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CABHN FEVER

If You Rely On Government Assistance To Pay For Housing, This CT Law May Protect You!



Connecticut is one of only a handful of states that have made it illegal to refuse to rent to a person who relies on government assistance to pay for housing. This law protects anyone who pays for housing with any lawful source of income.

Various forms of assistance qualify as “lawful source of income” under Connecticut law, including:

Federal housing subsidies: Section 8 housing voucher is the best-known type of housing assistance used by persons seeking housing.

State housing assistance: Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and Transitional Rental Assistance Program (T-RAP) are state programs similar to Section 8.

Security Deposit Guarantee: Through the Department of Social Services, this program aids low-income persons by guaranteeing that a landlord will receive a payment if the tenant causes damage to the rental property. This government-backed “IOU” is used instead of a cash payment for the security deposit.

Connecticut Legal Services (CLS) is now focusing on eliminating this form of discrimination, particularly in Fairfield and New London counties.

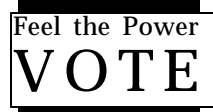
CLS attorneys hope to file several complaints against landlords who practice this type of discrimination. CLS believe that the problem of denial of housing to government-assistance participants is more widespread than it may appear.

Landlords’ reluctance to participate in the program – saying their apartment or house will not pass a Section 8

inspection, for example – does not excuse them under the law, CLS attorneys note.

People who may have been victims of this type of discrimination, or their caseworkers or advocates, should contact David Stowe at the Bridgeport CLS office at (203) 336-3851, or toll-free at 1-800-809-4434. Mr. Stowe can also be reached at dstowe@connlegalservices.org.

Your Organization Can Register Voters!



Most non-profit organizations are tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and therefore cannot engage in partisan political activity. But many organizations do not understand that they can register voters as long as voter registration activities are conducted in a completely non-partisan way. In fact, the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 encourages “all nongovernmental entities” to offer voter registration services.

Nonpartisan means not influenced by, affiliated with, or supportive of the interests or policies of any political party or candidate.

As long as your organization is not engaging in partisan activity, you CAN:

- register voters
- encourage registered voters to vote
- drive voters to the polls.

You CANNOT:

- make statements in support or opposition to a particular candidate or party
- display or distribute partisan literature, buttons, posters, flyers, bumper stickers or other political propaganda while engaged in registering voters, encouraging them to vote or transporting voters to the polls.

A 501(c)(3) organization also CANNOT, under any circumstances, endorse any political party or candidate.

For more information about the do’s and don’ts of voter registration for non-profit organizations, contact Americo Santiago at DemocracyWorks, 860-727-1157 americodemocracyworksct.org.



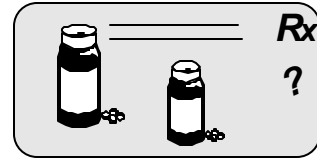
Come Join The Fun With The Recreation Connection

EndHungerConnecticut! is offering four \$500 grants for use at sites that participate in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The SFSP makes food available to low-income kids during the summer. The “Recreation Connection”, funded through a

Hartford Law Foundation grant, hopes to attract more participation in the program by offering kids recreation at the sites. The grants may be used for sporting goods, crafts or any other ideas that will bring kids to the food sites. For more information, or to apply, please go to

www.endhungerct.org.

Understanding the New Medicare Discount Card



Nationally: Starting 6-1-04, seniors (65 & older) who receive either Part A or Part B Medicare and disabled adults eligible for Medicare can purchase discount cards from private sponsors. The discount card costs up to \$30.00 per year, but several cost much less. For low income seniors, it is free.

There is an open enrollment, meaning you can enroll at any time. However, once you select a discount card, you are locked in until 12-31-04 with very limited exceptions. Starting 11-15-04 the enrollment period for 2005 will begin and you will have until 12-31-04 to select another plan that will begin 1-1-05.

Transitional benefit: If your income is below 135% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (\$1,048/month for a single person), you are eligible for a \$600 drug benefit. *This is a credit; it is not cash.*

In Connecticut, the Legislature passed the ConnPace “wrap-around” bill. It states that if you are a senior or disabled person on ConnPace (and a Medicare Part A or B beneficiary) with an income below 135% of the FPL, you will receive a Medicare drug discount card. The card will be free. ConnPACE has mailed information and a standard application to all beneficiaries.

For those individuals whose income is under 135% of the FPL, if you do not choose a drug discount card by 5-21-04, DSS will pick one for you. For those with income over 135% of FPL, obtaining a discount card is voluntary. DSS has the authority to change that, however, and require higher income seniors to purchase such a discount card.

Under ConnPace, you still pay a co-payment of \$16.25 for each prescription. Since low income seniors will have a discount card and be entitled to the \$600.00 transitional benefit, they may pay less than \$16.25 per prescription. With the discount card,

you pay 5% or 10% of the cost of the prescription depending on your income.

For example: if your income is below 100% of FPL, you pay 5%. If the drug costs \$100, you would pay \$5.00 rather than \$16.25 for the prescription.

The 5% or 10% co-pay structure only lasts until the \$600 benefit is exhausted, which could happen very quickly. Once the transitional benefit is exhausted, the ConnPACE beneficiary goes back to paying \$16.25 for every prescription.

Seniors on a Medicaid spenddown could be hurt by this new card. Instead of getting the full cost of their prescription applied to the spenddown, only their co-payment amount will be applied. In other words, the \$600 transitional credit does not count toward meeting their spenddown. Therefore, it will now take longer to meet the spenddown amount.

Connecticut has approved all 31 national sponsors and 44 approved plans, but only 15 sponsors have been approved for ConnPACE beneficiaries.

For those ConnPACE members enrolled in the HealthNet managed care plan (Fairfield County residents), the HealthNet’s Medicare-approved drug discount card is the only card available to you. For those ConnPACE members enrolled in the Oxford Medicare managed care plan, you can choose any of the available cards. For Medicare managed care enrollees, you are not eligible for the \$600 transitional benefit, no matter what your income.

As a senior, what do you need to know?

1. You need to make a list of all prescriptions and dosages. You want to try and ensure that your prescriptions are covered with the discount card you purchase.
2. Call your local CHOICES program for assistance. The number

is 1-800-994-9422.

3. If you are computer savvy, contact Medicare on-line at www.medicare.gov.

4. Or, you can call Medicare directly at 1-800-Medicare. It may take 30-45 minutes to get information on the various programs once you provide the Medicare worker with your prescription information.

5. You should also talk to your pharmacist. Some discount cards apply only to certain pharmacies.

Since the sponsors can change their formularies & prices at any time, does it make a difference which card you select?

It is unclear. According to CMS, the sponsors will not do that in order to be competitive. The problem is that the sponsors are not prohibited from making changes, but there is a “lock-in” period for the Medicare recipient. Advocates are seriously concerned about seniors being trapped in a changing plan. It’s advisable to research and choose what appears to be best for you, and make an informed decision.

Important to note!

Unless you are a ConnPACE beneficiary under 135% of FPL, this Medicare drug discount card program is voluntary! It is really a \$30 (or less) per year gamble that you will recoup the cost of the card through the discounts you receive with it. The choice is yours.❖

CLPE Can Help!

If you're a senior 60 or over with questions about your rights as a consumer, call the Consumer Law Project for Elders hotline, M-F, 9am-5pm 1-800-296-1467.❖



The 2004 legislative session ended on May 5 and for the first time in recent memory, produced both a revised budget (\$14.3 billion) and a DSS implementer bill. Many of the issues that we had prioritized at the beginning of the session, became part of the budget negotiations and ended up in budget and implementer language. The legislature did go back into special session on 5/11 to pass an OPM implementer bill and some bonding proposals.

Here's the latest update on where many of the issues we care about stand:

■ **Restoration of Medicaid Cuts made in the 2003 Special Sessions** - the final budget bill (HB 5692) and the DSS implementer bill (HB 5689) restore the HUSKY A benefits package to its current level, and eliminate cost sharing for HUSKY A, Medicaid fee-for-service and SAGA Medical recipients.

■ **SAGA Medical** - provisions from last session to fund this program through a federal waiver and to deliver services through health centers, remains.

■ **Waiver Authority** - the OPM implementer bill (HB 5801) prevents DSS (through 6/30/05) from agreeing to any Medicaid waiver that would limit the 50% federal match rate that CT currently receives.

■ **HUSKY B Premiums** - the OPM implementer prohibits DSS from cutting off HUSKY B children from now until June 30, 2004, for non-payment of the premium increases implemented this year. The DSS Commissioner is directed to study the impact of the premium increases and report to the General Assembly by June 1, 2004.

■ **Preferred Drug List (PDL)** - language to provide consumer protections to the expanded PDL was not successful.

■ **State-funded Benefits for Legal Immigrants** - reopens application process for SAGA cash and medical, the state-funded home care program, food stamps, TFA and State Medical Assistance for Non-Citizens. Also eliminates sunset provision.

■ **Child Care Assistance** - opens program for 2000 families from waiting list.

■ **TFA Employability Plans** - TFA benefits will not be granted until applicant has completed an employment plan at a one-stop center, unless applicant is exempt from participation in employment services program. DSS implementer added language requiring that employment plan be developed within 20 business days of application for assistance.

■ **TANF Bonus Funds (\$11.7m)** - See chart for final appropriations. Please note that budget language took \$250K from the Employment Success Program and granted it to the Greater Hartford Literacy Council. The DSS implementer then appropriated \$250K of DSS lapsing money and allocated it back to the ESP program. The OPM implementer makes further changes by taking \$100K from Emergency Shelters and \$50K from the Good News Garage and allocates this \$150K to the Connecticut Association for United Spanish Action, Inc. (CAUSA).

■ **TRAP** (Public Act 04-73) - expands T-RAP to include any family which is working at the time it leaves TFA (including families leaving before their time limits expire), if either (a) it is earning more than the TFA grant or (b) it is working at least 12 hours per week.

■ **Childhood Nutrition** - (Public Act 04-224) - creates minimum standards for schools in order to decrease childhood obesity.

■ **Income Tax Refund Anticipation Loan Disclosures** (Public Act 04-170) - requires refund anticipation loan facilitators (usually a for-profit tax preparer) to disclose certain facts when a borrower applies for the loan. It defines "refund anticipation loan" as a loan arranged to be paid directly from the proceeds of the borrower's income tax refund. ❖

TANF Bonus Funds as allocated in Budget adopted 5/04:

	2004-05	2005-06
Care4Kids	\$4,000,000	
Housing		
Rent subsidies	720,712	400,000
Family supportive housing	691,503	691,503
Emergency shelter services		100,000
Education & Training		
Enhanced Job Entry Initiatives	575,400	575,400
Charter Oak: Women in Transition	239,750	239,750
Child Care Apprenticeship Program	200,372	200,372
Intensive Supports for TFA Families		
Employment Success Program	710,270	
Other:		
Welfare to Work Transportation	650,000	300,000
Good News Garage	350,000	300,000

Helpful web site: www.chif.org

The Connecticut Housing Investment Fund, Inc. (CHIF) provides low interest Energy Conservation & Home Improvement loans to qualified applicants. ❖



Save the Date!!

One Connecticut Annual Planning Meeting

Wednesday, June 16th, 2004
9:00AM — 1:00PM at the UAW in
Farmington.

**Lunch at 1PM ~ \$5.00 donation
requested to register, please email
Kim Sweeney:**

oneconnecticutkim@yahoo.com ❖

Community Organizer Position Available

CT Center for a New Economy would like to hire a Community Organizer to work in the Hartford area. This individual would develop and support working relationships and coalitions among religious, labor, civil rights and community groups for the purpose of advancing economic justice and raising the standard of living for working people in the greater Hartford area. For more information on this position, contact CT Center for a New Economy at 203-785-9494. ❖

New Hours at Statewide Legal Services!

If you are low income and think you have a legal problem, help is available. Call between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday and the wait is shorter.

NEW HOURS: Mon. & Wed. - 9AM-4PM
 Tues. & Thurs. - 9AM-7PM
 Fri. - 9AM- 3 PM

Call 860-344-0380 in the Middeltown/Hartford areas. The toll free number is 800-453-3320. Se habla espanol. ❖

**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 Meetings:

June 4th

Community Renewal Team
(CRT)

555 Windsor St., Hartford

Topics:

Budget Update

Implementer Bill

Discuss Summer Meeting Schedule

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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