

CABHN FEVER

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Tax Assistance from HUD & IRS

HUD and the IRS are pooling their resources in order to help millions of low-income working families.

This partnership promotes a national tax assistance program using the *IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program*. This unique partnership will:

- Assist low-income, disabled, elderly and limited English proficient persons in meeting their tax obligations by providing educational outreach;
- Help low-income, disabled, elderly and limited English proficient persons and families in free tax preparation and free electronic filing of federal tax returns;

Section 8 Waiting List Web Site Now On-Line



The web site containing a listing of all open Section 8 waiting lists has finally come on-line. Creation of the web site was mandated by a state law adopted in 2004.

The web site address is www.das.state.ct.us/Business_Svs/HCVp/HCVp_Home.asp. Social services providers should bookmark this site on their computers. They should also go to the web site and register for automatic notification. Persons and entities who register will automatically receive email notice of new postings on the web site. It is recommended that social service agencies check the box marked "All Authorities" so that they will receive notice whenever a waiting list anywhere in the state is opened.

Registration is available to any person, including tenants looking for housing. Users can also go to the

■ Provide information on Earned Income Tax Credits, Child Care Tax Credits and Individual Development Accounts to eligible low- and moderate-income families; and,

■ Educate the public on how tax credits can be used to build assets.

Last year, 21 million families with two or more children qualified for the Earned Income Tax Credit providing tax refunds of up to \$4,300. IRS studies indicate millions more families are eligible for this tax credit but fail to claim it. To locate a VITA site near you, call 1-800-829-1040 or call Infoline 211.♦

Tell Your Story!

Advocates have proposed a bill that would provide basic consumer protections for all ConnPACE, SAGA, elderly, disabled and family Medicaid recipients who are required to use Preferred Drug Lists (PDLs) to get prescriptions. Your stories are needed to help illustrate the need for these protections!

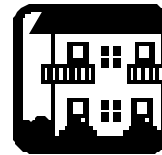
Have you been told by a pharmacist that your prescribed drug is unavailable because it is "not on the list"? Have you had difficulty getting your doctor to authorize the drug you need in a

(See Your Story on p.2)

website to find a list of currently open Section 8 waiting lists.

The new law requires every housing authority which intends to open a Section 8 waiting list to post notice of the opening on the web site at least two weeks before its list is opened. It is hoped that any housing authority whose waiting list is already open will post notice immediately.♦

CT'S Housing Wage Now At \$17.90/Hr



A new report from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition has found that a person must earn \$17.90 per hour to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in Connecticut. A single parent in Connecticut earning the minimum wage of \$7.10 per hour would have to work 101 hours a week — about 17 hours per day, 6 days per week — to earn enough to afford such an apartment.

The report documents the continuing wide gap between housing costs and household income, with Connecticut ranking as the sixth most expensive state in the country. The housing wage for the Stamford-Norwalk area — \$27.63 per hour — is the second highest of any metropolitan region in the country (second only to the San Francisco area).

The report, entitled "Out of Reach," concludes that for many families even working full-time does not provide enough income to afford a typical apartment. The report finds that nearly 77,000 low-income Connecticut households are paying more than 30% of their income for housing, with many paying more than 50%. The predictable result of the unaffordable nature of housing is doubling up, living in substandard housing, and cycling in and out of homelessness.

The report comes on the heels of federal changes in the Section 8 program which are reducing the number of Section 8 vouchers available and forcing tenants with vouchers to pay a higher percentage of their income toward the rent.

The full "Out of Reach" report can be accessed on the web at www.nlihc.org/oor2004/♦

Report on Medicaid Eligibility Determination Process Issued



The Legislative Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Committee recently released their findings and recommendations following their study of DSS' Medicaid Eligibility Determination Process. This study was prompted by concerns about DSS restructuring and employee reductions and their potential impact on client access to Medicaid.

The report indicates that there is a strong correlation between office staffing reductions and the percentage of applications that were not processed within federally required time limits. Further, there are variations in processing times depending on the type of Medicaid application being processed, with 60% of the overdue applications being for long-term care. There are variations between DSS regional offices with some offices dealing with application backlogs more effectively than others. Additionally, no formal system exists to ensure that DSS has the most current addresses for its clients.

Recommendations include:

- Revision and updating of client notices and forms to alleviate client confusion which can impact eligibility.
- Offering trainings for workers in time management and priority setting.
- Exploring factors that have contributed to some offices performing better in processing applications and implement these in all other offices.
- Restoration of 14 DSS staff positions dealing with eligibility issues. The positions were lost through early retirement.
- Promotion of mail-in applications and forms where face-to-face interviews are not required.
- Funding and re-establishing presumptive Medicaid eligibility for children by July 1, 2005.
- Requiring applications of pregnant women to be processed through a heightened system of expedited eligibility.
- Submitting a waiver to CMS to extend the standard of promptness for long-term care applications to 90 days and allow a two year redetermination process.
- DSS district offices should receive greater support from Central Office including facility improvements and better communication systems.
- Recommendations 8 - 12, dealing with the role of the Community Action Agencies (CAA) in working with DSS clients and work hours for DSS staff, were tabled by the Committee for further discussion. The report recommended that CAA staff should take on a larger role in client assistance and social service functions that could include assisting Medicaid clients in establishing a disability.

All other recommendations were accepted by the PRI Committee. The full report can be accessed at the PRI website www.cga.ct.gov/pri under Studies. ♦

There is a flyer available in both English and Spanish that advises recipients of rights and options when prescriptions are rejected at the pharmacy. Go to www.larcc.org and click on "Hot Topics" or go to www.hivcouncil.org/advocacy.htm under "Current Initiatives." ♦

Art Contest "Justice Is..."



It's time for 7th and 8th graders throughout Greater Hartford to think about the impact of civil justice in their lives. The annual "Justice Is..." art contest is in full swing, and the deadline for submissions is March 31, 2005.

Entries can be paintings, drawings, photography, collage - any two-dimensional art. They can be any size, but no larger than 18" x 24". They must be about civil (not criminal) justice. Entrants must be in the 7th or 8th grade and live or go to school within the Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA) service territory (see www.ghla.org for towns).

Teachers, scout leaders, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and parents: encourage your students and young friends to enter. GHLA can provide curriculum and discussion guides. There are cash prizes for the winning students and for their schools or organizations. Awards are presented in a ceremony at the State Capitol on Law Day, May 2, 2005.

For details and an entry form, contact Greater Hartford Legal Aid, 860-541-5000. ♦

Your Story (cont. from p. 1)

timely manner? Have you experienced things like chronic pain, hospitalization, emergency room visits, an inability to work or go to school because you were unable to get your medication?

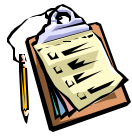
If so, your story is needed! Contact Sheldon Toubman, New Haven Legal Assistance at (203) 946-4811, or email stoubman@nhlegal.org. ♦

There are 45 Million Uninsured in U.S.

Want an understandable explanation of how a single payer health care system could work in the U.S.? Check out www.grahamazon.com. Click on 45 million.



Legislative Priorities for the 2005 Session



The 2005 legislative session convened on February 5 amongst reports of a projected budget deficit for the coming fiscal year estimated at between \$500 million by Democrats and up to as much as \$1.3 billion by Gov. Rell's office. Clearly budget concerns will influence many of the issues that we work on this session. Legislation that will be brought up this session that is of particular interest to CABHN Fever readers includes:

➤ Restorations to the SAGA Medical Program

This proposal will restore services that have been eliminated from coverage over the last few years as well as remove language which caps funding to hospitals and health centers serving SAGA Medical recipients. Coverage to be restored under this proposal includes non-emergency medical transportation, vision care, home health care, physical therapy, occupational and speech therapy, podiatry, chiropractic and naturopathic services.

➤ Restoration of HUSKY A coverage to parents up to 185% of the federal poverty level.

This proposal will address coverage for adult parents and caregivers that was eliminated in 2003. Although approximately 16,000 of these parents were able to maintain their eligibility for an additional 2 years because of a successful lawsuit brought by Legal Services, that 2 year extension is up in April 2005.

➤ Development of consumer protections for preferred drug lists.

These protections would apply to a prior authorization system for prescription drugs under any preferred drug list for low-income ConnPACE, SAGA and Medicaid recipients.

➤ Improving education and training opportunities for family welfare participants.

Funding for assessments and the purchase of education and training for Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) participants would be increased by \$18 million. Training Funds would be targeted to basic skills training (GED, alternative degree programs, ABE, ESL, etc.), vocational and occupational skills training and certification programs. The proposal also calls for implementation of a system to address the needs of JFES participants having inadequate reading or math skills. This system would include individual assessments and the development of individualized plans to remove barriers.

➤ Increasing tenant protections in public housing demolition and revitalization programs.

➤ Insuring that individuals required to enroll in the new Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit are not subjected to increased cost sharing because of this change in their benefits. This impacts those low income individuals who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid (dual eligibles). ❖

2005 Legislative Committee Assignments

Committee & Chairs

Aging

Sen. Jonathan Harris
Rep. Art Feltman

Appropriations

Sen. Toni Harp
Rep. Denise Merrill

Children

Sen. Ed Meyer
Rep. Michael Cardin

Higher Education & Employment Advancement

Sen. Joan Hartley
Rep. Roberta Willis

Finance, Revenue & Bonding

Sen. Eileen Daily
Rep. Cameron Staples

Housing

Sen. Bob Duff
Rep. Kenneth Green

Human Services

Sen. Mary Ann Handley
Rep. Peter Villano

Judiciary

Sen. Andrew McDonald
Rep. Michael Lawlor

Labor & Public Employees

Sen. Edith Prague
Rep. Kevin Ryan

Planning & Development

Sen. Eric Coleman
Rep. Lewis Wallace

Public Health

Sen. Christopher Murphy
Rep. Peggy Sayers

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 Date! UCAN Training



The Greater Hartford Central Labor Council and the United Labor Agency have teamed up to co-sponsor Union Community Activist (UCAN) training.

Highlights of the training include:

Forming community/labor alliances to strengthen the capital area

Power of community involvement/politics

Building a more caring community

Why unions are good for the country

Personal skill building

Trainings are held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-9PM, Feb. 22 to March 17, 2005 at the Greater Hartford Central Labor Council – United Labor Agency, 77 Huyshope Ave., 2nd Floor, Rm 210, Hartford. The cost is \$45 per person. For info, contact Mary McNeff (860) 727-9301. ♦

New Hours for SLS

Statewide Legal Services has changed hours to concentrate more staff during the busiest calling hours.

Monday	9AM-3PM
Tuesday	9AM-4PM
Wednesday	9AM-3PM
Thursday	9AM-6PM
Friday	9AM-4PM

Reminder: You'll get through faster by using the "redial" button rather than hanging up and redialing manually if the line's busy. ♦

Did you know...

...there was an average 13% increase in requests for emergency food assistance by families in 2004?

...that 34 percent of adults requesting food assistance were employed?

Percentages are from Hunger and Homelessness Survey 2004, conducted in 27 U.S. cities. ♦

CABHN Meetings held 1st Friday of the month

9:30 - 11:30 am

Upcoming Meeting:

February 11th

The Lyceum, 1st floor
227 Lawrence Street

Hartford

Topics:

Review of Governor Rell's Budget

See you there!

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.

Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT and CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)
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Hartford, CT 06106

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