

Highlights in this issue:

Changes to HUSKY.....p2
Virtual Food Drive.....p2
Jobs Special Session Summary.....p3
Super Committee Update.....p3

CABHN FEVER

Delays In Processing Applications for Food and Health Care Assistance

In these already troubled financial times, low-income people in Connecticut are having difficulty getting the help they are entitled to, when they need it the most. As caseloads at the Department of Social Services have increased, application processing for benefits has become very slow. For some time, DSS has failed to process applications for benefits and redetermination requests in the amount of time allowed by law. This can result in a delay in an individual or family receiving vitally important assistance or in an unjustified loss of benefits. The articles below describe ways you may be able to help speed up processing of applications for food and health care assistance.

Health Care Assistance

Under federal law, DSS has to complete processing Medicaid applications in 45 days. If an application is based on disability, the deadline is 90 days. Over 5,000 applications are delayed beyond the legal limit each month. Each application represents at least one person, and could include an entire family with children.

Many legal services clients have experienced significant hardship as a result of DSS not processing applications and redeterminations in the legal time-frame. To address this problem, it is important to have cases of affected people willing to tell their stories.

Referrals Needed:

If someone you know has ongoing medical needs and has been waiting long past the deadline for DSS to act on a Medicaid or HUSKY application, or has been cut off of Medicaid despite providing required information for a redetermination, please refer them to legal services as soon as possible.

Contact: Sheldon Toubman
 New Haven Legal Assistance Association,
 203-946-4811, ext. 148
 or stoubman@nhlegal.org

SNAP (formerly Food Stamps)

Individuals and families applying for SNAP (formerly food stamps) are seeing long delays of weeks or even months, before they get benefits. As a result, folks are finding it much more difficult to put food on the table.

Under federal law, DSS must provide SNAP benefits to eligible people within 30 days after they apply.

For households in immediate financial need, federal law requires food stamps to be provided no later than 7 days after they apply.

Referrals Needed:

The attorneys at Greater Hartford Legal Aid are interested in talking to individuals who have:

- Applied to DSS for SNAP (food stamps);
- and
- *have not* received their benefits, despite waiting for more than 30 days for a decision from DSS after they applied.

If individuals in these circumstances are willing to talk with GHLA or if you have questions about these issues, please call one of the following attorneys:

Lucy Potter, (860)541-5002; Greg Bass, (860)541-5018; Cecil Thomas, (860) 541-5017; Susan Garten, (860) 541-5020



Operation Fuel

Operation Fuel fuel banks opened its winter program on Monday 11/14. There is \$1.1 million available so it's important to apply soon.

Program information:

- Grant amount will be up to \$500
- Grants can be used for all heating sources, gas/electric utilities, oil, propane, wood, coal, pellets etc.
- Households with income up to 200% FPL can apply if they have exhausted all energy assistance benefits, or if they do not have an appointment for energy assistance within 30 days of the Operation Fuel date application.

To find a fuel bank, contact Infoline at 2-1-1. Here are the income guidelines for assistance.

200 % of Federal Poverty Level		
Household Size	Monthly Income	Annual Income
1	\$1,816	\$21,780
2	\$2,452	\$29,420
3	\$3,090	\$37,060
4	\$3,726	\$44,700
5	\$4,362	\$52,340
6	\$5,000	\$59,980

The state energy assistance program will not pay for fuel deliveries until Nov. 15 (In prior years, the date was Nov. 1).

Note: Applications from utility-heated households (households which heat with electricity or gas) should be handled by CAAs on the same timetable as other applications. Processing or accepting these applications should not be delayed. There is a serious risk that funds will run out this year and households with delayed applications may end up

(See Op Fuel pg. 4)

Important Changes to the HUSKY Program

In January 2012, all individuals covered by Medicaid will be served by the new administrative services organization (ASO) - **Community Health Network of Connecticut (CHNCT)**. The entire Medicaid (and HUSKY B) program will be known as "HUSKY Health". The ASO will be responsible for member and provider services, utilization management, intensive care management (for high risk populations), quality management, and support of the new medical home practices (doctors' offices that coordinate care for their patients). DSS will be responsible for enrolling providers in its medical assistance program and paying the providers. DSS contracts with Hewlett-Packard (HP) to carry out these tasks.

HUSKY Name Extended to other Medicaid Programs

All Medicaid and HUSKY B clients will automatically become part of the new HUSKY Health program. As of January 2012:

- **HUSKY A** remains Medicaid for families, children and pregnant women;
- **HUSKY B** remains CHIP coverage for children;
- **HUSKY C** will be the new name for Medicaid for "Aged, Blind & Disabled," referred to as ABD; and
- **HUSKY D** will be the new name for Medicaid for "Low Income Adults," referred to as LIA

Connecticut Food Bank Hosts Virtual Food Drive

Connecticut Food Bank is launching its Thanksgiving for All campaign, a series of events and food drives hosted and sponsored by local civic and religious organizations, charitable foundations, businesses, media and supermarkets which help Connecticut Food Bank make Thanksgiving special for thousands of our neighbors in danger of going without a holiday meal.

If you can't make it to a food drive or event, you can still help by buying a turkey or some of the trimmings online at our Virtual Food Drive. (<http://vad.aidmatrix.org/vadxml.cfm?driveid=3846>) ►

HUSKY B Coverage for Children with "Limited Scope" Plans

Generally, children must be uninsured for at least 2 months to be eligible for HUSKY B, although there are exceptions. A new exception has been added. Families will no longer have to drop "limited scope" plans in order for their children to be eligible for HUSKY B. Typically, limited scope plans are those that only cover, for example, dental services, accident-related care, or school accident care.

When in doubt, contact the HUSKY Program at 1-877-CT-HUSKY (1-877-284-8759).

The bottom line is that families will no longer be told by the HUSKY Program that they have to drop a limited coverage plan in order for their children to qualify for HUSKY B coverage.

The Community Action Committee of Danbury is in urgent need of donations for The Thanksgiving Basket Program. Please contact Elizabeth Garron (203)885-1076 x805 or Jennifer Miller x809 and visit www.cacd-caa.org

Changes to HUSKY A, HUSKY B and Charter Oak

As of January 1, 2012, the managed care plans (AmeriChoice, Aetna Better Health, and CHNCT) will no longer administer the medical benefits of HUSKY A, HUSKY B and Charter Oak enrollees. Instead, providers will be enrolled in the Connecticut Medical Assistance Program (CMAP) network. Most health providers that serve HUSKY A, HUSKY B and Charter Oak enrollees are already enrolled in CMAP. However, DSS is advising current enrollees to check with their doctors and other health providers to make sure they are signed up with CMAP. Current members will remain enrolled in HUSKY or Charter Oak through December 31, 2011. At the end of October new HUSKY or Charter Oak members will no longer be enrolled in managed care. Instead, they will be covered by "fee-for-service".

Note: HUSKY A, HUSKY B and Charter Oak basic benefits are NOT changing. (There may be an occasional situation where a benefit offered by an MCO is not offered under CMAP.) In addition, behavioral health, dental and pharmacy benefits are not changing.

HUSKY and Charter Oak members are receiving a special notice this month telling them of the upcoming changes. In October, DSS issued a Provider Bulletin (PB 77) explaining the changes to the provider community and is taking other steps to outreach to in-state and out-of-state providers.

*12/21/2011 - National Homeless Person's Memorial Day, Stamford, CT
Call Patricial Gallegos for more info (203) 327-5111 FCCstamford.org*

In 2010, "**Thanksgiving for All**" collected enough turkeys and trimmings for more than 790,000 meals for those in need during the holiday season.

The best way to help is to donate! A donation of \$10, a few hours of your time or five food items can impact the lives of your friends, families and neighbors who continue to struggle to put food on the table.

For every \$10 donated, Connecticut Food Bank can distribute \$50 worth of food at wholesale value.

Jobs Special Session Summary

In a special session devoted to jobs on October 26, the legislature passed HB 6801, a bill aimed at creating jobs in the state. The bill was passed with overwhelmingly bipartisan support and signed by the Governor on October 27. The legislation is over 100 pages long and has dozens of sections; its main goals are to provide job training and tax incentives for businesses that create jobs. Some of the more notable provisions include:

- Provides \$50 million in subsidies to small businesses to pay for part of the cost of hiring and training new workers. The subsidy is available for the first 6 months after a new worker is hired. To qualify, the new hire must be unemployed immediately before being hired, reside in a city with a high unemployment rate or a population of 80,000 or more, or have family income below 250% of the federal poverty level
- Replaces three existing tax credit programs with a new job expansion tax credit program for businesses that create new jobs and hire certain Connecticut residents to fill them. There are special incentives for hiring people with disabilities, veterans and people who are receiving or have recently received unemployment benefits
- Authorizes the state to provide \$100 million in loans to small businesses, with loan amounts ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000
- Provides state assistance to five business development projects for businesses that create at least 200 new jobs
- Creates public/private partnerships in which the state will assist in maintaining certain facilities and will pay for as much as 25% of a project's cost
- Creates airport development zones in which businesses get property tax relief and corporate business tax credits

Congressional "Super Committee" Update

In October's CABHN fever, we discussed the creation of the "Super Committee" which was charged with recommending ways to reduce the federal deficit by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. If a majority of the Committee agrees on a plan it will be sent to the House and Senate and to the President. Thus far, the Committee appears to agree on cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, and discretionary spending but differ on the focus of these cuts and whether there is room for increased tax revenues. The outcome of their negotiations will force Congress to choose between automatic cuts to defense and discretionary domestic spending and the Super Committee's recommendations.

At the beginning of November, Republican and Democratic members of the Super Committee offered competing proposals for consideration. The Republican plan proposes about \$3 trillion in deficit reduction over the next 10 years. Their plan includes cuts of about \$500 billion to Medicare with fourth-fifths of that coming from higher fees and reductions of benefits to program participants. Their proposals would also cut about \$185 billion from Medicaid and cut other mandatory spending by \$685 billion. There are no tax increases included in the Republican plan.

The plan recently released by Democrats on the Super Committee focuses more heavily on cuts than previous plans. The new plan proposes about \$4.1 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years. The proposal includes about \$475 billion in both Medicaid and Medicare cuts, about \$200 billion less than the Republican plan. The most noticeable difference between the proposals is the inclusion of revenue increases. The Democrats propose a \$1.3 trillion increase in revenues over 10 years.

A final deal has not yet been reached with the Republicans adamant about a refusal to raise taxes. Recently

Erksine Bowles, co-chair of President Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, recommended at a joint committee hearing that the final deal combine the current plans, focusing on deeper cuts to Medicare/Medicaid and including some tax increases. Whether members of either party will be willing to make these compromises has yet to be seen. The Committee has until November 23 to finalize its recommendations and December 2nd to approve them.

CT Parent Advocacy Center Offers Workshops

Exploring the Tools of Self-Advocacy, Tues., 11/29/2011

Participants will receive information about the tools available to help students learn self-advocacy skills and identify the skills necessary for students' success. All three workshops will be held from 6pm to 8pm at Middlesex YMCA located at 99 Union Street in Middletown, Connecticut. Register online at www.cpacinc.org/workshop-registration or contact CPAC at 1-800-445-2722 or cpac@cpacinc.org.

2-1-1 Resource for Vets and Active Military

In cooperation with CT Dept. of Veterans Affairs, United Way 2-1-1 has published an online directory of resources for veterans, active duty and National Guard and Reserves. To access the directory, visit <http://www.211ct.org/Documents/vetresources.pdf>.



For info and Q&A's on open enrollment for the Medicare Part D drug program (10/15 thru 12/07) Please go to: <https://salsa.democracynaction.org/o/1650/images/OpenEnrollmentFAQ.pdf>

Op Fuel (cont. from p.1)

with no energy assistance. If you are told you cannot apply for assistance because you heat with electricity or gas, or if your appointment to apply is scheduled far in the future, you should call Infoline at 2-1-1 and ask for the names and contact information for other nearby places to apply for energy assistance or file a written request for a "desk review" with the executive director of the CAA and a fair hearing with the Department of Social Services (25 Sigourney St., Hartford, CT 06106).

Food Loss During

Many suffered loss of food during the recent extended electric outages. To help compensate for some of these losses, DSS will be providing all SNAP (food stamp) recipients with 15% additional benefits in November.

SNAP and Cash- Assistance Benefits Can Pay for OTC Meds

As a result of a state law change in 2010, adults (over the age of 21) no longer have Medicaid coverage for over-the-counter (OTC) medications with the exception of insulin and insulin syringes. DSS clients who receive cash benefits (TFA or State Supplement) or SNAP (Food Stamps) may use these benefits to help pay for OTC medications. There are no restrictions placed on the use of cash benefits for this purpose. SNAP does carry some limitations. For example, SNAP benefits may not be used to purchase vitamins and supplements that come without a nutrition label or cough drops. For more information, please see DSS Provider Bulletin 2010-26, issued in May 2010. (<http://www.ctkidslink.org/media/other/DSSOTCBulletin102611.pdf>)

Upcoming CABHN/FESN Meeting

**The next meeting
will be**

January, 2012

Location:

To Be Announced

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



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.

Return Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG
U S POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD CT
PERMIT NO 3377

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