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CABHN FEVER

Beware of Medicare Phone Scams!



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) warns seniors and people with disabilities to be aware of a scheme that asks Medicare beneficiaries for money and checking account information to help them enroll in a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan.

This scheme is called the “\$299 Ring” for the typical amount of money Medicare beneficiaries are talked into withdrawing from their checking accounts to pay for a non-existent prescription drug plan. Consumers can report these cases to their local law enforcement agencies or by calling 1-877-7SAFERX (1-877-772-3379).

No Medicare drug plan can ask a person with Medicare for bank account

or other personal information over the telephone. No beneficiary should ever provide that kind of information to a caller. They should contact their local police department if they believe someone is trying to take money or information from them illegally.

Legitimate drug plans will not ask for payment over the telephone or the Internet. They must bill the beneficiary for the monthly premium. Typically, that amount is set up as an automatic withdrawal from the beneficiary’s monthly Social Security check. Beneficiaries may also opt to pay the monthly premiums in other ways such as writing a check or setting up automatic payments from their checking accounts.

New Haven Diaper Bank Meets Basic Need



The New Haven Diaper Bank is a rapidly growing agency addressing a basic need of families living in poverty. This grassroots, all volunteer organization is modeled on the successful national network of food banks.

The Diaper Bank centralizes the fundraising and distribution of free diapers to poor families through existing service providers including local food pantries, soup kitchens, daycare centers, social service agencies and shelters. The New Haven Diaper Bank currently gives away approximately 30,000 free diapers every month in New Haven and expects that number to double in the next year.

The considerable cost of diapers and personal hygiene products are not included in any entitlement program.

The lack of availability of affordable diapers for poor families in Connecticut puts children in those families at risk for a variety of problems including severe diaper rash which can lead to eczema and possible urinary tract infections. Day care centers will not take children without an accompanying supply of diapers, and parents without the support of daycare centers are prevented from entering the work force.

Agencies in New Haven serving poor families can contact The New Haven Diaper Bank to become a distributing agency. Agencies in different areas of the state are encouraged to start diaper banks. The New Haven Diaper Bank can help you get started. For more information, go to www.newhavendiaperbank.org or call 203-843-5372.

2006 Poverty Guidelines from Health and Human Services

Size of family	* Poverty Guideline
1.....	\$9,800
2.....	13,200
3.....	16,600
4.....	20,000
5.....	23,400
6.....	26,800
7.....	30,200
8.....	33,600

*Guidelines for Alaska and Hawaii differ from above.

For family units with more than 8 members, add \$3,400 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 January 24, 2006. For more information, go to <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/06poverty.shtml>

Energy Assistance

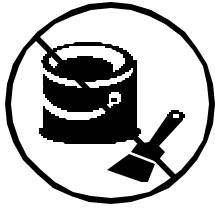


The deadline to apply is April 14th.

Statewide Legal Services (SLS) has assisted approximately 170 families through its Utility Day programs and about 50% of them had not applied for Energy Assistance. Call 211 INFOLINE to find the closest location to apply.

Energy Assistance is a lump sum payment to the heating source vendor (utility or oil company). Grants are between \$300 and \$675 to assist with

(See Energy Assistance, p.2)



Childhood Lead Poisoning: What You Should Know

Lead poisoning is considered the number one environmental threat to the health of children in the United States.

Where is lead found?

Lead is sometimes found in paint that was made before 1978, ceramic dishes, crystal, imported food cans, water pipes, solder and fittings, dirt, some ethnic cosmetics and home remedies.

How does lead affect the body?

Lead gets into the body by swallowing or inhaling lead-contaminated dust or materials. No amount of lead in the body is safe. Lead causes permanent damage! Lead can damage the brain or nervous system, interfere with growth, cause hearing loss and learning disabilities.

What are the signs?

Many children do not show signs of lead poisoning. If signs are present, they may include vomiting, upset stomach, irritability and restlessness.

If a woman is pregnant and is exposed to lead, she and her unborn child may become lead poisoned. Lead can cause permanent damage to the mother and her baby.

Have your child tested for lead at 1 year and 2 years of age or any time your child has been exposed to risk.

For more information on this topic and printable fact sheets, go to www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Lead/Prevention/lead_prevntion.htm or call the Connecticut Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (860) 509-7745 or (860) 509-7299 in Hartford.

Save the date! May 9, 2006 Conference on Childhood Lead Poisoning

"The Educational Implications of Childhood Lead Poisoning" is a conference that will take place in Room 2-C of the Legislative Office Building, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m on May 9.

The keynote speaker will be Dr. Herbert Needleman from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. This 2006 Health Education Lead Poisoning (HELP) conference offers a medical and educational overview of lead poisoning, including a description of appropriate educational

support for children impaired by lead poisoning. There will be an afternoon strategy session for those providing services to children.

If you are a parent, school administrator, educator, social worker, school psychologist, health professional or policy maker, you should attend this conference.

Please register at the website of the Connecticut Commission on Children: www.cga.ct.gov/coc. Seating is limited, so registration is required.

Energy Assistance

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payment of winter heating bills where the household pays the bills directly, and between \$240 to \$270 is available where heat is included in the rent and less than 30% of income. This year benefits are available for households which directly pay for their heat, for those with incomes up to 60% of state median income, (\$43,345/year for a household of three) significantly higher than last year. For households with heat included in the rent, eligibility is capped at 150% FPL (\$24,135/year for a family of three).

April 15th is fast approaching

Federal and State Tax Assistance

from VITA: The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program offers free tax help for low-to moderate-income (under \$35,000) people who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Volunteers receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. VITA sites are located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. Some locations also offer free electronic filing. If you need assistance from VITA, go to

<http://www.ct.gov/drs/lib/drs/vitasites2005.doc/ctsites06.pdf>

or call 211 INFOLINE to find out where you can get help.

Also, AARP Tax-Aide program offers free one-on-one counselling, as well as assistance on the telephone and internet to help individuals prepare basic tax forms, including the 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ and other standard schedules.

You can search by zip code to find AARP Tax-Aide site near you at

https://locator.aarp.org/vmis/sites/tax_aid_locator.jsp



President Presents 2007 Budget Proposal Cuts in Human Services and Continued Tax Cuts



On February 6, 2006, President Bush released his budget proposal for the 2007 federal fiscal year (October, 2006-September, 2007). The President's proposal would eliminate several domestic programs and make deep cuts in others in 2007 and beyond. Proposed spending is nearly \$14 billion below the FFY 05 level. Programs targeted for *termination* in the President's budget proposal include:

- Vocational education
- Community Services Block Grant
- Safe and Drug Free Schools Grant
- Hope VI
- Preventive Care Block Grant

The President's budget also calls for making permanent most of the tax cuts enacted since 2001. The benefits of such a proposal would be highly skewed to the highest income taxpayers: 20% of the benefits would go to the top 0.3% of the population - households with income of more than \$1 million. Even after the deep cuts in spending proposed by the President, his tax proposals would *further increase* the federal deficit.

Impact on Connecticut

Connecticut ranks 14th hardest hit among all states in the President's budget proposal. If the President's proposal is enacted Connecticut will lose:

- **\$82.4 million for K-12 Education** over the next 5 years (2007-2011).
- **\$17.1 million for WIC** (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) over 5 years. This means that 3,100 fewer people in Connecticut would be served in 2011.
- **\$7.1 million for child care funding** over the next five years.

• **\$68.9 million for Children and Family Services** over the next five years. Children and Family Services include Head Start, services for abused and neglected children and other community and social services. Under this proposal, in 2011, 700 fewer Connecticut children would be able to participate in Head Start in 2011.

• **\$32.4 million for public housing repairs** over five years.

• **\$61 million for the Community Development Block Grant** formula program over five years. The Community Development Block Grant program funds numerous economic development activities (such as improvements to roads and other infrastructure) and housing-related activities (such as rehabilitation of blighted buildings and assistance for people who are homeless).

• **\$40.1 million for energy assistance for low-income Connecticut households** over five years.

(adapted from Connecticut Voices for Children factsheets on the federal budget, March, 2006. Full fact sheets and other information available at www.ctkidslink.org)

State EITC Wins First Vote

Calls to Legislators Needed

Efforts to enact a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) cleared its first hurdle. On March 14, the Human Services Committee passed S.B.147, An Act Creating An Earned Income Credit Against the Personal Income Tax, by a bi-partisan vote of 13-3. A state EITC would provide tax relief to hard-working, low-income families who are struggling to make ends meet.

The bill has been referred to the Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee. This is the first step to

include a state EITC in a broader tax package.

Legislators need to hear from their constituents about support for a state EITC. Calls to Leadership, Finance Committee, and the Governor's Office are also important. The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) has prepared state EITC phone scripts that people can use when calling their legislators. To get a copy of state EITC talking points, phone script, and legislative contact information, please call Maggie Adair, Policy Director, 860-951-2212, ext. 239, or email at madair@cahs.org

CAHS is providing regular State EITC email updates and Action Alerts through its Family Economic Success (FES) Policy Network. If you would like to receive this information, please call or email Maggie at CAHS.

Important Bills at the Legislature

By the time you receive this, action will have been taken by key committees on many bills of importance to *CABHN Fever* readers. Here's a list of the bill numbers. We will update you on the status of these bills in the next newsletter. You can get updates immediately by going to the Connecticut General Assembly website - www.cga.ct.us - and typing the bill number into the Quick Search Number box.

RB 5024 - \$3 million pilot program for basic skills education and training for JFES participants

RB 479 - TFA (Temporary Family Assistance) Reforms - includes TFA exemptions for people who can only work limited hours due to a disability; opening the Safety Net to families who lose benefits as a result of time limits; eliminating the family cap penalties for having children while receiving welfare; and return to the policy of six-month extensions up to five years for families

(See Bills, p.4)

Bills (continued from page 3)

who earn less than benefit standard and have complied with program rules.

RB 5642 - Unemployment Compensation for Part-Time Workers

RB 475 - HUSKY Reforms - repeals the requirement that DSS impose co-pays and premiums on poor families on HUSKY with incomes between 100% and 150% of the federal poverty level; restores continuous eligibility so that children do not cycle on and off HUSKY; eliminates double verification of income and restores "self-declaration" so that eligible families will get coverage when they need it; and adopts a state EPSDT (Early and Periodic, Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment) requirement for children in HUSKY A.

RB 478 - SAGA Medical Restorations - restores SAGA coverage of medical services which have been eliminated from the program in recent years.

RB 5637 - Preferred Drug List Consumer Protections**RB 147 - Earned Income Tax Credit****RB 202- School Breakfast****RB 381 - Healthy Food and Beverages in Schools**

CABHN Meetings
held 1st Friday of the month

9:30 - 11:30 am

Upcoming Meeting:

Friday, April 7

The Lyceum
227 Lawrence St., Hartford

Topic:

The 2007 Federal Budget

Guest Speaker:

Sharon Langer
CT Voices for Children

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

CABHN FEVER

**E-Mail
Supplement**

"Justice is...Art Contest

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).

There are cash prizes for the winning students and for their schools or organizations. Awards are presented in a ceremony during the first week of May.

All entries must be received at GHLA, 999 Asylum Avenue, 3rd Floor, Hartford, by 4:00 PM Thursday, March 30, 2006.

More Utility Days Offered:

SLS is offering Utility Days where legal advocates will try to come up with a workable payment plan for both you and the utility company. There are several Utility Days being held around Connecticut. See the schedule below to find the one nearest you.

NEW BRITAIN – Saturday, April 1, 2006
from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

CONNECTICUT BAR ASSOCIATION
– 30 Bank Street

(For customers of Northeast Utilities/
Connecticut Natural Gas)

HARTFORD – Saturday, April 8, 2006
from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
– 277 Main Street

(For customers of Northeast Utilities/
Connecticut Natural Gas)

WHO CAN WE HELP?

Low income customers of utility companies who have some kind of income

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Legal aid volunteers will help you try to work out a personal budget

Legal Aid volunteers will help you to try to work out an affordable payment plan with the utility companies

NOTE: Budget counseling is provided, but not direct cash assistance.

If you have any questions, please call Bonnie Roswig at SLS, (860) 344-8096 ext. 3002.