

CHANGES Program Report

Consumer Help and Awareness of Natural Gas and Electricity Services

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Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) 3rd Quarterly Meeting – October 13, 2023



California Public
Utilities Commission

Introduction

- CPUC created CHANGES to support Limited English Proficient (LEP), disabled, and senior consumers that have issues with their energy services.
- Three main components: outreach, education, and individual case assistance (needs assistance or dispute resolution).
- Contract oversight by the CPUC's Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB) Analytics Group in the News and Outreach Office.
- Lead contractor team consists of Self-Help for the Elderly and Milestone Consulting. Together they manage a collaborative of 24 Community Based Organizations(CBOs).

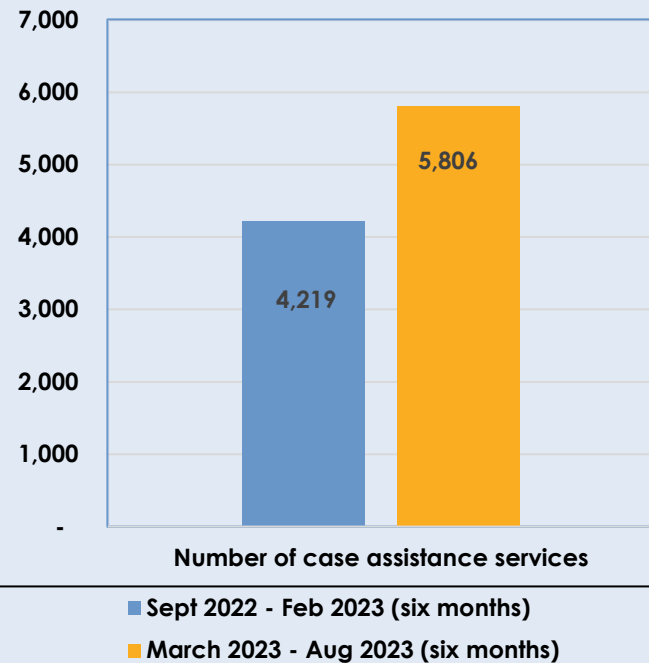
CHANGES Services

PY 2023-24: March – August 2023

Case Assistance

Comprised of Needs Assistance and Disputes

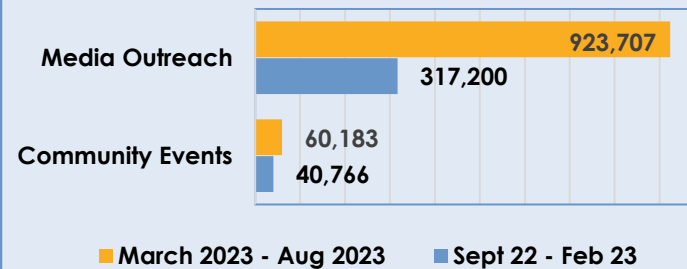
Case Assistance Services



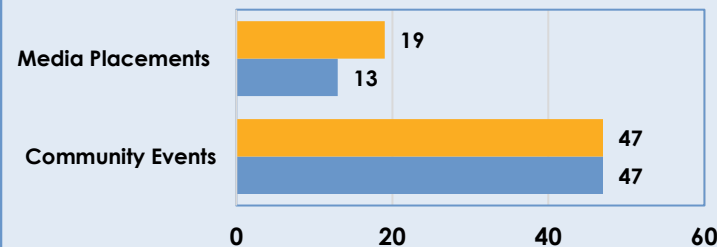
Consumer Outreach

Through community events and media placements

Consumers Reached



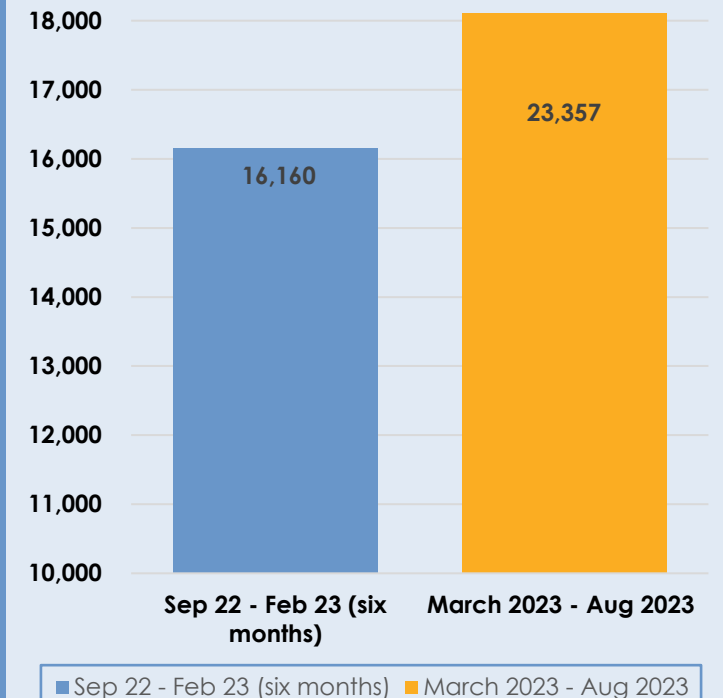
Number of Community Events/Media Placements



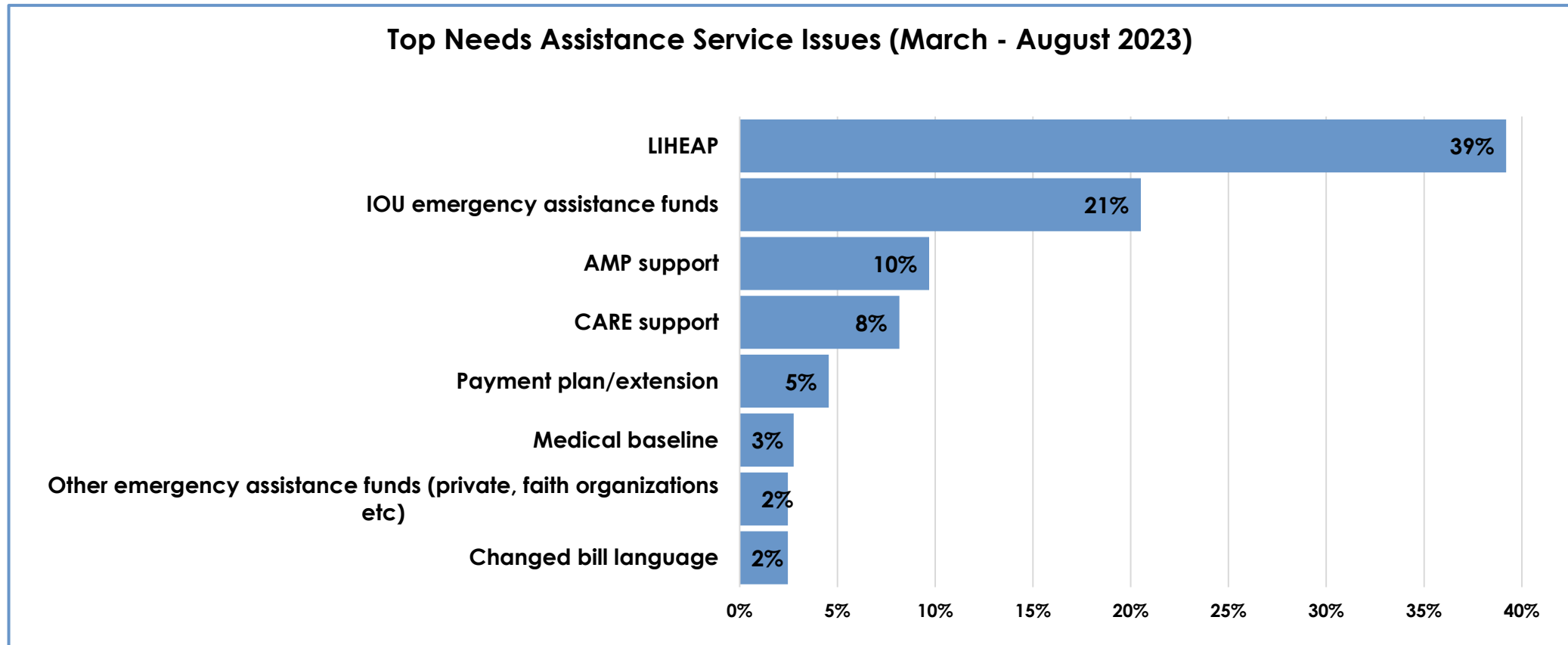
Consumer Education

Classes on various topics related to energy bills

Educational Class Attendance



Most Prevalent Case Assistance Services



LIHEAP, IOU/Non-IOU emergency funding & AMP represented 72% of all services

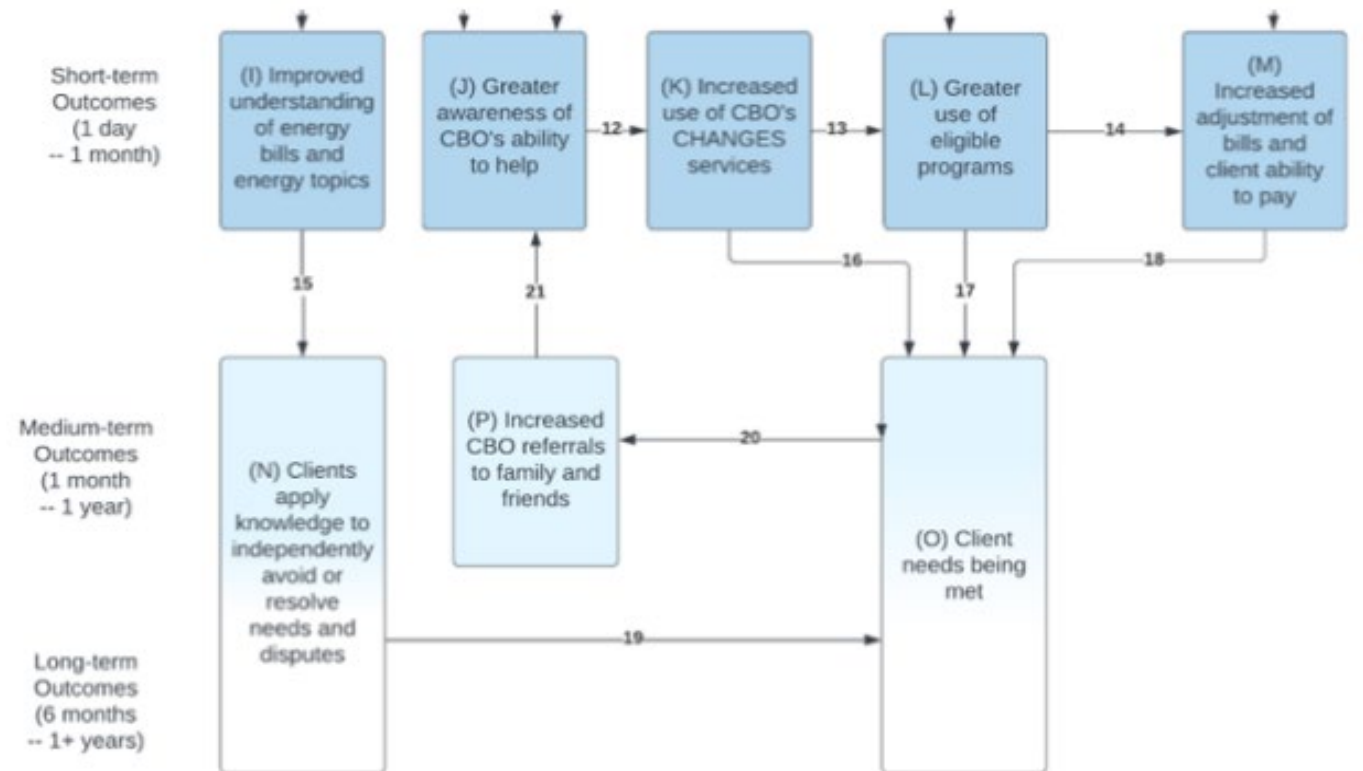
2023 CHANGES Evaluation

- The CPUC mandates that CHANGES Program be evaluated by an independent third-party firm.
- Opinion Dynamics assessed program delivery and effectiveness in key areas: Overall Performance, Data Collection, Program Value, Program Costs & Funding, Operations and Structure.
- Employed a mixed-methods research approach –used existing data and conducted stakeholder interviews & CHANGES client surveys.
- Study Period was 2019 – 2021.

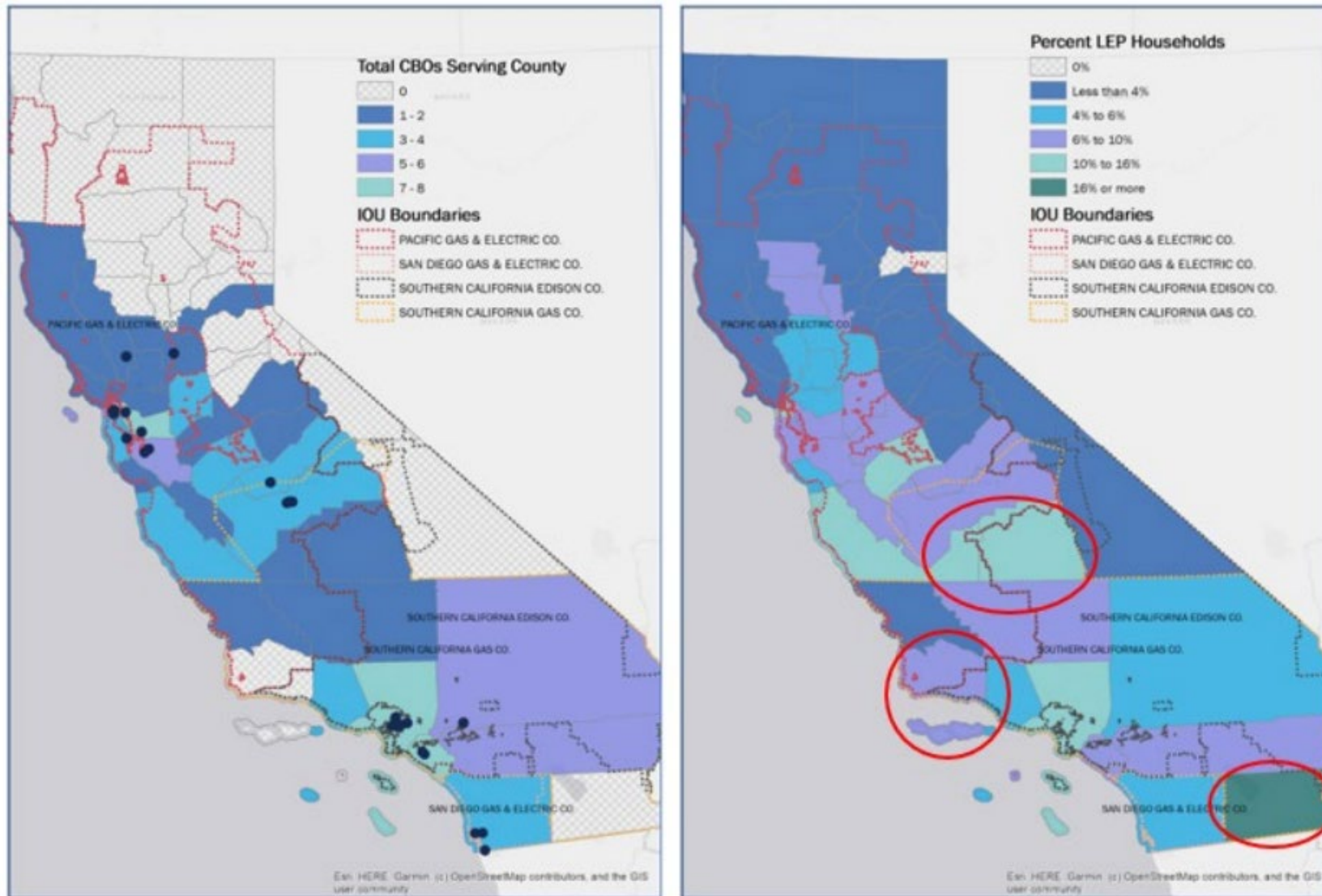
2023 CHANGES Evaluation - Overview

Similar to previous evaluation, evaluator assessed that the CHANGES Program is adhering to its core principles and serving the energy-related needs of LEP customers within the IOU territories.

PTLM – Short, Medium, and Long-Term Outcomes



CHANGES Evaluation – Geographical Analysis



2023 CHANGES Evaluation – recommendations

- Establish more specific **program metrics** to improve assessment of overall program performance e.g., statistics about repeat visits; counts of avoided disconnections, scams etc.
- **Data collection / database:** database field validation controls to minimize errors in data entry (zip code, email address etc.), improve naming conventions; enable CBOs to pull reports from database for invoices.
- **Funding recommendations:**
 - CPUC should revisit the basis for **the per unit cost** established for case assistance reimbursement - issues associated with time-intensive bill disputes; addressing multiple clients' needs; helping clients in small multi-jurisdictional utilities (SMJUs) and/or municipal utility territories (non-reimbursable).
 - Based on the services provided and the customers who benefit, funding the CHANGES Program through the CARE budget is appropriate:
 - ❖ 96% of CHANGES participants are eligible for CARE.
 - ❖ ensures that costs are recovered in rates to other non-low-income customers, aligned with best practices.
 - ❖ Switching to GRC source would have meant that CHANGES clients would pay for the program themselves via their rates.

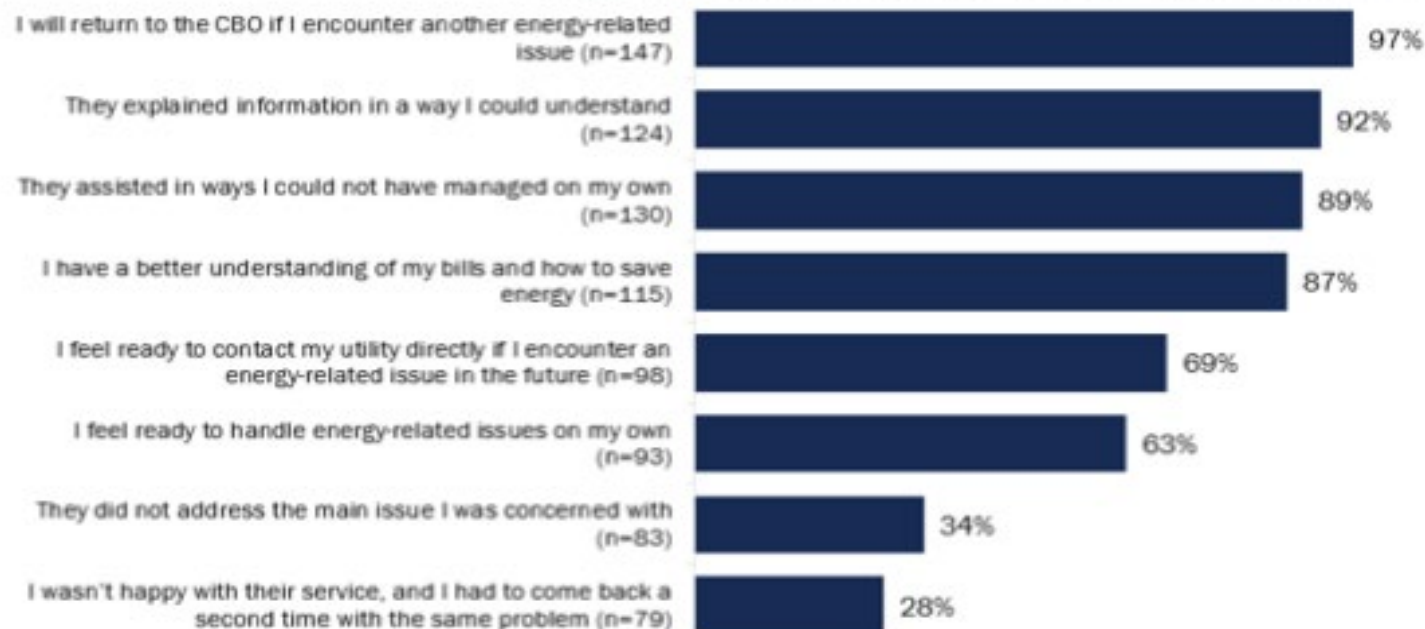
2023 CHANGES Evaluation – client survey

Survey sent in 5 different languages – Spanish, Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese, English with 221 responses



Surveyed CHANGES clients reported high levels of satisfaction with CBOs and nearly all reported they would return if they encountered another energy-related issue.

Client Feedback on Overall Experience with CBO



Conclusion

- Unprecedented increase in demand. Compared to the previous six months, case assistance is up by almost 38%, education attendance is up by 46%, and outreach (by potential reach of community events and media) is up by almost 300%.
- Financial challenges are driving the increases - LIHEAP, IOU/Non-IOU emergency funding & AMP represented 72% of all services
- Evaluation shows that program is meeting its core objective to support LEP consumers to manage their energy services
- Some improvements can be made in some areas, particularly data metrics, data entry, CBO case funding and geographical coverage (LA County and Central Valley)

Any questions?



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