

Highlights in this issue:	
DSS Office Re-opens	p 1
CHAP Program Opens 2/9/04	p1
Update on Housing Issues	p 2
State Budget Update	p 3

CABHN FEVER

DSS Announces the Re-opening of the Willimantic Office on March 8

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has announced its plans to re-open its Willimantic Office to serve residents of 20 towns in northeastern Connecticut. The office will open at 676 Main Street on Monday, March 8, 2004 and will serve the residents of Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Columbia, Coventry, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Mansfield, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Union, Willington, Windham and Woodstock.

The office will be open to clients, and will take calls on the main switchboard three days a week (Mon., Tues. & Fri. 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.). Clients who live in the 20 towns served by the Willimantic office will be receiving letters informing them of their new eligibility worker. If clients receive appointments scheduled after March 5 in the Norwich office, they are advised to contact the Willimantic Office at 860-465-3500 (or toll-free at 1-866-342-3500), or to call their DSS worker to avoid having to travel to the Norwich DSS office.

The Willimantic Office will provide a full range of eligibility services, including Food Stamps, Temporary Family Assistance, State-Administered General Assistance, State Supplemental Income for the Aged, Blind and Disabled, Medicaid/HUSKY, and Child Support Enforcement. Social Work Services will continue to be managed out of the Norwich office, and referrals for Protective Services for the Elderly should be made by calling 1-888-385-4225.

The public is invited to a community open house at the Willimantic office on

CHAP Program Now Taking Applications



The Contingency Heating Assistance Program (CHAP) is now available to qualified households.

Applications for a one-time, \$200 energy assistance grant are being accepted now through April 30th (or earlier if funds run out).

Income Eligibility Requirement:

Family Size	*60% state median income	**60% state median income
1	\$ 2,145	\$25,745
2	\$ 2,806	\$33,667
3	\$ 3,466	\$41,588
4	\$ 4,126	\$49,510
5	\$ 4,786	\$57,432
6	\$5,446	\$65,353
*monthly		**annual

Apply now at your local Community Action Agency, or call Infoline for further information and referral to an application site in your city or town. Bring proof of income for everyone in the household and a copy of your fuel or utility bill. ♦

Thursday, March 4, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. (Snow date for the open house is March 5 from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m.) To RSVP or for further information about the open house, please contact Patricia Weel at patricia.weel@po.state.ct.us or 860-723-1281. ♦

2004 Poverty Guidelines from Health and Human Services

Size of family	Poverty Guideline
1.....	\$9,310
2.....	12,490
3.....	15,670
4.....	18,850
5.....	22,030
6.....	25,210
7.....	28,390
8.....	31,570

For family units with more than 8 members, add \$3,180 for each additional member. (The same increment applies to smaller family sizes also, as can be seen in the figures above.)

These guidelines went into effect on February 13, 2004.

For general questions about the poverty guidelines (but NOT for questions about a particular program that uses the poverty guidelines), contact Gordon Fisher, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, at (202) 690-7507 or if you have Internet access you can go to the poverty guidelines Internet site at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty>. For information about the number of people in poverty since 1959 or about the Census Bureau poverty thresholds, contact the Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division information staff (HHES-Info) by calling them at (301) 763-3242—or you can send an e-mail to hhes-info@census.gov; persons with Internet access may visit the Poverty section of the Census Bureau's Internet site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty.html>. ♦

Bush Administration Budget Threatens Section 8 Program

The Bush Administration's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2005 may, if adopted, have a devastating effect on the Housing Choice Voucher program (still popularly known as "Section 8"). The budget, which seeks to reduce federal expenditures on domestic programs, adversely affects Section 8 in two major ways:

Underfunding: According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), the proposed budget underfunds the Housing Choice Voucher program by about \$1 billion. NLIHC estimates that, nationwide, there will be insufficient funding to maintain about 250,000 currently authorized vouchers.

Restructuring: The President's proposal would block grant the Section 8 program to local housing authorities, giving them wide discretion to administer the program under any rules which they wish. Last year, Congress rejected the President's effort to block-grant Section 8 to the states. This year's proposal would make operation of the program even less uniform and potentially more arbitrary.

The problems raised by this proposal include:

- *Local housing authorities could make up their own rules.* For example, they could eliminate the Brooke Amendment, which generally prevents tenants from having to pay more than 30% of their income as their share of the rent. Similarly, they would no longer have to target at least 75% of their vouchers to the poorest households (those with incomes below 30% of median).

There would be financial pressures on housing authorities to target vouchers away from the poorest households. Funding would be changed from a unit-based system (in which the housing authority gets a certain number of vouchers) to a dollar-based system (in which the housing authority gets a set amount of

money to work with). The poorest families require the largest subsidies. By targeting relatively more prosperous families, a housing authority could retain more vouchers.

- *There will be a likelihood of ever-greater underfunding in the future.* With a block grant, it is politically easier to reduce total federal funding or hold it level in the face of rising rents, thereby phasing down the program over the long term. The Administration's desire to reduce federal spending on domestic programs is probably the main reason behind the block grant proposal.

- *There is no requirement that existing families be allowed to retain their vouchers.* They could be forced off the program or forced to reapply.

- *Housing authorities would have incentives to put time limits on vouchers.* The Administration's proposal includes financial rewards to housing authorities which "graduate" tenants out of the voucher program. The Administration is now starting to refer to this program as a "transition" program as if it were a short-term welfare program. In reality, housing subsidies are needed on an on-going basis by families with a wide range of incomes, and rental assistance for low-income renters is no more transitional than is the income tax mortgage deduction for home owners.

- *"Enhanced" vouchers would be valid for only one year.* Enhanced vouchers allow families to remain indefinitely in housing developments with project-based federal subsidies which convert to market rate housing at rents above regular Section 8 limits. A one-year limitation on enhancement could force the family out after one year.

- *The portability of vouchers would be limited.* No family could move out of the issuing housing authority's jurisdiction during its first year with a voucher. ♦



What can you do? Call your federal Senators and Congressman at 1-888-818-6641.

Bill Could Result In Tenants Losing Possessions After Eviction



The Judiciary Committee has raised a bill, S.B. 232, which greatly increases the risk that tenants will lose all of their property after they have been evicted. The bill states that if a tenant is unable to remove their possessions before an eviction is carried out, the marshal who removes the property can put the goods on the curb and leave them there. In due course, the town will presumably pick up what is left and remove it as trash.

This could leave the very poorest of tenants with literally nothing but the clothing on their backs. In addition, it would invite the landlord, his employees, and the marshal's movers to seize and keep any property of the tenant which has value. It is unlikely that landlords will cooperate in returning goods to tenants when they have evicted; and, even if they do not discard or take the goods immediately, they can easily make it impossible for tenants to reclaim property. Slightly different versions of this proposal would simply give all of the tenant's possessions to the landlord, either immediately upon the eviction or after holding them for 15 days.

Currently, the town removes and stores an evicted person's property for 15 days after an eviction. This give the tenant a chance to reclaim their property. It is estimated that there are 2,000 or more evictions per year in Connecticut in which a marshal

See SB232 page 4



The Governor's budget proposal, announced on February 4, contained very few new proposals and surprisingly limited proposed cuts to human services programs. On the other hand, it also contained very limited revenue increases, mostly through taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, and took no steps to repair damage done by cuts in previous budgets.

The budget package did outline a proposed allocation of the \$11.7 million in TANF Bonus funds, which have been available to the state since October. See below for a comparison of the Governor's proposals with the Welfare Working Group proposals.



Major New Spending Cuts/ Policy Changes Proposed by the Governor:	Projected Savings
Limit Transitional Medical Assistance (extended medical coverage for working families) to one year (currently available for two years)	\$15.9 million (starting in 2005-06)
Eliminate "non-critical" adult dental services (including fillings, crowns and root canals)	4.7 million
Impose \$2.00 co-pay on Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation	1.2 million
Require an employability plan before granting cash assistance to families in TFA program, unless family found to be exempt from work requirement	1.1 million

Comparison: Governor's Budget & Welfare Working Group's Recommendations

The Governor's budget assumes that there will be a federal waiver to permit a reduction of benefits and the imposition of premiums on Medicaid and HUSKY A participants.

The Governor did propose some innovative uses of the TANF Bonus Funds. Here's how his proposal compares to the Welfare Working Group recommendations. A bill on this issue will come before the Human Services Committee.

Program	Governor's Proposal (spending over 2 yrs)	Welfare Working Group Proposal (spending over 1 yr)
Working Parents Child Care	\$4 million	\$5 million
Housing:		
Rent subsidies	\$1.6 million	\$1 million
Family supportive housing	1.4 million	.3 million
Emergency shelter services	.4 million	
Education & Training:		
Enhanced Job Entry Initiatives	\$1.2 million	
GED/Basic Skills Training		\$2.4 million
Charter Oak: Woment in Transition	\$.5 million	
Child Care Apprenticeship Prog.	\$.4 million	
Supports for TFA Families:		
Employment Success Program	\$.7 million	\$ 2 million
Safety Net Program		\$ 1 million
Other:		
Welfare to Work Transportation	\$.7 million	
Good News Garage	.6 million	
Fatherhood Initiative	.4 million	
Faith-based Initiative	.1 million	

SB 232

Continued from page 2

removes tenants and their property from the premises. SB 232 eliminates the town from the process and the tenant's right to get the property back. It is essential that the town, as a neutral party, continue to store the tenant's goods and that there be a redemption period during which the tenant can get them back.

The bill is sponsored by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), which represents town governments, and by one of the state's landlord groups. ♦

What can you do?



Contact legislators on the Judiciary Committee and tell them that you oppose S.B.232 in all of its forms.

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

Save The Dates



March 15th, 5:30-7 p.m.

Ending Long-term Homelessness in Our Region - A Community Forum
3rd Congressional District:

Special guest U.S. Rep. Rosa. DeLauro at Thornton Wilder Hall, Miller Complex 2901 Dixwell Ave., Hamden (adjacent to the Hamden Public Library)

For more information call Kate Kelly at 860-244-0066

April 7th - One CT Good Jobs and Economic Security Issue Day at the Legislature. For more details, contact Jane McNichol, LARCC, 860-278-5688 ext. 15 or Lucy Nolan, End Hunger CT!, 860-560-2100 ext. 13

May 8th-Letter Carrier's Food Drive--12th Annual Assoc. of Letter Carrier's Food Drive -The food collected helps restock food pantries prior to the summer months. Please leave food on your doorstep for pickup by the letter carriers. ♦

CABHN Meetings

held 1st Friday of the month

9:30 - 11:30 am

Upcoming Meetings:

March 5th

April 2nd

Community Renewal Team
(CRT)

555 Windsor St., Hartford

Topics:

*Review of Governor's Budget
Proposal*

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.

NONPROFIT ORG
U S POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD CT
PERMIT NO 3377