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# CABHN FEVER

## Need Help with Income-Tax Preparation? VITA Sites Can Help!

VITA sites are located across the state of Connecticut, and are open from late January through mid-April. There is probably one in your neighborhood!

To find the VITA location most convenient for you, you can visit [www.ctfreetaxhelp.org](http://www.ctfreetaxhelp.org), or visit the 2-1-1 website. Appointments are preferred for most VITA sites; contact information and hours of operation for each site are available through 2-1-1 or the IRS website.



**What to bring with you to your VITA appointment:**

- Valid photo ID
- Social Security cards or Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN) for you, your spouse & any dependents living with you
- Birth dates for you, your spouse & dependents
- Documentation for all income from work, Social Security or pensions including forms W-2, 1099-R, etc.
- Documentation for any deductible education expenses & student loan payments from 2011
- Interest & dividend statements from banks or other financial institutions, if any (Forms 1099)
- Total \$ paid for child care in 2010. Bring day care provider's address and tax ID number (the provider's Social Security # or Employer Identification #)
- Copies of last year's Federal & State income tax returns, if available
- Current year's tax package, if you received one
- Voided check or checking account numbers if you want to have your refund direct deposited

And don't forget about the federal and state **Earned Income Tax Credit**

The EITC is widely regarded as the single most effective poverty-reduction program for working families in the United States. Working families with incomes up to \$49,000 (depending on household size) qualify for the federal EITC, which may provide a credit of up to \$5,657. Each year, over 150,000 Connecticut households in every rural, suburban, and urban community claim the EITC, bringing close to \$300 million directly into the pockets of working people. Working families with children and incomes between \$12,000 and \$18,000 usually benefit the most. A

combination of free tax preparation services at a VITA site and the potentially large return from the EITC can really help to boost a family's tight budget. The EITC can also provide the opportunity for a family to begin saving for the future, paying down debt, or investing in assets such as a home, small business, or higher education.

To find out if you qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), visit the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/article/0,,id=96406,00.html>.

*Information from Connecticut Association for Human Services*

## Connecticut Voices for Children Releases New Report

Connecticut Voices for Children has released a new report, "Taking Stock: Four Decades of State Revenues, Expenditures, and Deficits," that examines Connecticut's budget trends over the past forty years. According to CT Voices' report, state budget trends contradict some conventional views and concerns about taxes and spending in Connecticut. Connecticut's recent recession sparked controversy about the appropriate balance between revenue increases and spending cuts in closing the state's budget deficit. During the last recession, Connecticut policymakers closed a larger share of the deficit through spending cuts and smaller share through revenue increases than during previous recessions.

The reports, "Taking Stock: Four Decades of State Revenues, Expenditures, and Deficits" and "Making Sense of the Rankings: Where Connecticut Stands on Business Taxes," can be found on the organization's website, [www.ctkidslink.org](http://www.ctkidslink.org).

## Amend 2012

January 21 marks the second anniversary of the Supreme Court decision, Citizens United vs FEC, which has sparked record spending in national political campaigns, including hundreds of millions of dollars provided by undisclosed and virtually untraceable donors. Super PACs, born of the Citizens United decision, pose as independent but operate as subsidiaries of the campaigns.

Common Cause is launching a national campaign called Amend 2012 that will give Connecticut an opportunity to push back on corporate

**(See Amend p. 4)**

## **Ages and Stages Child Monitoring Program from United Way 2-1-1**



The Ages & Stages Child Monitoring Program offered by Help Me Grow, can help you learn about your child's development and identify potential delays as early as possible.

The Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3) provide a fun, interactive way to understand the many changes a child goes through.

ASQ-3 questionnaires are sent out at the following intervals: 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 42, 48, 54 and 60 months of age and are available in English and Spanish. You can begin the program at any age prior to your child's fifth birthday. Participation in this program is entirely voluntary and at no cost to you.

To begin the process complete the Online Ages and Stages Child Monitoring Program Enrollment Form (<https://intake.ctunitedway.org/>) or print out the paper enrollment form (<http://www.ctunitedway.org/CDI/docs/asq.pdf>) and send it to Child Development Infoline (CDI). At the appropriate age, a questionnaire will be mailed to you. A postage paid envelope will be included so you can return the completed questionnaire to CDI.

If the completed questionnaire shows that your infant, toddler or preschooler is developing on schedule, we will send you a letter telling you so and enclose some fun activities for you and your child to enjoy. We will mail the next age level questionnaire to you at the appropriate time.

If the completed questionnaire leads to a concern about your child's development, a Care Coordinator from Child Development Infoline will contact you to discuss those concerns. You may then choose to have their child's development evaluated through the Connecticut Birth to Three System, if your child is under age

three, or by the local school district, if your child is between three and five years old. If so, we can help you with this process.

Results of the questionnaires may also be sent to your child's primary health provider if you give consent.

*Mail Questionnaire to:*  
Child Development Infoline  
1344 Silas Deane Highway  
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

You can also fax the form to Child Development Infoline at 860-571-6853. For questions and information, please call Child Development Infoline at 1-800-505-7000.

### **FRAC Report: Low-Income Households' Struggle**

*From End Hunger CT! and the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)*

In December 2011, the Food Research and Action Center released "A Half Empty Plate: Fruit and Vegetable Affordability and Access Challenges in America," a report which found that households with incomes less than \$24,000 per year reported struggling to afford and access fresh fruits and vegetables 2.5 times more frequently (13.8%) than those with incomes between \$60,000 and \$89,999 (5.7%).

The report examines household ability to obtain affordable healthy food and looks at variables of race, income, health status, and geographic location down to the congressional district. FRAC analyzed the answers given by hundreds of thousands of survey respondents to a question posed for the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project: "In the city or area where you live, is it easy or not easy to get affordable fresh fruits and vegetables?" FRAC characterizes "not easy" answers as evidence of an affordability and access challenge.

The biggest differences observed were those between income groups and those experiencing food hardship (those who answered "yes" to the

question: "Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?") Among these households, 18.5% reported an inability to afford and access healthy foods, while only 5.7% of households without food hardship reported these challenges.

FRAC proposes the following actions to address these disparities: increase the adequacy of SNAP benefits; reject recent Congressional proposals to reduce SNAP benefits; increase outreach for SNAP and streamline administration at the state level and more community efforts to increase outlets offering healthy food.

How did Connecticut fare?

Between 2008 and 2010, Connecticut, with a rank of 29th, 9.2% of households with children had difficulty accessing healthy produce. Households without children in CT ranked 34th with 7.9% rate of difficulty.

Read the full report at [http://frac.org/pdf/half\\_empty\\_plate\\_dec2011.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/half_empty_plate_dec2011.pdf).

### **Plan C: The People's Budget of Connecticut**

The Community Party is organizing support for an alternative budget. Plan C: The People's Budget of CT is based on an economic justice plan which consists of five elements. 1) A progressive income tax. 2) Corporate tax reform. 3) A public bank for Connecticut. 4) Public assistance reform. 5) A return of war dollars to the state. The budget also includes targeted job creation for communities of color and foreclosure protection for homeowners.

Meetings are open for the Public Assistance Reform Committee and are coordinated by Mary L. Sanders, Exec. Dir. of the Spanish Speaking Center of New Britain. To get involved, contact Mary through the Community Party (860-206-8879 or [samuelsloflo@aol.com](mailto:samuelsloflo@aol.com)). Visit <http://www.facebook.com/CommunityPartyAction>

*Submitted by David Samuels, Founder, Community Party*

## State Basic Health Program – A New Choice for Low-Income Residents in 2014

The State Basic Health Program is an option in federal health care reform which allows states to establish a health care program for individuals not eligible for Medicaid with incomes between 133% and 200% of the federal poverty level. The Program would not be available until federal health care reform is implemented in January of 2014.

If established by Connecticut, eligible individuals would not enter the Health Insurance Exchange in 2014. Instead, the State Basic Health Program would provide health care coverage for these individuals. State Basic Health Programs are funded by the federal government, which provides funding to the state instead of spending federal funds on subsidies in the Exchange.

The State Basic Health Program can be structured to:

- offer quality, affordable health care to low-income residents of the state not currently eligible for federal health care programs and
- be cost-neutral to the state, or even save the state money.

The state must decide to implement a State Basic Health Program and should do so this year as it is developing its Health Insurance Exchange.

With funding from the Connecticut Health Foundation and research from the Center for Health Law and Economics of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, the Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut (LARCC) has developed a research brief on this issue. The brief will be released and will be available on our website, [www.larcc.org](http://www.larcc.org), by February 1st.

**New Resource Available** - Greg Kaufmann, a writer for The Nation magazine, has launched “This Week in Poverty,” a once-a-week resource aimed at raising awareness and garnering advocacy around issues that affect low-income Americans. The feature will post every Friday and can be accessed at <http://www.thenation.com/blogs/greg-kaufmann>.

## Legal Services Program Brings Statewide Class Action Against DSS For Delays

On January 9, New Haven Legal Assistance Association filed a statewide class action lawsuit in federal district court against the Department of Social Services (DSS) over extensive delays in processing applications for Medicaid in violation of federal law. Federal law requires that most Medicaid applications be processed, and a determination made, within 45 days. As caseloads have increased, DSS has failed to process applications for benefits and redetermination requests in the amount of time allowed by law.

The complaint attributes these delays to a dramatic decline in the number of eligibility workers over the last decade coupled with a dramatic increase in both applications and worker caseloads. The lawsuit seeks immediate injunctive relief to require the prompt processing of the huge backlog of Medicaid applications.

In the last 19 months, DSS has received an average of 10,000 new applications for Medicaid each month, compared to an average of 8,300 in 2004. According to DSS data, during this 19-month time period, an average of 4,600 applications, representing an average of 45% of all applications pending at the end of the month, were delayed in violation of federal law. For November 2011, however, the number illegally delayed jumped to an unprecedented 55% and climbed to 56% in December.

The delay problems at DSS involved in the lawsuit extend beyond processing initial applications for Medicaid. Sometimes needy individuals are found to be eligible for Medicaid except that they have income over the Medicaid guidelines. They are given a “spend down” amount.

When they have submitted medical bills equal to that amount, they can start receiving Medicaid for up to 6 months. But DSS workers are unable to review medical bills submitted by these individuals — for days or even weeks. During this time Medicaid coverage is not provided.

Because Medicaid applications and annual reviews are not processed in a timely manner, individuals who continue to be eligible for Medicaid and who have submitted their annual redetermination forms, are routinely cut off from Medicaid.

Cuts in eligibility worker staffing in DSS offices throughout the state and a marked increase in Medicaid caseloads are contributing to the delays.

Some facts:

- In the last ten years, the number of Medicaid enrollees has increased by about 52%.
- During this same time period, the total number of DSS employees has dropped by about 20%. There were 845 DSS employees (for all programs) specifically involved in eligibility determinations in July 2002; today there are only about 558, a 30% drop.
- Today, the caseload of workers is around 1,750 for all programs and in some cases, as high as 2,400.

Plaintiffs’ counsel invite other individuals who have applied for Medicaid and been unable to obtain a timely decision to contact them.

*For further information, please contact:*

► Sheldon Toubman  
(203)946-4811, ext. 148  
[stoubman@nhlegal.org](mailto:stoubman@nhlegal.org)

► Shelley White  
(203) 946-4811, ext. 116  
[shwhite@nhlegal.org](mailto:shwhite@nhlegal.org)



## Help Needed To Plan Reentry

### Employment Fair

The Chrysalis Center's Employment Support Network in Hartford will be hosting an Employment Roundtable on Thursday, February 9th, 2012. The focus will be to plan Hartford's 2nd Annual Reentry Employment and Resource Fair. This is an opportunity for reentry programs to collaborate together to plan the upcoming reentry employment fair for people reentering the community post-incarceration. Last year's fair had over 250 participants, with 30 employers present for recruitment. The planning event will be from 2:00 – 4:00 pm at 255 Homestead Ave. in Hartford (please enter from the back of the building).

## Amend (cont. from p.3)

political spending, and build toward national referenda calling on Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to reverse Citizens United.

The Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United overturned decades of law and granted corporations the same rights as people when it comes to political spending. If you would like to sign the petition to reverse Citizens United, go to [www.amend2012.org](http://www.amend2012.org).

Common Cause is a non-profit, non-partisan citizens lobby dedicated to improving the way government works and increasing civic engagement.

## Upcoming CABHN/FESN Meeting

The next meeting  
will be  
**February 17, 2012**

**9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M**

**Location:  
To Be Announced**

*The Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs (CABHN) is a statewide network of individuals, community groups and organizations which supports and promotes advocacy on low-income issues. For more information, please call (860) 278-5688.*

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**Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT and  
CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)**  
44 Capitol Ave., Suite 301  
Hartford, CT 06106