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CABHN FEVER

Important Changes for HUSKY Participants

On April 1, HUSKY A and B participants enrolled in the WellCare/ Preferred One and Health Net/Healthy Options plans were moved out of those plans and into plans administered by CHNCT or Anthem Blue Care Family Plan or directly by DSS through traditional Medicaid (also known as “fee for service”) for most of their health care services. (Behavioral health services are being administered separately by the Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership, and pharmacy benefits are being run directly by the Department of Social Services (DSS).) HUSKY participants now in traditional Medicaid, most of whom were assigned to this plan because they did not pick a different plan, may find that some of their providers are not participating in this program; the same may be true of individuals who chose CHNCT or Anthem. **Note that an individual can switch to a different plan in which all or most of their providers are enrolled at any time.**

Help us identify problems with the switch to this new system!



A one-page survey to identify problems caused by the requirement that HUSKY participants change administrators on April 1 is available in both English and Spanish at www.LARCC.org. The survey seeks to identify any access problems early, so that they can be corrected and this major transition in the HUSKY program can be run as smoothly as possible.

Please circulate this survey among HUSKY participants and providers and return the surveys to: Sheldon Toubman, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, 426 State St., New Haven, CT 06510, Phone: 203-946-4811, ext. 148, Fax: 203-498-9271. Also call this number if you have a story

about access problems but do not have access to the internet.

HUSKY participants can also contact the Department of Social Services at 1-877-CT-HUSKY, for assistance with individual problems about access to providers.

Take Action to Respond to HUSKY Changes

Under current plans, HUSKY participants will be required to go through another transition to a different set of administering agencies by July 1, 2008. Advocates and legislators are working to delay this second transition until at least January of 2010 and to conduct a study of the most effective way to provide HUSKY health care.

HB 5618, An Act Concerning Revisions to the HUSKY Plan, would mandate this delay and study. To indicate your support for this bill, call the Governor’s office toll-free at (800) 406-1527 and your legislators (see page 3).

Caregiver Respite Camp



July 28 - Aug 2, 2008

The Salvation Army’s Camp CONNRI in Ashford, CT, sets aside a special week (~~Aug 14-19~~) as Caregivers Respite Camp. The week is targeted to adults who are now full time caregivers to their grandchildren or relative. While the adults enjoy the pleasures of this vacation, their camper-age relatives have special time at youth camp. Workshops on issues related to raising a second generation, relaxation techniques, stress reduction, trips to special places, and recreational opportunities are all available to caregivers. Participants, during this week only, do not have to be 50 years or older. Costs for this week are underwritten by special donations, with the exception of sliding scale →

Free Meals for Kids in the Summer!

End Hunger CT!, Hartford’s Recreation Division, and Hartford School Food Service have teamed up to make sure more children benefit from the Hartford Summer Feeding Program through the federal Summer Food Service Program. Lunches are served in Hartford schools, parks, and community centers during the summer months and are FREE to all children 18 and under-no catches. More information and details to come.

Young Entrepreneur Program

The Capitol Region Conference of Churches’ Young Entrepreneurs Program is funded by the United Way of the Capitol Area and the Long Foundation. This program serves young men and women within the ages of 17 and 24 by teaching them how to leave the “hustle” of the street and start micro-enterprises to enhance their economic security.

The Young Entrepreneurs Program is based on the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship curriculum which provides innovative and hands-on training for young people. The program also provides entrepreneurship Neighborhood Life Coaches for ongoing support; and partners with faith and community based organizations.

To learn more about the Young Entrepreneurs Program in Connecticut, call (860) 236-1295 ext. 18. Enrollment is free.

registration fees. For more information on week-long summer Senior Vacations or special weekends, contact Majors Ronald and Pamela Santmyer at (860) 429-6840. For information on children’s summer camp dates, fees and scholarship availability, please call (860) 543-8400.

Legal Protection From Utility Shut-Offs

Utility customers have legal protection against shut-offs under Connecticut law when a member of a customer's household is seriously ill, or a lack of utility service would cause a life-threatening situation.

If a lack of gas or electric utility service would endanger the life of a member of a utility customer's household, service must be provided year-round, even if the customer does not make payments to the utility. A physician must certify that the lack of service would create a life-threatening situation in order to get this protection.

The customer will still owe the utility bills and service could be shut off when the life-threatening situation no longer exists. The utility could also take other steps to collect the debt such as suing the customer.

During the winter shut-off moratorium (November 1 to May 1), utilities are barred from cutting off gas, electric and water utility service to many categories of customers. One way to avoid having your utilities shut off during the moratorium is to have a physician certify that a member of the customer's household has a serious illness.

The customer will still owe any bills that accumulate and the household could have service shut off between May 1 and October 31 if the customer doesn't make and keep a payment agreement with the utility.

Each utility has its own physician certification form, as well as its own procedures for accessing the protection of the law in these situations.

Any utility customer has the right to a reasonable payment agreement when there is a debt to the utility. Affordable payment agreements are particularly important where a lack of service could jeopardize the health or survival of someone in the household. Special arrearage forgiveness programs are available each fall from the utility which provides heat to the household, provided the customer receives energy

assistance for that utility. UI and CL&P also have special payment programs for their non-heat customers.

Each utility company also has a program for "thirdparty notification" in which a customer can ask that another person get notice if service is scheduled to be shut off. This is potentially a life-saving program for customers who have difficulty understanding or paying their bills, but very few vulnerable customers are using it.

On January 31st, the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) held a hearing regarding the policies and practices of gas and electric utility companies when a member of a customer's household is seriously ill or a lack of utility service would cause a life-threatening situation. The utilities whose practices are being reviewed include: SCG, CNG, Yankee Gas, CL&P and UI, and the municipal utilities around the state. A decision has not yet been issued by the DPUC, but it could result in changes in how the utilities handle such situations.

Pulling Apart in Connecticut



Over the last two decades, the gaps in average, inflation-adjusted ("real") income between wealthy and poor Connecticut families and between wealthy and middle-income families have grown more in Connecticut than in any other state in the country. While real income for the poorest families in the state has declined since the late 1980s by 17%, the largest drop of any state, the wealthiest families have enjoyed an increase in their real income of 45%. Middle-income families have seen little change in their real incomes, which increased by only 5.1%. This percentage trend for middle-income residents was the worst among all states.

Connecticut is the only state in which real income for the poorest fifth of families declined significantly →

CT Housing "Out of Reach" for Many

"Out of Reach," the annual report prepared by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, concludes that full-time work does not provide enough income for many families to afford a modest apartment in Connecticut.

Some findings from the report:

- *A person must earn \$21.11 an hour to afford the rent for a modest two-bedroom apartment in Connecticut;*
- *A person earning the state's minimum wage of \$7.65 per hour must work nearly three full-time jobs to afford the statewide fair market rent of \$1,098 per month for a two-bedroom apartment;*
- *In terms of annual income, a Connecticut household must earn \$43,911 a year to afford a typical two-bedroom rental;*
- *The Stamford-Norwalk metropolitan area is the most expensive rental market in the entire country—surpassing cities such as Honolulu and San Francisco*

For more data on Connecticut and other states, please go to: <http://www.nlihc.org> and click on **Out of Reach.**

since the late 1980s. The average income of the wealthiest fifth of Connecticut families is 8 times greater than the income of the poorest fifth, compared to 4.6 times in the late 1980s. The wealthiest families have income 2.7 times that of middle-income families, compared to 1.9 times in the late 1980s. Both of these increases in income inequality are the greatest among all states. For the full report, *Pulling Apart in Connecticut: Trends in Family Income*, go to Connecticut Voices for Children website: http://www.ctkidslink.org/pub_detail_408.html

Submitted by Doug Hall, Phd., Connecticut Voices for Children.

Appropriations Committee Releases Budget Proposal

The Appropriations Committee released their \$18.4 billion budget on March 26. The Committee's proposal came in at \$110 million less than the Governor's version and was also \$21 million less than the 2009 budget crafted last year. The final budget will be negotiated based largely on these proposals. The Committee's plan requires no new taxes but relies on unspent money allocated to CT's Medicaid program over the years. Highlights of the Appropriations Committee bill include:

- Medicaid interpreter program continued. Governor's budget proposed elimination.
- No change in the definition of medical necessity.
- \$1.5 million to restore podiatry and chiropractic as Medicaid optional services;
- \$10 million for increased nursing home staffing;
- Hospice coverage for Medicaid;
- Requirement that nurses administer medication in residential care and boarding homes
- \$350,000 for Child Poverty and Prevention Council recommendations - \$150,000 to fatherhood initiative, \$50,000 to expand teen pregnancy prevention, \$150,000 for 5 pilots for first time parents on TFA;
- \$50,000 to expedite SAGA medical for those leaving prison;

Victory For Low Income Tenants!



After months of campaigning, the Public Housing Residents Network has succeeded in getting the Connecticut legislature to correct a mistake it made last year. On April 7, Governor Rell signed a bill restoring \$3.9 million in funding for two 40-year-old low-income housing programs that were defunded in last year's budget. The defunding appears to have been the result of a legislative misunderstanding of the likely impact of the loss of these state funds.

Under the public housing PILOT (Payments In Lieu Of Taxes) program, the state pays the property tax obligations of housing authorities that manage state-financed family public housing in the Moderate Rental Housing program. Twenty-two housing authorities with more than 4,200 units of such housing participate in the program. The loss of funding would have forced rents up an average of \$68 per unit per month, and much more in some developments. Moderate Rental Housing includes such developments as Bowles Park and Westbrook Village in Hartford, Oak Park and Lawn Hill in Stamford, Bates Woods and Briarcliff in New London, and Sunset Ridge and Rockwood Acres in Middletown. Rent increases in Seymour and Enfield, which had been implemented on January 1, will be rolled back retroactively.

Under the Tax Abatement Program, the state pays a portion of the property tax for more than 6,000 units of privately-owned subsidized housing developments, most of them owned by non-profits. Both elderly and family housing are included. The new law requires a rollback of any rent increases based on the original defunding of this program.

If you or your organization would like to receive CABHN Fever by email or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact dbrown@larcc.org or call 860-278-5688.

Second Chance Act of 2007

On Wednesday, April 9th, 2008, President Bush signed the Second Chance Act of 2007 into law. This Act authorizes \$362 million to expand community programs and services available for those preparing to re-enter or who have transitioned back into their communities following incarceration, as well as extending supports available to children whose parents are incarcerated.

An estimated 650,000 people are released from prison each year, and approximately two-thirds of these individuals are re-arrested within three years.

This legislation offers a different approach to criminal justice that focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration rather than solely devoting dollars to the punishment of crime. Emphasis will be on programs that provide housing, drug treatment, education and employment as well as faith based mentoring programs.

Examples of specific services to be funded under the legislation include:

- Mentoring programs
- Drug treatment during and post-incarceration
- Education and job training
- Alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenses
- Supportive services for children whose parents are incarcerated

www.sentencingproject.org.



Call Your Legislator!

House Dems 1-800-842-1902
House Reps 1-800-842-1423
Senate Dems 1-800-842-1420
Senate Reps 1-800-842-1421
Gov's Office 1-800-406-1527

Save the Dates! Housing Fairs



Are you having trouble paying your mortgage because your adjustable rate mortgage has reset?

If you are worried about foreclosure or making your next mortgage payment for ANY REASON, register to attend one of the upcoming Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) Housing Fairs.

Upcoming fairs:

*April 25&26 - Hartford, CT
Convention Center*

*May 16&17 - Bridgeport
Holiday Inn*

*May 30 & 31 - New Haven Omni
Hotel at Yale*

Fairs are Fridays 2-8PM and
Saturdays 9AM-1PM

Learn about the Expanded CT FAMILIES Program and other refinancing programs; foreclosure prevention, legal rights, loss mitigation and credit counseling.

Register by contacting the CHFA Call Center at 860-571-3500 or send an email including your name and address to housingfairs@CHFA.org. For updates, check out www.CHFA.org under "News and Events."

Upcoming Utility Days!

New London – Saturday, 5/3/08
9am-3pm, OIC of New London
County, 106 Truman St.

Stamford - Saturday, 5/10/08, 9am-
3pm, CTE, 34 Woodland Ave.

Meriden - Saturday, 5/17/08,
9am-3pm, Yankee Gas, 56 Cooper
Street

Utility Days are for low income customers of CL&P and Yankee Gas utility companies who have some type of income. Budget counseling is provided, but not direct cash assistance. Questions? Call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320.

CABHN Meetings

Upcoming Meeting

CABHN/FESN Meeting

Friday, June 6

9:30-11:30 am

**Community Renewal Team
(CRT)**

555 Windsor St., Hartford

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

Connecticut Alliance For Basic Human Needs

44 Capitol Avenue, Suite 301, Hartford, CT 06106

Phone (860) 278-5688 Fax (860) 278-2957

April, 2008

Dear Friend,

2008 brings new resources and new challenges to CABHN. We have recently hired a full-time Coordinator, Ellen Small. This will enable us to reinvigorate our work with the community and explore new ways of delivering information and services to you. **We are writing to request that you help us continue and expand the work of CABHN by making a financial donation.**

In 2007, with your help, we:

- **published ten issues of *CABHN Fever***, with articles updating readers on health care, welfare and other important state and federal issues;
- convened seven joint meetings of **CABHN** and the **Family Economic Success Network**. Since June, we have placed special emphasis on exploring strategies to advance the work of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council; and
- maintained an **e-mail alert and information network** for immediate contact with the most active members of CABHN.

In the coming year, we will continue the monthly publication of *CABHN Fever* and we will explore new ways to reach community members, including developing an electronic version of the newsletter. We will also continue to convene regular meetings of the CABHN/FESN network of advocates and activists in the Hartford area and we are exploring the best formats for a series of regional meetings outside Hartford.

Ellen will be meeting with people in the community to provide needed information and to learn how we can be most helpful to community activists. Ellen brings experience and a particular interest in ex-offender re-entry issues. We will, of course, continue to be a resource on welfare, health care, housing and employment issues.

Your support is particularly important to ensure that *CABHN Fever* continues to be printed and distributed. **Since 1992, the printing and mailing of *CABHN Fever* has been possible because organizations and individuals like you have recognized its importance and made donations to CABHN.**

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Sincerely,

Ellen Small
Coordinator

Jane McNichol
Executive Director, LARCC

Please send donations to:

**CABHN c/o LARCC
44 Capitol Avenue, Suite 301
Hartford, CT. 06106**