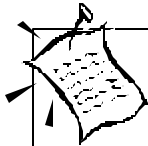


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CABHN FEVER



Energy Assistance Benefits Now Available to More Families

Changes have been made to the Energy Assistance program which will now allow more people to qualify for energy assistance (see increased income chart below). Also, benefits for utility heated households have been expanded slightly. **CEAP and SAFA recipients** who pay a utility company for heat will receive \$15 more in benefits this winter. **Apply now...** application deadline is April 30, 2002 *or earlier if funds run out.*

1. You may be eligible for benefits even if heat is included in your rent payment (depending on your income and rent amount).

2. Income limits have increased. Apply if your income is less than:

People in house:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Annual income:	\$23,557	\$30,806	\$38,054	\$45,303	\$52,551	\$59,799
Monthly income:	\$1,963	\$2,567	\$3,171	\$3,775	\$4,379	\$4,983

4. Apply at the local Community Action Agency or call INFOLINE (211) for information on the closest application site. *Bring proof of income for everyone in the household and a copy of your fuel or utility bill.*

5. If you heat with gas from Yankee Gas, SCG or CNG, and you owe them money, contact them and apply for the arrearage forgiveness program .

7. Repairs or replacements of unsafe furnaces or furnaces that are not working are available to some households.

8. Much more weatherization assistance (making your home energy efficient) is available. (Call Infoline at 211)

❖ Important: If you are on state welfare (TFA), think about what you can really afford when you make a payment agreement. Your income may drop if you are at the end of a time limit for receiving benefits, making it hard to keep the agreement. Call Statewide Legal Services for advice: 1-800-453-3320.

The Earned Income Credit: Extra Money for People Who Work



Get more from your regular paycheck! The Earned Income Credit (EIC) is a special tax benefit for people who work full or part time. If you qualify, you'll owe less in taxes and may get cash back. Even if you don't owe income tax, you can get the credit. But, you must file a federal tax return. Even workers who aren't raising a child can get the EIC! (Please see page 2-Tips on Keeping...)

Extra Credit - Claim the New Child Tax Credit! Did you earn more than \$10,000 in 2001? Can you claim child under 17 as a dependent? If so, you may be eligible for a child tax credit--up to \$600 for each child. Even if you don't owe income tax you may be able to get this. (Eligibility rules are different from the EIC, but many workers can get both!)

How much is the EIC?

■ If you lived with one child in 2001 and your family earned less than \$28,281, you can get up to \$2,428.

■ If you lived with more than one child in 2001 and your family earned less than \$32,121, you can get up to \$4,008.

■ If you had no children living with you in 2001 and you earned less than \$10,710 AND, you were 25-64 years old, you can get up to \$364.

Note: The EIC does not affect eligibility for state welfare, Medicaid, SSI, food stamps, or low-income housing.

How do you get the EIC?

You can figure the EIC yourself, or have the IRS, a tax professional or a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site. Call 1-800-829-1040 to find a VITA site.

For more information, call Debbie at CABHN 860-278-5688 x 12.❖

Having Trouble Getting Orthodontia (Braces) Covered By Medicaid?

Braces for teeth and related services (orthodontia) are fully covered for all Medicaid (also known as HUSKY or Title 19) recipients under age 21. As with all medical services for Medicaid recipients under the age of 21, if there is a medical need, services must be provided. There are no coverage limitations for a Medicaid recipient under 21. This includes for orthodontia service. (Continued... See Medicaid, page 2)



Agency Offers Employment Help

The ACCESS Agency in Willimantic has hired an Employment Specialist who will collaborate with local employers to hire, train, and coach clients in the following programs. Call the Access Agency at 860-450-7449.

“Women in Non-traditional Apprenticeship and Non-traditional Occupations”. The “Parents Step Up to Success” Program provides “Individual Employment Training” for parents currently paying child support or want

(Continued... See Access, page 2)


RAP & Sec. 8 Waiting Lists Nearly Ready But Governor Impounds \$2 Million in Rental Assistance Funds

It is now likely that, within about a month, applicants for the state's Section 8 and Rental Assistance (RAP) programs will receive notice of their place on the newly created Section 8 and RAP waiting lists. There is, however, a serious question of when the state will actually begin implementing the RAP waiting list because of action taken by the Governor in regard to the state budget. It is ironic that, at the very time the state has received 38,000 applications for rental assistance, demonstrating the enormous need for rent subsidies, the Governor has effectively rescinded \$2 million of RAP program funding for 2001-2002.

The RAP waiting list will consist of the first 7,000 households which applied for rental assistance, in the order in which their applications were received. The state Section 8 waiting list will consist of 12,000 households, chosen by lottery from the 38,000 applications. It is thus possible that a particular family could make one waiting list, both lists, or neither. Applications which do not make either waiting list will be dropped. It is anticipated that the RAP waiting list will be ready by the end of January and the Section 8 waiting list by the end of February.

At the present time, there are an estimated 400 RAP certificates and 800 to 1,000 Section 8 vouchers potentially available for distribution through the waiting list. There are also 200 RAP certificates being distributed outside the waiting list structure — 100 through DSS district offices to selected working families which are losing TFA benefits because of time limits and 100 through homeless shelters to families living in shelters.

There is, however, uncertainty about the 400 RAP certificates because of the Governor's impoundment of \$2 million in RAP funding for the current (2001-2002) fiscal year. Even with the impoundment, there is sufficient available funding in the RAP budget to pay for the immediate lease-up of all 400 RAP certificates for the remainder of this fiscal year. If, however, the Governor attempts to apply the same or a larger cut to the 2002-2003 budget adjustments he will be presenting in February, it will have a devastating impact on the RAP budget for that year, which would then become insufficient to cover the 2,151 certificates authorized for the RAP program. It is unknown if the danger of that possibility will interfere with the prompt lease-up of those 400 RAP certificates.

 **What Can You Do?** Call the Governor and Legislators. Strongly urge that the RAP program receives no less than its full budget for 2002-2003. (See phone numbers on next page). *For more information, call Debbie (860-278-5688 x 12).* ♦

Medicaid Coverage of Orthodontia Services

(Continued from page 1)

Unfortunately, it is common for Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) to wrongfully deny medically necessary services to Medicaid recipients. So, if you have been told that the orthodontia or other Medicaid services you requested will not be covered, you can challenge these decisions. To find out how to get the needed services, call Statewide Legal Services (SLS). *See below.*

HMOs may use the following reasons for denying orthodontia services. These

reasons may be challenged and legal help is available through SLS.

- the service does not meet some special point system, or
- the kind of orthodontia needed is "not covered", or
- the child is too young to receive these services, when the orthodontist thinks otherwise.

 **If you have been denied services, please call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 or 860-344-0380.** ♦

Tips on Keeping More of Your Tax Refund



Before you spend part of your tax refund on commercial tax preparation, take a look at your options. Here are a few choices when it's time to file:

■ **Get FREE help filling out the forms.** The IRS offers free tax preparation through a program called VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance). Call your local library or Infoline at 211 to find the site nearest you.

■ **Fill out the forms yourself.** Tax forms are at the post office or library. You can fill in the needed information and the IRS will calculate the rest.

■ **Pay a commercial tax preparer.** Fees for this can be \$40-\$55 **plus more** for electronic filing and even more for "quick refunds". Paying for tax preparation takes money away from EIC and other tax refund benefits.

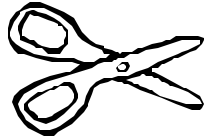
What is a "Quick Refund"? A quick refund means a commercial tax preparer files a tax return and gives the taxpayer a "refund" check within a few days. Actually, the "refund" is not coming from the IRS, but from the tax preparer as a loan. The fee for this is really an interest payment on the loan which is paid up front.

It is easy to be persuaded to take a "quick refund" since the costs of preparing the tax return and the loan charges are taken out of the amount of the expected refund. *Caution:* If the EIC does not come back from the IRS in the amount expected, the taxpayer will have to repay the difference to the bank that holds the "quick refund loan" arranged through the preparer. ♦

Access Agency Offers Services

(Continued from p. 1)

to pay child support. The "Displaced Homemaker" Program is now enrolling participants. The program tries to help participants in developing an employment plan that will lead to appropriate and satisfying work. Supportive services offered. ♦



Governor Continues to Propose Cuts in Social Services

At the start of the legislative session on February 6, the Governor will announce his budget proposals for the budget year beginning July 1, 2002. Every indication is that the budget address will propose significant cuts to programs which assist poor people. In fact, the Governor has proposed significant cuts to social service expenditures in the current year to minimize a projected budget deficit.

The past eight months have seen a remarkable reversal in the fiscal condition of the state. We ended the last fiscal year with a \$600 million surplus, \$600 million over the amount that can be spent under the state's spending cap. Now, the Governor and the Comptroller both are projecting that, unless spending is cut, the state will end the current fiscal year with a deficit. The Governor is projecting a \$350 million deficit while the Comptroller sets the figure at about \$150 million.

The Governor and the Legislature addressed the possibility of a deficit in the fall. The Governor adopted 5% cuts in certain budget line items (as he is authorized to do under state law) and the Legislature met in special session to adopt further changes in the state budget. The Legislature refused to adopt cuts to mental health and transportation funds which the Governor had proposed.

The Governor is now adopting further cuts, again targeting important social service programs, and has sent proposals for bigger cuts to the Legislature. While the proposals will probably not be taken up by the Legislature until the regular session in February, they indicate what the Governor's budget proposals for 2002-2002 will look like.

On December 28, the Governor cut money from the following programs:

- \$2 million from the Rental Assistance Program (RAP)
- \$7 million from programs of the Dept of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- \$6 million from education programs

The Governor has also made two sets of proposals for cuts from surplus spending approved by the Legislature in June. **The first set of proposals, made on December 28 suggested cutting:**

- \$7 million from the Mental Health Strategic Investment Fund
- \$4.5 million from the Private Provider Infrastructure Fund
- \$1.9 million from the Workforce Development Boards
- \$1.4 million from the Community Employment Incentive Program (CEIP)
- \$400,000 from Individual Development Account funds

On January 21, the Governor proposed further cuts in approved spending from the surplus:

- \$50 million from school construction projects
- additional cuts from the surplus funding targeted to mental health and supportive housing programs, for total reductions of \$11 million.
- \$10 million from higher education

These proposals set the stage for cuts which will be proposed in the upcoming budget year. (Please see article, *Alternatives to Cutting...* on this page).✦

Alternatives to Cutting Needed Social Services

Connecticut Voices for Children has outlined the following alternatives to cutting needed social services:

- ✓ **collect all the federal money available** and make any adjustments to the spending cap necessary to do so
- ✓ **conduct a review of tax credits, exemptions, exclusions and deductions granted to businesses** during flush economic times and **close tax loopholes** which do not make sense
- ✓ **enact targeted tax increases**, such as an increase to the cigarette tax
- ✓ **declare that it is raining and make use of the Rainy Day Fund** (Budget Reserve Fund)--which currently contains about \$600 million to be used to help the state weather bad fiscal times.

What Can You Do?

To support these alternatives to cutting needed social services,

- ✦ write a letter to the editor about the importance of services that are being targeted for cuts, and/or
- ✦ contact your legislator and let him or her know about the alternatives to cuts which are outlined above.

For more information or tips on writing a letter or contacting your legislator, call Debbie at CABHN, 860-278-5688x12 or visit www.larcc.org. ✦

Health Information for Consumers on the Web

The CT Health Policy Project website now includes a page to help consumers navigate the maze of health information on the web. The page includes links to helpful agencies and organizations for resolving problems, starting places to find personal health information and to policy sites developed for consumers. The site also provides information on how and why consumers need to get involved in directing health policy, rather than responding to problems. Visit www.cthealthpolicy.org.✦

	House Democrats	1-800-842-1902
	House Republicans	1-800-842-1423
	Senate Democrats	1-800-842-1420
	Senate Republicans	1-800-842-1421
	Governor's Office	1-800-406-1527

Save the Dates:

March 7. Town meeting/accountability session, sponsored by the National Campaign for Jobs and Income Support. This meeting in D.C. with Senate Democratic leaders will focus on TANF reauthorization issues. A group from Connecticut will be attending. *Information: Gracie Brown, Mothers for Justice, 203-777-7848.*

March 13-15. TANF Action Days for Poverty Reduction in D.C. Sponsored by the National Council of Churches (NCC). Spend one day on Capitol Hill meeting with decision-makers. Registration is \$50. *Information: Mary Cooper, NCC, 202-544-2350 or mcooper@nccusa.org.*

April 4. Deadline for art contest: "What is Justice" open to 7th & 8th graders, sponsored by Greater Hartford Legal Assistance. 860-541-5000.

April 12, 2002. CT NOW 14th Annual Feminist Awards Dinner. *Tickets: 860-524-5978. ♦*

Homeless Civil Rights Violations Increasing

Homeless persons are finding their civil rights threatened in an increasing number of communities, according to a recent report by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. The report, *Illegal to be Homeless: The Criminalization of Homelessness in the US*, finds more jurisdictions are enacting laws that effectively criminalize homelessness by prohibiting activities. For example, almost 80% of the cities surveyed have laws prohibiting sleeping/camping in public areas. Meanwhile, 100% of communities surveyed lack enough shelter beds to meet demand. For a copy, call NCH at 202-727-6444 or visit www.nationalhomeless.org. ♦

Office Furniture Needed

Mothers for Justice in New Haven is moving and needs office furniture! If you have any to donate, please call Gracie Brown at 203-777-7848. ♦

Upcoming CABHN Meetings:

Friday, February 8th
10 - Noon
Community Renewal Team (CRT)
555 Windsor St., Hartford

Topics:
Governor's Budget
Legislative Action

Friday, March 8th
10 - Noon
Join us for our first New Haven area meeting.
Place to be announced.

In case of bad weather, listen to WTIC AM 1080 for cancellation information.

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.

CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)

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Hartford, CT 06106