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# CABHN FEVER

## **New SNAP (Food Stamp) Telephone Info Line:**

**1-866-974-SNAP**

As of December 1, 2008, people interested in learning about SNAP (formerly food stamps) can access basic information via a new toll-free telephone line.

Created and managed by End Hunger CT!, callers can hear about income and asset requirements, get contact numbers of outreach workers and request an application be mailed to them.

The automated line is toll-free and provides information in both English and Spanish.

Funded through an outreach grant from the Connecticut Department of Social Services and the USDA, the SNAP information line joins the End Hunger CT!'s on-line prescreener in providing immediate access to food stamp information.

Persons interested in SNAP can call 1-866-974-SNAP twenty-four hours a day or access the on-line prescreener at [www.ctfoodstamps.org](http://www.ctfoodstamps.org).

## **How to Get Help from Your Community Action Agency**

The Connecticut Association for Community Action has a new brochure that details services available through the state's Community Action Agencies and the best ways to access those services. Community Action Agencies provide a wide variety of programs and assistance, including child care, employment and training services, energy assistance and services for the elderly. To view a copy of this new brochure and to learn about the best way to access services in your area, go to the CAFCA website: [www.cafca.org](http://www.cafca.org).

## **Report on Connecticut Hunger Trends**



A recent report by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) on hunger and poverty in Connecticut shows that many Connecticut residents are slipping through the cracks in federal and state nutrition programs.

The *State of the States* report, shows that between 2005 and 2007, on average 122,000 people in Connecticut lived in households that struggled against hunger and that 7.9 % of Connecticut residents live in poverty, with 11.1% of the state's children being impoverished.

The report also indicates only 62% eligible participate in SNAP/ Food Stamp.

The report included data compiled

by End Hunger Connecticut!, which is a statewide anti-hunger and food security organization. Executive Director, Lucy Nolan, emphasized the impact of increasing School Breakfast participation. If the program number were increased by 60%, Connecticut could increase its federal funding by \$7 million.

FRAC and End Hunger Connecticut!, pledge to work with the incoming Obama administration to accomplish the goal of ending childhood hunger in the United States by 2015. They are pushing for Congress to do the same and to take more immediate action to increase SNAP/Food Stamp benefits. To view this report, go to [http://frac.org/pdf/SOS\\_2008\\_withcover\\_nov08.pdf](http://frac.org/pdf/SOS_2008_withcover_nov08.pdf)

## **Increased Unemployment May Mean Problems Getting Through To Call Center**

### An extension of state UC:

Unemployed workers who have exhausted their regular 26 weeks of state UC and the 13 week extension, may be eligible for another 7 week extension beginning the week of November 23rd. The Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL) began mailing letters on 12/10/08 to notify these individuals. The letter includes instructions and an application to reopen a claim for a 7 week benefit extension.

### An extension of federal UC

Connecticut's unemployment rate of 6.5% is high enough to trigger an additional 13 weeks of federal benefit payments. DOL will notify claimants in January 2009 that they can file claims for another 13 weeks of federal UC benefits after they have exhausted the 20 weeks benefits, if able and available for work and actively looking for a job.

**Note:** People who return to work and

then are laid off again may not qualify for this federal UC extension if they earned enough wages to establish a new base year for state UC benefits. If found eligible, they will receive state unemployment benefits, which may be lower than what they received before.

Callers may have problems getting through to file a new claim for unemployment compensation (UC) or to file for an UC extension due to the increasing numbers of unemployed workers filing claims. When callers do get through, they should tell DOL when they first tried to call so they don't lose credit for any days that they were not able to get through.

The state DOL has expanded its TeleBenefit phone line to the hours of 7:45AM to 6PM. Please note that filling out the online Web application will greatly speed up the mailing of your benefits. Go to [www.ctdol.state.ct.us](http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us) and click on TeleBenefit Center.

## AmeriCares Free Clinics for Uninsured

**To be eligible you must:**

- ▶ Have no health insurance    ▶ Meet income guidelines
- ▶ Be a resident of the area    ▶ Provide photo identification
- ▶ Provide proof of income

**For more information call 1-800-486 HELP or go to:  
www.AmeriCaresFreeClinics.org**

**AmeriCares Free Clinics Income Limits**

Household size	Annual income
1	\$20,800
2	\$28,000
3	\$35,200
4	\$42,400
5	\$49,600
6	\$56,800
<b>For each addl. Person add</b>	<b>\$7,200</b>



AmeriCares Free Clinics provide quality medical care to the uninsured in Norwalk, Bridgeport and Danbury. Volunteer doctors and nurses provide primary as well as specialty care for qualifying, low-income residents.

All three clinics treat adult patients through walk-in programs. Patients with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and asthma, can be seen by appointment. In addition, each clinic offers specialty care programs on a limited basis. The Norwalk clinic is the only

location with a pediatric program. Children are examined on Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Lab tests and diagnostic services are available **to patients at no charge** through AmeriCares Free Clinics extensive network of partner hospitals and laboratories. All three clinics also have established relationships with local pharmacies and participate in Patient Assistance Programs to ensure our patients get essential prescription medications at little or no charge.

## On The Road to healthcare4every1!

Join your neighbors, faith leaders, doctors, small business owners and others to learn about how advocates are working together to win quality, affordable health care for everyone.

Join Healthcare4every1 on one of these upcoming dates for more information.

**Willimantic**

Tuesday, December 16  
EASTCONN Capitol Theater 896 Main Street

**Meriden**

Wednesday, December 17  
John Barry School  
124 Columbia St.

**Norwalk**

Thursday, January 8  
Norwalk City Hall  
Community Room  
125 East. Ave.

**Hartford**

Tuesday, January 13  
(statewide launch of the Connecticut plan for health care we can count on)  
Union (Train) Station  
1 Union Plaza, Hartford

Visit [www.healthcare4every1.org](http://www.healthcare4every1.org) or email: [info@healthcare4every1.org](mailto:info@healthcare4every1.org) for more information/directions.

## “Beyond the Box” Passes in Norwich

On December 1, the Norwich City Council voted unanimously in favor of an ordinance seeking to reduce employment barriers facing people with criminal records. The ordinance, known as “beyond the box,” removes the box inquiring about an applicant’s criminal background from the initial application for jobs with the City of Norwich only, delaying the inquiry and background check until a person has made it through to the final stages of the interview process. This allows applicants to be assessed based on their skills and qualifications, rather than having their application automatically dismissed when the employer notices the applicant has checked “yes” to having a criminal conviction.

“Beyond the Box” is the first of its kind to pass in Connecticut, though

**See Beyond the Box, p.3**

## Groundwork Bridgeport 10th Anniv.

Groundwork Bridgeport (GB), a member of the Groundwork USA network of nonprofit organizations founded to revitalize the city by empowering its citizenry to work for the creation and maintenance of urban greenspaces.

On October 21st, Groundwork Bridgeport celebrated its 10th Anniversary. Guest speaker, CT DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy emphasized the “No Child Left Inside” policy, and noted how Groundwork’s programs, which place young people of the city outside and working on beneficial service projects, coincide with the policy’s goal.

Groundwork Bridgeport supports the efforts of neighborhood-based community groups working to reclaim their neighborhoods by partnering with them to achieve their goals. If you are interested in helping to fulfill Groundwork’s mission, please call 203-335-6126 or visit [www.groundworkbpt.org](http://www.groundworkbpt.org).

## Recession Could Cause Large Increases In Poverty

On December 1, the National Bureau of Economic Research officially confirmed the U.S. economy is in a recession. The effects of this economic downturn are likely to impact millions of Americans, and could be particularly significant for individuals and families who already struggle to make ends meet. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) recently released an article detailing the potentially devastating impacts of this recession.

### What is happening?

Several signs indicate the U.S. is likely to see an increase in poverty during and following this recession:

- Projections suggest the unemployment rate will rise to 9% by the fourth quarter of 2009, impacting low-income workers more than higher-income workers as unemployment eligibility rules in many states deny benefits to individuals who worked part-time or did not earn enough during a certain period.
- Food stamp caseloads increased by 9.6% from August 2007 to August 2008. In 25 states, at least one in five children receives food stamps.
- Federal and state policy changes left the cash assistance safety net less equipped to meet growing challenges than in previous recessions.

### What could happen?

If the rise in unemployment projection holds true:

- The number of people in poverty will rise by between 7.5 million and 10.3 million
- The number of poor children will increase by between 2.6 and 3.3 million
- The number of people in deep poverty (living below half of the federal poverty level) will rise by between 4.5 and 6.3 million
- The number of children in deep poverty will rise by between 1.5 and 2.0 million

### What can be done?

CBPP suggests several options to lessen the impact of this recession on Americans living in or on the brink of poverty.

- **A temporary increase in food stamp benefits**, which would offset rising food costs.
- **Additional rental assistance through the housing voucher program**, increasing assistance to very low-income households having trouble affording high rents with lower-income jobs.
- **Expand and improve the TANF contingency fund**, which exists to provide additional resources to states during recessions as more families need assistance. Unfortunately, this fund is likely to be drained by fiscal year 2009 and will need to be replenished. Another problem is that this fund requires states to match federal funds, which will be difficult as so many states, including Connecticut, already face large deficits.
- **Expand and extend unemployment benefits** through a temporary, federally-funded increase in unemployment benefit levels.
- **Provide significant fiscal relief to the states.** CBPP reports 41 state face budget deficits. States, unlike the federal government, cannot end the fiscal year in a deficit.

For more information, see the latest article on the recession from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities [www.cbpp.org/11-24-08pov.pdf](http://www.cbpp.org/11-24-08pov.pdf).

## "Beyond The Box" (Cont. from p. 2)

municipalities across the country have passed similar ordinances. Bridgeport, New Haven, and Hartford are also actively pursuing efforts to pass ordinances which will delay inquiry into an applicant's criminal history until a later stage in the employment process and increase opportunities for people who have been incarcerated to obtain

## More Administrative Changes to HUSKY

The HUSKY program continues to be in flux. In November, the Governor and DSS agreed to allow the MCOs which are new to HUSKY, Aetna Better Health and AmeriChoice, to recruit providers for the HUSKY network without requiring that these providers also participate in the Charter Oak Health Plan network. This removes what was developing as an impediment for providers. However, Aetna, AmeriChoice and CHNCT are still required by contract to administer Charter Oak and develop provider networks for Charter Oak.

In November, DSS also decided that the current program (with Anthem, CHNCT and DSS administering the HUSKY program) would continue until at least February 1, 2009. While HUSKY participants can switch to Aetna Better Health or AmeriChoice if they want to, moving out of the Anthem or DSS system will not be required at this time. DSS and the federal regulatory agency, the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), will decide at the end of December whether there are enough providers in the MCO networks to mandate that participants in the Anthem system change to a different plan by February 1. DSS has already decided that HUSKY participants in the "traditional" Medicaid program, people who receive administrative services through DSS rather than an MCO, will not be required to enroll in a different plan on February 1.

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gainful and sustainable employment. "Beyond the Box" was introduced to the Norwich City Council by the Connecticut Pardon Team and its founder Jacqueline Caron. The CT Pardon Team would like to thank A Better Way Foundation, CABHN, Legal Assistance Resource Center, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, Clean Slate New Haven, Ever Green of New Haven, and all the residents of Norwich who came out and supported this ordinance.



## Countdown to End Homelessness CT Point-in-Time Count 2009

Join hundreds of volunteers for 4 hours on Wednesday, January 28, 2009 as they fan out across the state to gather information that will help to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Since 2003, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has required applicants for federal homeless assistance grants to report the number of people who are homeless in their communities at a particular time. HUD currently requires that communities conduct a point-in-time count during the last week of January. This third consecutive Point-in-Time initiative allows analysis to begin determining trends in data. The numbers collected during CT Counts 2009 will help bring into focus the previous two statewide snapshots, producing a more accurate

picture of homelessness in Connecticut.

Sign up to volunteer and learn more on the Reaching Home website: [www.ctreachinghome.org](http://www.ctreachinghome.org) or call Sarah Zucker, Research and Communications Associate, at 860-721-7876 ext. 111 or Kate Kelly, Reaching Home Campaign Manager at 860-244-0066.

### Calling All Volunteers!

Volunteers are needed for the Connecticut Mission of Mercy (CT-MOM) project in New Haven, CT for April 16-19, 2009. It's not too early to plan ahead!

CTMOM will provide free dental care to those who cannot afford or have difficulty obtaining dental care. Please visit: [www.csda.com](http://www.csda.com) and click on the CTMOM logo to register.

### Upcoming CABHN/FESN Meeting

Friday, Jan. 9th

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.*

Return Service Requested

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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