferral were in the West and Midwest, and their most common causes for deferral were similar to those stated by the weatherization staff survey; vermiculite, mold/moisture, excessive CO readings, unsanitary conditions, and that the home is too new (nothing to weatherize). Hoarding was also mentioned as a common cause for deferral.

Agency Communication

The agency with the highest proportion of clients who did not know they were deferred notified clients only verbally (at the audit) of their deferrals and did not follow up with a written explanation of the deferral status and reason for deferral. Follow up from the agency after the deferral seems to be associated with higher success rates and more positive client experiences. High-success rates were associated with agencies who mentioned having a "personal touch" when communicating with the client and staying in contact. Some clients in this study noted that they attempted to follow up with the agency to better understand how to move forward with the weatherization process, and their calls were not returned if they left messages.

Agency Resources

The availability of in-house resources is associated with higher client success rates in this study. Specifically, one high-success agency mentioned that an in-house home repair program, when combined with their weatherization program, was an unbeatable combination which caused extremely high-success rates in their agency. When the home repair program was defunded by their state, this particular agency noticed a significant drop in their client success rate. The most common cause for deferral in the 43 agencies interviewed was roof leaks. However, according to DOE regulations, it is unlikely that agencies can repair roof issues with WAP funds due to the lack of cost-effectiveness.

Referrals

All agencies said they provide clients contact information for outside referral sources (if available) either during the application process or once the deferral has been made. Outside referral sources include any agency, program, or organization which is not part of the interviewed agency itself. Referral information was provided to clients either in the form of a list at the time of the application or audit, as a pamphlet or list mailed with the deferral letter following the audit, or in a phone call to the client following the audit. Some agencies also directly refer clients to in-house resources when those resources are available. In-house resources include resources which are available inside the agency, such as in-house low-interest loan programs available to clients, in-house home rehabilitation programs, and funding from private

sources which can be used by the agency to help clients work through home repair issues. Among agencies with in-house funding available to assist with home repairs, there was variation as to the success with which these funds are used to resolve deferral issues.

Follow up

The majority of agencies stated they never follow up with clients. However, follow up after referral appears to be associated with higher success at resolving deferral issues. Few agencies indicated that they follow up with clients after making referrals. The agencies that follow up with clients reported that many deferred clients resolve the issues that led to deferrals and return to seek weatherization services. In contrast, the agencies that never follow up with clients once clients have been referred to other sources almost never see clients return to seek weatherization services.

Characteristics of low deferral (5% or less) and high-success (over 50%) rate agencies

Agencies with low-deferral rates attributed their need to walk-away from a weatherization job less than other agencies due to: their auditors and employees willing to work in conditions which many other agencies would walk away from (unsanitary), while still following the rules and regulations for their agency; the homes they serve are generally in good shape and are newer than other agencies; their in-house resources assist clients in avoiding deferrals in the first place; a high proportion of homeownership in the area (no landlord issues to work around); active code enforcement in the region (homes which are severely substandard are condemned before the agency would work with them); and adequate funding levels. The majority of high-success agencies have in-house resources to refer to. Defunded in-house home repair programs contribute to an increase in deferral rates. Having a cross referral partnership with other agencies did not correlate with high-success for weatherization post-deferral.

Client Categorization

Client-related issues include: lack of money or physical ability to complete repairs; landlord not allowing repairs to be made; client no longer interested; or client's home is already up-to-date. The majority of clients in this category mentioned that they do not have the funds necessary to complete the repairs and move forward with the process. The third category involves clients who received full or partial weatherization and consider the process complete, or are currently working to resolve the issue and expect to move forward with the process soon. This is the least common result amongst the three main categories identified in the review of client responses. This group of clients was reviewed in greater detail in an effort to identify specific characteristics or practices of the clients or agencies that might be associated with higher or lower levels of client success at resolving their deferral issue and receiving weatherization. If the issue is less severe and the client understands and is capable of addressing the minor issue, there is greater chance for success with weatherization.

Key Findings

The major finding from this special study is that the availability of sufficient resources, especially in-house resources which can specifically address home repairs, is associated with higher success rates and lower deferral rates. However, agencies are not always able to influence the amount of funding they have. Clients who apply for weatherization services often have limited support networks to which they can turn for help with home repairs or for financial assistance. However, if the cause for deferral is minor, clients are better able to resolve the issue, allowing for weatherization to be completed. Additionally, effective communication and follow up with clients by the agency staff encourages success with implementing weatherization post-deferral.

6. CONCLUSION

WAP Grantees (states) and Subgrantees (agencies) rely on either agency instituted, state, regional, and/or federal policies to determine whether an eligible household should be deferred. The most frequently reported rate for deferrals across surveyed states, agencies, and weatherization staff is 1-5%. Over 20% of agencies report deferring over 11% of WAP eligible households. Because cases where households are deferred weatherization services are not always tracked at the agency, and therefore the state level, the WAP deferral rates provided are only estimates. Lack of tracking or monitoring of deferral occurrences leaves the WAP network to broadly estimate the rates rather than provide accurate rates with more precision. To better estimate a national statistic for the incidence of deferrals across agencies and programs, deferral rates were collected during the surveying of clients for the national occupant survey. Findings from the survey revealed that 30% of those audited and called for pre-weatherization survey responses had been deferred. Interviews conducted with case study agencies and through in-depth interviews with sampled agencies suggest higher deferral rates during ARRA attributable to expectations of increased production; limiting time previously spent on attempting to bundle resources to address housing rehab needs, for example; and additional health and safety standards preventing weatherization work from occurring where it might have in the past.

Through the national weatherization staff survey, auditors acted as key informants and provided reasons for deferrals. Of those surveyed, 32% of weatherization auditors reported deferring or “walking away” from a home for excessive mold or mildew either very frequently or frequently. This was the most common auditor reported reason for either very frequently or frequently deferring a unit followed by unsanitary conditions, excessive repair that is beyond the scope of WAP, and then reasons stemming from structurally unsound or dilapidated units. The in-depth interviews conducted with a sample of agencies revealed the most common reasons for deferring a home are due to roof leaks and structural problems (e.g., foundation issues) impacting the cost-effectiveness of the measures.

Agencies with low-deferral rates tended to work with newer housing stocks in adequate condition and in areas with high rates of home-ownership. These agencies also reported a local focus on condemning unsafe housing and a high staff tolerance for health and safety hazards. Agencies with high-success rates for completing weatherization post-deferral were inclined to have a similar general attitude or commitment to not turning clients away. High-success agencies tended to have funding for home rehabilitation programs. These programs were able to address the structural problems preventing the completion of weatherization. Additionally, none of the high-success agencies relied on verbal notice only to households to communicate the deferral reason, and recommendations for or referrals to other agency resources.

REFERENCES

- Bensch, I., Keene, A., Cowan, C., and Koski, K. 2014. National Weatherization Assistance Program Characterization: Describing the Pre-ARRA Program. ORNL/TM-2013/188, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, April.
- Carroll, D., Berger, J., Miller, C., and Driscoll, C. 2014. National Weatherization Assistance Program Impact Evaluation - Baseline Occupant Survey: Assessment of Client Status and Needs. ORNL/TM-2015/22, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, October.
- Tonn, B., Rose, E., and Hawkins, B. 2014. Weatherization – Beyond the Numbers: Case Studies of Fifteen High-Performing Weatherization Agencies - Conducted May 2011 – July 2012. ORNL/TM-2014/317, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, September.
- Tonn, et al. 2015. Assessment of the Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers Grant. ORNL/TM-2015/160, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, April.

APPENDIX A: AGENCY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ON DEFERRALS

APPENDIX A. AGENCY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ON DEFERRALS

CALL 1

INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND ASK FOR PRIMARY CONTACT

I'm calling from APPRISE on behalf of the National Weatherization Assistance Program Evaluation. I would like to speak with [insert contact person from Claire].

EXPLAIN PURPOSE OF PHONE CALL – IDENTIFY CORRECT PERSON FOR INTERVIEW

The first part of this deferral study is to speak with agency staff from 20 agencies about how the deferral process works at each agency. We are looking for your agency's deferral statistics, information on how you handles deferrals, and what resources you have available in your community.

A second part of this deferral study is to speak directly with clients who have been deferred to find out more about what their understanding is of the deferral reason, their plans for addressing the issues, the types of groups or agencies they might be working with to address the deferral issues.

After this interview, we would like you to identify 12-15 clients who have been deferred by your agency in the past XX months. We will provide you with a form for you to use to provide this information. The form will include guidelines for how to select clients and detail the contact information we need for each client.

Ask if we need to speak to someone other than the primary contact provided by Claire

- *We would like to speak with someone at the agency about three aspects related to deferrals*
 - *General deferral policy and statistics*
 - *Referrals & other local community programs*
 - *Identification of 12-15 clients who have been deferred within the past XX months*

Potential agency staff we may need to speak with (record name, position, and what information they can provide)

- Weatherization manager _____
- Intake person _____
- Admin person _____
- Other _____

Schedule a time to talk - probably need 15-20 minutes

DATE & TIME _____

BEST NUMBER _____

NOTE: S2 has information on deferral percentages and audits - have this information available to reference during interviews

CALL 2 - ACTUAL INTERVIEW

Explain study purpose:

The first part of this deferral study is to speak with agency staff from 20 agencies about how the deferral process works at each agency. We are looking for your agency's deferral statistics, information on how you handles deferrals, and what resources you have available in your community.

A second part of this deferral study is to speak directly with clients who have been deferred to find out more about what their understanding is of the deferral reason, their plans for addressing the issues, the types of groups or agencies they might be working with to address the deferral issues.

After this interview, we would like you to identify 10-15 clients who have been deferred by your agency in the past XX months. We will provide you with a form for you to use to provide this information. The form will include guidelines for how to select clients and detail the contact information we need for each client.

Find out the following about the agency:

- In general, a characterization of their housing stock (old, structurally unsound)

General information about DEFERRALS

- How does agency define 'deferral'?
- Do they use state guidelines for deferrals? If so, what are their thoughts about these guidelines? Are these guidelines helpful or do they limit the agency or force them to defer things they don't think they should defer? Do they follow guidelines exactly or is there flexibility here - that is, do they add their own additional reasons for deferrals and ignore some of the state reasons?
- Does the agency do any kind of pre-screening of applicants and decide to defer based on pre-screening? If so, what are the pre-screen questions that flag a client for deferral?
 - If they do this, find out if these pre-screened applicants are included in the deferral rate and how many of these occurred last year
- How many audits the agency does per year
- How many clients are provided with weatherization services
- How many deferrals occur per year (make sure understand their definition of deferral)
 - How many of the deferrals were resolved and client got services
 - How many did the agency resolve?
 - How many did the client resolve?
 - How many are not resolved?
- Find out the two or three most common types of deferrals the agency sees. For these common deferral reasons find out...
 - How many the agency resolved. And how the agency resolved it.
 - How many the client resolved
- Find out about the process after the deferral has been made
 - How much time the client has to resolve the problem before having to reapply -is there a specific time limit or a more general process
 - Where the client moves to on the list
 - How client proves the deferral issue has been fixed

Find out about other resources that might be available for clients, such as...

- Intra-agency resources that are available for clients with the top deferral reasons identified above
 - If have this resource, ask if they connect clients directly to that resource

- Identify resources available to the agency that help them avoid deferrals (e.g. they have funding for small home repairs so they are able to avoid deferrals for this issue because they can fix it)
- Intra-agency resources available for other types of clients, such as:
 - Population Group Served (Elderly, Disabled, Families with Children)
 - Need Served (Housing, Nutrition Services, etc)
- Inter-agency/community resources for these groups
- For each resource mentioned, ask about
 - Agency's relationship with that program
 - Whether cross-referrals occur between the two programs

General information about REFERRALS

- Does the agency refer clients to other resources? Which ones?
- Does the agency refer and leave it to client to follow up or does agency work with client and other agency?
- Find out how referrals are communicated to the client and what referral information is communicated - does the agency provide name, contact information in writing or just mention the name of a group or agency that might be able to help?
- How often are these referrals able to solve the problems that lead to the deferrals?

WRAP UP QUESTIONS

Find out what two resources would be most helpful for agency to decrease deferral rate.

Request for Sample (12-15 clients who have been deferred in the past XX months

Arrange to email or fax this document to them and indicate you will call back to make sure they got it and to answer any questions they may have.

Indicate that we would like this information provided in two weeks.

APPENDIX B: CLIENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ON DEFERRALS

APPENDIX B. CLIENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ON DEFERRALS

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW RECORD THE FOLLOWING:

Respondent name:

Local agency name:

Agency's deferral process (i.e. do they send the client a deferral letter, how long does the client have to resolve the deferral issues, etc):

INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND THE PURPOSE OF THE CALL:

*I'm calling from APPRISE on behalf of the National Weatherization Assistance Program Evaluation. You have been selected to participate in a national study that will help us understand how the weatherization program can be improved. We received your name from <INSERT AGENCY NAME>. We would like to speak with you about your experiences with the weatherization program and why you have not received weatherization services. **[ASK IF HAVE RECEIVED SERVICES YET HERE]***

We will send you a check for 25 dollars in appreciation of you taking the time to talk with us about these issues. We expect this conversation to take about 15 to 20 minutes.

INTERVIEWER NOTES:

Let respondent know this conversation will be recorded.

It is very important that the respondent recalls the program and the process they went through with this program. Remind them of the name of the local agency. There is no point trying to go on with the interview if the respondent does not recall the agency, program, or deferral so it is very important to get all this straight before going into the interview.

SCREENER:

Find out if respondent has received weatherization services yet.

(INTERVIEWER NOTE: this includes if the services have been started but not yet completed since our last contact.)

IF YES: thank them for their time and end the interview

WEATHERIZATION APPLICATION:

Discuss the **process the respondent went through to apply** for weatherization services. Find out:

- When they first applied.
- How they applied – (at the agency, over the phone or by mail)
- If there were any problems with providing the documentation they requested.
- If they were asked about potential deferral issues during the application process (structural issues, mold, clutter, etc)

POST APPLICATIONS/PRE-AUDIT

Find out what happened after the application process and before the audit. Such as:

- If they talked to someone on the phone after they applied.
 - IF YES, find out what conversation was about – did they ask about housing conditions?
- If someone came to the home before performing the audit? [NOTE: It may be hard for client to differentiate between a “pre-audit” and a regular audit. Try to probe whether person was running tests or just walking around]

THE AUDIT PROCESS

Find out if someone came to their home to conduct an audit. **[IF NOT, SKIP THIS SECTION]** (AUDIT - During an audit or assessment, a person from the agency comes to look at the home and heating equipment to see what can be done to reduce the energy usage. It is usually the first visit that the agency makes to the home.)

Get a description of the **audit process** and how it worked at that respondent’s house – find out:

- Who came to their home.
- How long the process took.
- When in the process the deferral/walk away occurred.

Probe for the respondent’s **impression of the auditors** who came to the home. Find out if:

- The respondent was able to communicate with the auditor.
- If the auditor was respectful and helpful.
- If the auditor seemed knowledgeable about the process.
- If the respondent had any concern about the auditors.

[NOTE: The goal of this question is to see how auditor/staff reacted to deferral issues – ex. were they respectful of home conditions.]

THE DEFERRAL

Now that we have talked about the weatherization process you went through, I'd like to understand more about why you did not receive weatherization services.

Find out **if the respondent understood why s/he did not receive weatherization services.**

Find out whether respondent is familiar with terms **deferral or walk away** [IF AGENCY USES DIFFERENT TERM, ALSO INCLUDE AGENCY SPECIFIC TERM].

(A “deferral” could mean the applicant has 30 days to clean up home/repair roof, etc. A “walk away” is what the agency calls it when they are not able to weatherize a home because of particular problems or issues in the home.)

- Use the term for ‘deferral’ that the respondent is most comfortable using – make sure you understand what that term means to them.

Find out how the **auditor/staff communicated the deferral** to the respondent [HAVE AGENCY PROTOCOL ON HAND TO PROMPT]. Get details about the deferral, such as:

- **When they found out** they had been deferred.
- **How they found out** they had been deferred (was it in writing or just verbal)
- If the auditor gave them a list of things they thought could be done in their home to be eligible for weatherization (if applicable) or to save energy.
- What kinds of things were on that list (if applicable).

Probe for specific **reasons the agency gave** respondent for the deferral. Find out if:

- Agency explained **why their home could not be weatherized**

Ask about an **appeal to the deferral**.

- Find out whether respondent appealed or tried to talk with the agency about the situation after being told s/he would not receive services. IF YES: Have respondent describe the appeal process.
- Find out if client was aware of an appeal process - did he/she know there is a process for appeal?

Discuss whether **part of the home was approved** for weatherization services. Find out if:

- They already received services in that part of the home.
- They are scheduled to receive services for that part of the home.

REASONS FOR DEFERRAL

Talk further about the **reasons they were deferred** and what the next steps are to address those problems.

Probe if the respondent understands **what s/he needs to do** to fix the issues that caused the home to be deferred. Find out if:

- The agency staff (auditor, weatherization crew or some other agency personnel) told them what has to be done in order to fix the problem.
- The agency staff wrote it down or just told them.
- The agency staff told them what it might cost them to have these problems fixed.
- The weatherization staff from the local agency offered to do anything themselves to address these problems for them.

Find out if the respondent knows what to do to begin the weatherization process again if s/he fixes the problems that caused the house to be deferred. [USE AGENCY PROTOCOL TO PROMPT IF NECESSARY].

- Ask if there is a time limit to getting items fixed.
- Ask if they need any kind of proof/documentation to prove issue was fixed
- What is their understanding of where they go in the list when the issue is fixed

REFERRAL

Find out if **the local agency** (either the auditor, weatherization crew or other agency personnel) referred them **to another agency or organization** for help fixing the problems that caused the deferral. If yes, find out:

- The agency (what type of agency) they were referred to.

- The type of help they were given (contact info, the agency made the call, written information, verbatim, etc).
- If they already had a relationship with the agency being referred to

IF REFERRED:

Discuss what respondent has **done with the referral information** s/he received. For example...

- If they contacted the agency or organization that was referred.
- If they received any help from that agency or organization.
- If not, why?

Identify **potential obstacles faced** by respondents who have used or have tried to use the referral information they received.

THE CLIENT’S ACTIONS

Find out if the respondent has **done any work on their own to address these problems** or issues that caused the home to be deferred.

- IF YES: Find out what respondent has done.
- IF NO: Find out if respondent plans to do anything, and if so, what.
- IF WON’T DO ANYTHING:
 - Find out most important reason why respondent does not plan to do anything to address these problems.
 - Probe the respondent to find out what the obstacles or barriers are for not moving forward with repairs – Such as: cost, not knowing what to do or how to do it, not knowing who to contact to get the work done, etc.

Find out if respondent has been able to **do anything on his/her own or through another agency** or organization to weatherize the home.

- IF YES: Have respondent describe the things s/he has been able to do.
- IF NO: Find out most important reason why respondent has not been able to do anything to weatherize the home.

Discuss the **respondent’s relationship with his/her local Community Action Agency** [USE NAME OF LOCAL AGENCY FROM DATA FILE]. Find out if:

- It is easy for them to get to the local agency.
- They have ever gone to the local agency for assistance not associated with WAP.
 - IF YES: Discuss services received from local agency.

CLIENT SUPPORT NETWORK

You told me before about some of the obstacles you face with getting work done on your home and the people, groups or organizations that you turn to for help with these kinds of things. I’d like to learn more about your formal and informal support network. Formal networks are government, church and private organizations and informal supports are people like your family, friends and neighbors.

Find out if:

- There are any programs and/or supports they currently access for assistance
- It’s more formal or informal networks that they rely on.

- The support described assisted with addressing the deferral reason(s)
- They could suggest a service needed in the community that could have assisted with addressing the reason for the deferral.

[NOTE: Focus on specific groups such as family, friends, church, community organization, and government agency – flesh out each one mentioned by respondent]

FINAL THOUGHTS ON DEFERRAL

Find out what, if anything, the respondent thinks the **weatherization program could have done differently** to make this process work better. Find out if:

- They think there is a better way for the agency to communicate the reasons for the deferral.
- There are any things they think the agency could have done to help address the issues that caused their home to be deferred.
- The agency could have offered them more help or in a different way to get those issues resolved.
- The agency could do more in referring them to the right place for help getting these issues resolved.
- They need more information and/or if they need information provided in a different way.

Get any **final comments or suggestions** the respondent has about this program.

To conclude the call:

Those are all the questions I have for you. Thank you so much for your time today. The information you provided will be very helpful in trying to improve this program so it works better for everyone.

As a token of our appreciation for your time, we'd like to send you \$25. I just need to verify your full name and address so we can send you the check.