

Highlights in this issue:

Youth Job Opportunity	p2
Help Us Continue to Publish CF!	p2
Budget Update	p3
PCCM Update.....	p3

CABHN FEVER

Documenting Citizenship When Applying for Medicaid

In 2006, the federal government began requiring that citizens applying for Medicaid (including HUSKY A) provide documentation proving their citizenship prior to being enrolled in the program. This new requirement caused delays in citizens accessing Medicaid and, in some cases, meant that eligible applicants were rejected. The citizenship rules impacted mostly children, parents and pregnant women on HUSKY A.

When Congress reauthorized the Children’s Health Insurance Program (formerly SCHIP) in February, it imposed this citizen documentation requirement on CHIP programs

(HUSKY B in Connecticut), although the rules will not apply to HUSKY B until January 1, 2010. The new law, however, made changes to make the documentation requirement less burdensome.

Most importantly, the new rules say that Medicaid and HUSKY applicants will be enrolled in the program while they are gathering the needed documentation, rather than having to wait until they have collected the paperwork. Other changes will make it easier for DSS to document citizenship so new

(See Citizenship, p. 2)

Report : How Many Connecticut Residents Lack Health Care Coverage?

The Lewin Group, one the nation’s leading health and human services consulting firms, (www.lewin.com) looked at how many Connecticut residents lacked health insurance coverage at some point during the last two years.

They found:

- *1 of every 4 Connecticut residents (excluding those over age 65 and covered by “government-run” Medicare) went without health insurance at some point in 2007 or 2008.*
- *Of those 758,000 residents, more than 2 out of 3 lacked health insurance for 6 months or longer.*
- *The majority of people in Connecticut who lacked insurance at some point during 2007 or 2008 were white.*
- *The likelihood of an African-American or Hispanic being uninsured was about twice that for whites: 19% of white Connecticut residents under the age of 65 were uninsured at some point in 2007 or 2008, compared to 36% of African-Americans and 48% of Latinos.*
- *More than 80% of the uninsured in Connecticut were from working families.*
- *Almost half of the very poor in Connecticut lacked health insurance at some point during the two-year period: Of the 650,000 residents with incomes below 200% of the poverty level, 303,000 - 46.7% - were uninsured at some point in 2007 or 2008.*

The full report is available at: <http://www.universalhealthct.org/admin/uploads/52954585949c290a8c86c30.35692581.pdf>

Are You Eligible for Extra Help?

Connecticut’s Department of Social Services (DSS) estimates that there are approximately 13,000 CT residents that are eligible for the low-income subsidy in Medicare Part D who are not receiving any “Extra Help.”

What is the Low-Income Subsidy?

The low-income Subsidy, also known as “Extra Help,” provides financial assistance for some Medicare Part D beneficiaries who have limited income and resources. Those who are eligible for this low-income subsidy will get help paying for 75% or more of their monthly premium, yearly deductible, prescription coinsurance and copayments and will have no gap in coverage. **The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) encourages all Medicare Part D beneficiaries to apply for the Low-Income Subsidy, which in 2009 is estimated to be worth \$3,923 at the pharmacy and as much as \$298 in annual premiums.** The Low-Income Subsidy can be critical for persons with mental illnesses who struggle to pay their Medicare Part D premiums and purchase needed medications.

Who is eligible for Extra Help?

Some people are automatically eligible for the low-income subsidy. These include:

- full benefit dual eligibles (on Medicare and Medicaid);
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients with Medicare; and
- Medicare Savings Programs participants.

(See Extra Help, p. 2)

**Extra Help
(Continued from p. 1)**

Some people must apply through the Social Security Administration (SSA) to become eligible for the subsidy. Individuals who make less than \$16,245 and married couples who make less than \$21,855 may qualify for a subsidy. If you support other family members or live in Alaska or Hawaii, this income limit may be higher. Eligibility also depends on an applicant's resources, including bank accounts, stock and bonds – not your house or car. Individuals should have resources less than \$12,510 and married couples should have resources less than \$25,010 to qualify. Generally, those eligible for the low-income subsidy pay no Part D plan premiums or deductibles, but pay \$1.10 or \$2.40 for generic drugs and \$3.20 or \$6.00 for brand-name drugs, depending on their income.

How to Apply for the Low Income Subsidy:

People who are not automatically eligible must fill out an application and send it to SSA or apply on-line at : www.socialsecurity.gov

Obtain Applications from SSA:

Call (800) 772-1213 or (TTY) (800) 325-0778

Go to your nearest Social Security Office Obtain an applications and more information from Amy O'Connor at NAMI-CT at policyassistant@namict.org or (800) 215-3021.

**Citizenship
(Cont. from p. 1)**

changes will make it easier for DSS to document citizenship so new applicants won't have to provide documents at all in many cases.

As a result of these changes, Medicaid and HUSKY applications should no longer be delayed while documents relating to citizenship are collected and submitted to DSS. If individuals have questions, they can contact HUSKY Infoline 1-877-CTHUSKY .

Job Opportunity for Youth with Disabilities

The Workforce Investment Boards (the agencies that manage federal job training funds and run the CT Works Centers) are currently accepting applications from young people (aged 18-25) for summer jobs. These are paid positions in local companies that offer authentic work experiences and supervision. The Work Investment Boards are offering CT youth with disabilities equal opportunity employment and the chance to expand their workforce experience.

Contact information for each of the five boards is below. Contact your local board for information and to apply. Applications will be accepted until early spring. Contact Information

**Capital Workforce Partners,
Hartford (860) 522-1111**

**Workforce Alliance, New Haven
(203) 624-1493**

**Easter CT Workforce Investment
Board, Franklin (860) 859-4100**

**The WorkPlace Inc., Bridgeport,
(203) 335-9703**

**Northwest Regional Workforce
Investment Board, Waterbury
(203) 574-6971**

Upcoming Event

**Friday, May 8, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
at Manchester Community College,
Arts Sciences & Technology Center**

*Empowering People with Disabilities
in the Workplace
Employment Conference & Career
Fair*

Keynote speaker is Barbara Reinhold, Ed.D., Author of *Toxic Work*. Workshops will include: Skills Employers Need & How You Can Get Them, Entrepreneurial & Nontraditional Careers for People with Disabilities, and Mastering the Interview Process. For more information, contact Melissa Marshall at Melissa.marshall@snet.net.

**Help Us Continue
Publishing CABHN
FEVER!**

Please let us know if you are willing to receive CABHN Fever electronically! The economic downturn and the state budget challenges have put vital social service programs in danger of losing funding, if they have not already experienced significant losses. The Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs (CABHN) is a project sponsored by the Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut (LARCC), a program of legal services. The Legal Services programs face unique budget challenges during the present time and, as a result, must make difficult decisions to reduce spending and preserve services. One way LARCC can save money is to distribute CABHN Fever electronically. Over 700 of our members already receive their monthly newsletter electronically. We do, however, send paper copies to over 3,000 members.

We understand and appreciate that many recipients do not have access to email and that paper copies are their only option. Others may simply prefer to receive a paper copy. **For those who have email access and would not mind receiving their newsletter electronically, however, please send us your email address so we can update our system.** Contact Ellen Small at esmall@larcc.org or (860) 278 – 5688 x. 208.

We also maintain an email “Action Alert” list and send out frequent updates on state budget and policy issues, notification of upcoming events and meetings, as well as other time-sensitive information we are unable to include in our newsletter. Please contact Ellen Small if you would like to be added to this distribution list.

Thank you for your assistance. We look forward to continuing our work here at CABHN.

Appropriations and Finance Committees Adopt Budget Proposals

The Appropriations and Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committees of the Connecticut Legislature have taken the next step in the process of developing the budget for the next two years (July, 2009 - June, 2011). On Thursday, April 2, the Appropriations Committee adopted HB 6365, which incorporates the Legislature's spending proposals and the Finance Committee adopted SB 932, which includes the legislature's revenue raising plans.

These plans are very different from the Governor's budget proposals announced in February. Importantly, the Finance Committee proposes raising \$1.7 billion in new revenue in the first budget year and \$1.6 billion in the second year. The plan raises \$1.2 billion in the first year and \$.8 billion in the second year through raising personal income tax rates on higher income residents. The increases start with a 6% rate on the income of couples over \$200,000 and peak at a 7.95% rate on incomes of couples over \$1 million.

Other revenue proposals would increase the cigarette tax by \$.50 per pack to raise \$36 million in the first year and \$63 million in the second, repeal some sales tax exemptions and impose temporary corporate and estate tax surcharges.

These revenue increases make it possible for the legislative proposal to address the \$1 billion shortfall in revenues which was not addressed in the Governor's budget and restore some of the cuts proposed in the Governor's budget. The Legislature's proposal still includes cuts of \$1 billion in the first year and \$1.4 billion in the second year.

Cuts to health care programs are minimized in the Legislature's proposal. Key health care provisions include:

- *rejection of the Governor's proposals for co-pays and premiums in HUSKY A and Medicaid*
- *continuation of adult dental care*

- *continued health care coverage for recent legal immigrant children and pregnant women (but elimination of coverage for other adults who are recent legal immigrants)*
- *limits on the state's Medicare Part D (prescription drug) Wrap Around program, including imposition of co-pays of up to \$15 per month for prescription drugs for people who are eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.*
- *changes in the definition of "medical necessity" in the Medicaid program which will limit the services available in HUSKY A and Medicaid fee-for-services*
- *imposition of various restrictions on access to prescription drugs, including particularly drugs to treat mental health conditions, in Medicaid*
- *elimination of Cost of Living Adjustments in TFA, SAGA and Aid to Aged, Blind and Disabled*

What happens next? These proposals will probably go to the House and Senate for votes and then to the Governor for her approval or, more likely, veto. There will be negotiations among the Governor and the Legislature about the budget. Alternatively, there could be negotiations on these proposals prior to a vote in the House and Senate. In either case, now is a good time to contact legislators and the Governor about the things that are important to you in the budget.

Next Steps in Primary Care Case Management

On March 31, the Human Services and Appropriations Committees of the Connecticut Legislature agreed that the Department of Social Services (DSS) should submit a waiver application to the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The waiver would permit Connecticut to continue operating the HUSKY program through Managed Care Organizations with the addition

of a Primary Care Case Management (PCCM) component.

The waiver application contains some important provisions for HUSKY A participants and providers interested in being part of PCCM. PCCM is a way of running HUSKY A without involving managed care organizations. In PCCM, HUSKY A participants choose a primary care provider such as a clinic or doctor, who is responsible for managing their care. Providers in PCCM receive a fee from DSS to provide this case management.

Currently, a small number of providers and HUSKY participants in the Waterbury and Willimantic areas are enrolled in the PCCM program. Under the newly approved waiver application:

- ***PCCM will be expanded to HUSKY A participants in the greater Waterbury and greater Willimantic areas. DSS will be notifying all HUSKY A participants of this option. If you are interested, watch for this letter from DSS.***
- ***any primary care provider in the Waterbury and Willimantic areas can sign up to participate in PCCM now.***
- ***PCCM will be extended to the greater New Haven and greater Hartford areas by January 1, 2010. All HUSKY A enrollees in these areas will be invited to participate in PCCM and all primary care providers in these areas will be able to sign up for PCCM.***

Even though DSS notices about this have not yet gone out, all HUSKY A enrollees living in Waterbury, Windham or any of the surrounding towns are eligible to sign up with PCCM now. If you live in the Waterbury or Willimantic area and are interested in PCCM, you should contact your primary care provider about this possibility or look for a primary care provider who is participating in PCCM. For more information about PCCM, call (877) 284-8759 or go to www.huskyhealth.com or www.cthealthpolicy.org

Reminder: 3rd Annual Riverfront Run

The Riverfront Children's Center is hosting a 5K Plus Road Race (3.45 mi.) and Family Fun Run (1.3 mi.) Saturday, May 16, at 9AM

Starts and finishes at Eastern Point Beach in Groton. Online registration is available at www.active.com Registration is also available on day of event. Proceeds of the 2009 Riverfront Run benefit Riverfront's Tuitions Assistance Program, which provides need based, Center awarded scholarships to some of Riverfront's neediest, most at-risk children.

Upcoming Events at GOODWorks, Inc.

April 18, 2009

Multi Cultural Fashion Show

2:00 pm–6:00 pm

656 Silver Lane, East Hartford, CT

April 22, 2009 - Workshop*
"Women, Power & Influence"

6:00 pm–7:30 pm

L. Kay Wilson, Motivational Speaker

April 29, 2009 – Workshop*
"Leadership Development"

6:00 pm–7:30 pm

LaReese Harvey, Policy Director, A Better Way Foundation

*Held at GOODWorks, Inc., 10 Clark Street, East Hartford, CT 06108, (860) 290-8329

GOODWorks Inc. is a nonprofit organization that assists women coming out of prison to make a successful re-adjustment back into the community.

The New Beginnings Mentoring Program operates with a holistic, strength based approach that focuses on development of positive behavioral and lifestyle changes for women entering the GOODWorks program.

Upcoming CABHN/FESN Meeting

Friday, May 15th
9:30–11:30 A.M.

Location & Topics:
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