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CABHN FEVER

SAGA Medical Program Shifts to Managed Care on August 1; Providers May Change

As of August 1, the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) Medical program will be a managed care system with the Community Health Network of Connecticut (CHNCT) as the administrator of the system and the federally qualified Community Health Centers as the major providers of primary care. SAGA Medical currently provides health care to about 30,000 people in Connecticut. Participants will receive information about the change from the Department of Social Services (DSS) and from CHN.

Under the new system, SAGA participants will be assigned to and must receive primary care from a primary care provider which has a contract with CHNCT. In most cases, participants will be assigned to the federally qualified Community Health Center that is closest to their home. Referrals will be made to specialists as needed by the primary care provider.

Participants may also be assigned to hospital clinics or private and group medical practices which choose to contract with CHNCT. Providers who do not contract with CHN will not be reimbursed for many services provided to SAGA recipients after August 1.

SAGA Medical participants have received letters from DSS alerting them to this change and should receive information from CHNCT explaining this new system and providing the name of the participant's primary care provider before August 1. The CHNCT mailing should also contain a CHNCT membership card. After August 1, SAGA participants should go to their assigned primary care provider to receive regular health care.

Participants can change their primary care providers to another provider in the CHNCT network. To change primary care provider, or to get answers to other questions about this new system:

Call CHNCT at 1-866-361-SAGA (7242) or go on the CHNCT website: www.chnct.org.

CABHN is trying to document problems with this system as it is implemented. If you or one of your clients is assigned to a primary care provider located far from home, has other problems getting to the provider or generally has problems with this new system, please contact Deborah Noble at 860-278-5688 ext. 12 or dnoble@larcc.org and leave details about the issue.

Summer Food Service Program for Kids in CT



Children in your community do not need to go hungry this summer. During the school year, nutritious meals are available through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. But those programs end when school ends for the summer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program helps fill the hunger gap. There are hundreds of sites in the state where children can get a free and nutritious lunch.

To locate a site in your neighborhood,

1. go to the State Department of Education web site: www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/nutrition/SFSP/
2. call 2-1-1 INFOLine at any time of day or night, or

Mentoring Program

The "One-on-One" Mentoring Program in Eastern CT helps teenagers referred by DCF to transition successfully from foster care to independent living. The program is available at the ACCESS Agency in both the Danielson and Willimantic offices. For more information, contact Pat Murphy, Program Manager at 860-774-0418 or by e-mail at mentoring@accessagency.org

Old Cell Phones Wanted



Interfaith AIDS Ministry of Greater Danbury is collecting used cell phones to raise funds for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Education work in the Greater Danbury Area. Send or bring phones to Donate-A-Phone, c/o Interfaith AIDS Ministry, 46 Main St., Danbury, CT 06810-8047. Call for more info: 203-748-4077.

3. check out the INFOLine website, at www.referweb.net/uwct211/ (To find sites in your town, put in the name of your town and search with the key word "Summer Food Service Program.")

At the Department of Education website, you will also find outreach materials, applications to become a Summer Food Site, and guidelines for many food and nutrition programs.

For more information about the summer food program contact:

Charlene Russell-Tucker
charlene.russell-tucker@po.state.ct.us
 or 860-807-2071

Susan Bohuslaw
susan.bohuslaw@po.state.ct.us
 or 860-807-2073.

Medicare Drug Cards Should NOT Hurt Food Stamp Recipients

As part of the drug card program, authorized in last year's Medicare drug law, an additional \$600 subsidy, known as "transitional assistance," is available in 2004 and 2005 for low-income Medicare participants (those with income below 135% of FPL) to use towards purchasing prescription drugs.

Seniors and people with disabilities do not need to worry that their food stamp benefits will be decreased if they sign up for the Medicare drug card. The \$600 transitional medical assistance available through the Medicare drug card will not be counted as additional income for food stamps.

But wait there's more good news! Currently seniors and people with disabilities are able to deduct out-of-pocket medical expenses in excess of \$35/month from their income resulting in higher food stamp benefits. Federal guidance requires that the \$600 transitional assistance be counted as an out-of-pocket medical expense, which will increase most households' food stamp benefit.

The CT Department of Social Services is currently reviewing these policy changes and Connecticut specific policy has not been issued. If you have any questions, please call Sally Mancini, Program Director at End Hunger CT! (860) 560-2100 ext. 17.

Need Child Care?



2-1-1 Child Care Infoline is a confidential and free child care referral telephone service in Connecticut - just dial 2-1-1. Counselors are available to assist in locating appropriate resources and referrals. Multi-lingual counselors are available.



Reminder: Changes to Programs Effective 7/01/04

As of July 1st:

- Legal immigrants who have been in CT for at least 6 months are eligible to apply for SAGA Cash and Medical, State Medical Assistance for Non-Citizens, Food Stamps, Home Care for Elders, and TFA (cash assistance)
- The Care4Kids Program has expanded its Priority Group to include families who have been on welfare any time during the past 60 months (back to July 1999) and have begun processing applications from the Wait List.
- SAGA and Medicaid clients no longer have to pay co-pays for prescription or physician visits.
- The premiums for HUSKY B have been lowered to their January 2004

amounts and overpayments made by families will be refunded.

■ New applicants to the TFA cash assistance program who are not exempt from the work requirement must complete an "employment plan" before benefits will be granted. However, DSS cannot delay the granting of benefits if it takes longer than 20 business days to develop the emergency plan.

■ The T-RAP (Transitional Rental Assistance Program) is expanded to include families leaving TFA who are working at least 12 hours per week or earning more than their monthly TFA benefit

For more information about these changes please call Deborah Noble at CABHN, 860-278-5688x.12

Opening of Section 8 Waiting Lists Posted on Internet

Effective 7/1/2004, a new law, Public Act 04-258 Sec. 14, requires each housing authority to post the opening of its waiting lists on the Internet at least two weeks prior to the list opening up. The information that is posted on this site will include: the date the Section 8 waiting list is to be opened; how someone can apply; and the date the Section 8 waiting list will close.

The Department of Administrative Services (DAS) is creating a web site for this purpose and expects it to be up by 10/01/04. In addition, it will be possible for individuals to register to receive automatic notices whenever a new listing is posted on the web site. It is expected that INFOLine, as well as many other services providers, will register so that they will be able to keep their web site and clients updated. When available, CABHN will publish the web site address and put it on our web site (www.larcc.org).

2-1-1 Infoline Social Barometer

INFOLine/2-1-1 has released a report titled "A Social Barometer for Connecticut - Housing and Homelessness in Connecticut". The focus of this report is the shortage of affordable housing and the crisis of homelessness which is affecting so many people in Connecticut.

The report reflects information from INFOLine's database of community services and five years of consumer calls to their 2-1-1 telephone service.

Over the past five years, the number of housing-related requests for assistance rose by 120% while service requests overall increased by 53%. During the same five year span the number of calls from homeless individuals increased by an astounding 357%!

You can find this report at: www.211infoline.org

2-1-1 Infoline is a public/private partnership between the State of CT and CT United Ways.

Section 8 Under Attack



The Section 8 Housing Program, the federal program which makes housing affordable to low-income households, is at risk due to federal actions on several fronts.

HUD and the 2004 budget

In April 2004 the federal Dept. of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) issued a directive which retroactively reduced the Section 8 funding (back to January 2004) across the country. The directive stated that housing authority Section 8 reimbursement payments would be based on the number of vouchers and the average rents that were in place as of August 2003, plus a limited inflation adjustment. In many areas, however, Section 8 utilization and Section 8 rents have increased since that date.

As a result, these unanticipated changes by HUD left many housing authorities with insufficient funds to support their Section 8 programs, in some cases forcing drastic housing authority responses. Housing authorities have stopped issuing Section 8 vouchers to families on their waiting lists, demanded the return of vouchers issued but not yet leased up, lowered fair market rents (thereby limiting tenant choice of apartments or forcing tenants to pay a higher percentage of their income as rent), or tried to renegotiate rents with landlords. Some of these housing authority actions may be illegal.

HUD claimed that its action was in response to Congressional mandate, but Congress in fact had included enough money in the HUD budget to fully fund all Section 8 vouchers. In June, Connecticut's entire Congressional delegation — its two Senators and all five of its Congressmen — sent a letter to HUD protesting its actions.

The 2005 budget and beyond

In addition, the Bush Administration is asking for substantial cuts to the Section 8 voucher program in its proposed 2005 budget. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that under the Administration's proposal, it is likely that Connecticut will lose funding for more than 4,000 of its 34,000 Section 8 vouchers in 2005 and for nearly 10,000 of them by 2009, a loss of nearly one-third of the funding for the program. It is also pushing a proposal to block grant the Section 8 program to housing authorities and to convert Section 8 to a "budget-based" appropriation which will result in fewer Section 8 vouchers for a housing authority as market rents rise. Taken together, these proposed changes will result in less funding for Section 8, higher rents and fewer rights for tenants.

What can you do?

The Bush Administration budget proposals are still only proposals — they have not been enacted into law. You can contact your United States Senators and your Congressional representative and urge them to:

- ⇒ Support full funding for the Section 8 program.
- ⇒ Oppose retroactive reduction of Section 8 allocations,
- ⇒ Oppose block granting Section 8,
- ⇒ Oppose budget-based funding,
- ⇒ Oppose cutting other housing programs to pay for Section 8,

For more information on the Section 8 voucher program and proposed budget changes, please contact Rafie Podolsky at LARCC, 860-278-5688 x 13.

TANF Re-Authorization: 3 Month Extension

In June, Congress passed a bill that extended the TANF program through September 30, 2004. Between now and September, advocates and some members of Congress will likely try to pass a long-term (five-year) extension of current TANF law. However, it is unclear when the Senate will again take up debate on a welfare reauthorization bill. From July 26th to September 6th, both chambers will be in recess for the party conventions and their annual summer break.

When Congressmembers return in September, they are likely to wrap up unresolved items (particularly the annual appropriations bills) and adjourn in order to go home and campaign before the November 2nd elections. Their target adjournment date is currently October 1st. It is unclear whether the members of Congress will come back to Washington, DC for a lame duck session in late November or whether they will let the next Congress that is sworn in January deal with TANF Re-Authorization.

Did you know?

In Connecticut, a person who has been confined to a federal or state correctional institution, correctional facility, or community residence can have his/her voting rights restored by submitting written proof to a city/town Registrar of Voters or other admitting official of their discharge from confinement and, if applicable, parole. Any fines that were charged in conjunction with the felony conviction must also be paid. The Department of Correction (which can supply a release letter) and the Office of Adult Probation are responsible for notifying people of their rights to apply for voter registration.



Save The Date!



On Saturday, October 23, 2004 the YWCA of the Hartford Region and Connecticut State

Treasurer Denise L. Nappier are co-hosting The Money Conference for Women — a one-day conference focusing on money management, investment and retirement strategies for women of all ages, economic backgrounds, and levels of financial knowledge. The program is designed to address the unique financial issues women face in their work and personal lives. The conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel & Conference Center in Cromwell, CT.

The Money Conference for Women is open to the first 550 registered participants. The day-long conference will feature motivating speakers, specialized breakout classes and the opportunity to speak one-on-one with a certified financial planner. For more

information or to request registration materials, please contact (860) 525-1163 ext. 292 or visit our website at www.ctmoneyconferenceforwomen.com

More Help From Statewide Legal Services

Statewide Legal Services is now open more hours to meet the needs of our clients. Statewide is open Tuesday and Thursday evenings until 7 p.m. Evenings are a good time to call because it is less busy.

The full weekly schedule is

Monday - 9 to 4

Tuesday and Thursday - 9 to 7

Wednesday and Friday - 9 to 3

Please call 1-800-453-3320 to get the help and advice you need with your legal issues!

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

CABHN Meetings held 1st Friday of the month

9:30 - 11:30 am

Upcoming Meeting:

September 3rd

Community Renewal Team
(CRT)

555 Windsor St., Hartford

Topics:

SAGA Medical

and more

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.

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