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CABHN FEVER

Health Care Campaign Launched

The Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut has begun a series of television ads designed to spark statewide public discussion on health care issues and possible universal health care solutions.

There are now three 30-second spots running alternately over a four week span on local and cable stations. Foundation officials said that these ads are the first phase of a public campaign aimed at educating and engaging the general public in the health care debate.

How can you participate?

Log on to the new web site: healthcare4every1.org. The site features a menu of activities that allow residents to tell their stories, speak with state leaders and get involved in the public discussion on health care. The foundation has commissioned national research to provide businesses,

(See *Health Care*, p.2)



Good News Garage

Good News Garage, an affiliate of Lutheran Social Services of New England, is an innovative program working to improve lives and inspire hope. GNG was the first program in the nation to provide low-income families and individuals with safe and reliable cars to enable them to access jobs and other economic opportunities. Recipients use the vehicles to get to jobs and ultimately leave state assistance rolls and become financially self-sufficient. To learn more visit www.goodnewsgarage.org or call 860-218-2970 or toll-free at 1-877-GIVE-AUTO.



Summer Food Program

The Summer Food Service Program is a federal child nutrition program that provides up to two meals a day to children 18 and under during the summer. This program enables children to eat healthy, nutritious meals during the summer, limiting the risk of going hungry. Schools, camps, private nonprofit organizations, and local governments sponsor the program throughout Connecticut. Call Infoline 2-1-1 for a complete listing of Summer Food Program sites throughout the state. For more information call Sally Mancini at End Hunger Connecticut!-(860) 560-2100 ext. 17.

Alternative to Rising Food Cost



Serve New England is a food co-op program designed to promote volunteer service by giving deep discounts on high quality grocery, meat and vegetable items to community-minded individuals willing to volunteer 2 hours of their time a month to a worthwhile cause. Regardless of age or income, if you give your time and energy to anyone outside your immediate family, Serve New England rewards you with top quality food at up to a 40% discount. Food packages are ordered monthly and there are 12 chapters in Connecticut. For more information, go to www.servenewengland.org or call toll free: 888-742-7363.

Scholarship Available

The Patsy Takemoto Mink Education Foundation for Low Income Women and Children is accepting applications through 7/1/06 for Education Support Awards. There will be 5 awards of up to \$2,000 each. For application and to find out if you qualify, go to www.ptmfoundation.net.

Free Workshops: Food Stamp Program

The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) is planning a series of free workshops on the Food Stamp Program, and their recently-released KidsCount/Working Poor Families report. These workshops will feature representatives from the USDA's regional office, who will be presenting their new Outreach Toolkit, media campaign, and future opportunities for federal funding. This will be an opportunity to learn about the Food Stamp Program and how your organization can get more involved in helping eligible people access this important program. The food stamp portion of the agenda will be followed by a presentation on CAHS' new KidsCount report. This report will focus on working poor families, the issues that they face, and what this means to the future of Connecticut.

Workshops and locations:

- **New Haven-Gateway Community College**, 60 Sargent Dr. on June 27 from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm
- **Waterbury-The Timexpo Museum**, 175 Union Street on June 28 from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm
- **Bridgeport-City Hall Annex**, 999 Broad Street on June 29 from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm

The workshops are free, but registration (deadline 6/16) is required and space is limited. To register, call Tracy Helin at (860) 951-2212, ext 236, or email thelin@cahs.org.

Important Information For Medicare Recipients Who Also Are On Medicaid (Title XIX) OR CONNPACE

Since January 1st, people who are eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare (“dual eligibles”) must get essentially all of their medications through the Medicare Part D prescription drug program. ConnPACE recipients who also are on Medicare and have not already picked a Part D plan are being assigned to Part D plans by the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services (“DSS”).

Connecticut has adopted some “wrap-around” provisions to ensure that Medicaid and ConnPACE recipients can get drugs that are not available through their Medicare Part D plan. These protections, first adopted on a temporary basis last December, were continued through action in the legislative session that just ended.

If you are on both Medicaid and Medicare:

YOU should not pay or be billed for a co-pay for prescription drugs, even though your Medicare plan may require a co-pay of between \$1 and \$5. The state of Connecticut will pay Medicare plan co-pays for dually eligibles. Pharmacists should bill DSS for the co-pay, if the pharmacist’s computer indicates that there is a co-pay required by the Medicare plan.

DSS will also pay for prescribed drugs which are not on a dual eligible’s Part D plan formulary, if the drug is available through Medicaid. When your pharmacist’s computer says that a prescribed drug is not covered under your Part D plan, your pharmacist should immediately bill

DSS to get authorization for state payment through the pharmacist’s computer.

If you are on both ConnPACE & Medicare:

YOU should not pay a co-pay of more than \$16.25 for any drug covered by ConnPACE, even if your Medicare plan requires a higher co-pay. The state of Connecticut will pay any co-pay in excess of \$16.25. Although your Part D plan may charge a substantial co-pay, your pharmacist should immediately bill DSS for any co-pay which is in excess of \$16.25.

DSS will also pay for prescribed drugs which are available through ConnPACE but not on your Part D plan formulary and you will be charged a co-pay of no more than \$16.25. When your pharmacist’s computer says that the prescribed drug is not on your Part D plan’s formulary, the pharmacist should immediately bill DSS to get authorization for state payment.

Now available on the LARCC website, www.larcc.org, (under “Hot Topics”) are wallet-sized cards, in both English and Spanish, plus instructions, for both dually eligible and ConnPACE recipients who are also on Medicare. The cards tell pharmacists what to do to obtain state payment if the Part D plan’s computer tells the pharmacist a prescribed drug either is not on the Part D plan’s formulary or is on the formulary but has a co-pay that DSS will pay.

Health Care **(Continued from p.1)**

elected officials and consumers the information to make informed decisions.

The web site provides the tools to translate concerns into positive, constructive action for change. View the ads at healthcare4every1.org. In addition to providing a space for submissions of personal stories, the site also features a section that spotlights the views and perspectives of legislators and other leaders on the issues.

The Foundation recognizes health care as an issue that touches everyone’s lives, from workers to employers and expects to invest several million dollars in grants, research and strategic communications to achieve its mission. To view the ads and learn more about the public campaign for universal health care, visit the Web site at healthcare4every1.org.

New Publication Available On-Line!

“Health Care Facts” combines brief descriptions of health care programs and issues with answers to questions about the impact of these topics now and in the future. To view, go to www.larcc.org, click on Self-Help Materials and see Health Care Facts. This publication was produced by LARCC with the generous support of the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut.

Save the Date

July 15th, 10am to 3pm, the Mt. Moriah Corporation of Excellence presents H.E.L.P. Initiatives (Health, Education, Lifestyle Programs) Health Fair. There will be a job fair, free screenings for cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes as well as free dental services and eye exams. Come on down to 222 Barbour Street, Hartford and enjoy the free food, face painting and basketball too! For more info, contact Cynthia Bent at 860-527-0245 or 860-716-0702.

Problems Getting Your Drugs?

If you are a dual eligible recipient or a ConnPACE/Medicare recipient, and you are having trouble getting your drugs paid for any reason, call:

- Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320
- CHOICES hotline 1-800-994-9422
- DSS Pharmacy Unit 1-860-424-5150
- Atty. General-Health Fraud Unit 1-860-808-5355
- Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc. 1-800-262-4412



2006 Legislative Wrap-Up

The 2006 legislative session ended on Wednesday, May 3 at midnight. Many of the issues that LARCC and CABHN Fever readers care about were successfully addressed through specific legislation or implementer language. Here's what happened with some of these proposals:

■HB 5024 Basic skills education and training pilot for JFES participants -

Although the underlying bill was unsuccessful, the DSS Implementer (SB 703) included language to help CT reach the new federal work requirements. Programs are directed to "emphasize vocational and educational training programs, work experience programs and the expansion of employment services and child care services." The DOL budget includes \$6.5million for programmatic revisions designed to meet these goals. Advocates will be working to further define how this money is allocated.

■Program Review and Investigations Committee study on impact of welfare reform after 10 years

This proposal was approved by the Committee as a study topic for the coming year.

■HB 5781 Certificates of Employability

- The underlying bill allowed for the issuance of a certificate of employability that would raise the automatic bar on the hiring or licensing of an ex-offender for certain occupations. This concept survived with some modifications, through language incorporated into the OPM Implementer (HB 5846 as amended by LCO #5627). Certificates of Employability are now known as Provisional Pardons.

■HB 5647 Unemployment Compensation for Part-Time Workers

- This successful proposal will expand eligibility for unemployment compensation to workers who can only work part-time because of a disability.

■SB 475 HUSKY A restorations -

The initial bill would have repealed authorization for premiums and copays

for HUSKY A parents and restored self-declaration of income (electronic verification), continuous eligibility for children and two years of Transitional Medical Assistance. This proposal was not successful. However, the final budget and DSS Implementer provide for the restoration of self-declaration of income.

■SB 478 SAGA Medical Restorations

- This bill would have restored nonemergency medical transportation for SAGA recipients and removed the funding cap that limits the reimbursements to hospitals and health centers for SAGA services. The bill was unsuccessful but the final budget included additional funding for the hospitals and health centers and \$2.8million for SAGA services which are thought to include nonemergency medical transportation and vision.

■Improve rates paid to dental providers through Medicaid

The DSS Implementer includes language that authorizes payments to be made in accordance with a settlement in the pending litigation around access to dental services for Medicaid recipients.

■Rental Assistance Program (RAP):

\$1.8 million was added to next year's appropriation for RAP. These funds should permit the issuance of 500 or more new RAP certificates over the next year, bringing the program to at least the 1,900 certificate level.

■Security Deposit Guarantee Program (SDGP)

The budget for this program was increased by \$250,000. It is anticipated that DSS will reopen the part of the SDGP which allowed a tenant with a new RAP certificate or Section 8 voucher to apply for a security deposit guarantee. Because of a shortage of funds, the program is currently limited in most cases to applicants who are homeless or on the verge of becoming homeless.

■Eviction:

The proposal to repeal the right of evicted tenants to reclaim their possessions from the town for 15 days after an eviction (and instead to allow the landlord to immediately discard or keep the possessions on the day of the eviction) died in the Judiciary Committee.

Starting July 1 - US Citizens Must Prove Citizenship for Medicaid

The federal Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 included a new requirement that states collect proof of citizenship from US citizens applying for Medicaid or renewing Medicaid coverage starting July 1, 2006.

Note: The new law does not change Medicaid requirements for non-citizens. Some legal immigrants are eligible for federally reimbursed Medicaid coverage. In Connecticut, recent legal immigrants, who are not eligible for federally reimbursed Medicaid coverage, may be eligible for a state-funded program which provides the same services as Medicaid. The changes in federal law do not make any changes in requirements for these programs.

In Connecticut, the federal government reimburses the state \$.50 for every dollar that the state spends on Medicaid coverage. If the state does not have the required documentation for an individual, it may not be able to get reimbursement for the costs of serving that individual under Medicaid. It is still very unclear how this new requirement will be administered in Connecticut - but here are some important things to keep in mind:

(See Proof, p.3)

Proof (Cont. from p. 3)

1. If you are receiving Medicaid now, you will not have to prove citizenship until your regular annual redetermination.

2. Proof of citizenship can consist of (A) a passport, a certificate of naturalization, or a certificate of US citizenship, which can prove citizenship *and* verify identity, or

(B) a birth certificate with an embossed seal, a Report of Birth Abroad of a US Citizen, or a US Citizen I D card, to prove citizenship, ACCOMPANIED BY a driver's license or state-issued ID card with picture, to verify identity.

The federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is authorized to specify other documents that could prove citizenship but has not yet done so.

Birth certificates can be obtained from the Town Clerk's Office of the

Connecticut town in which a person was born. There is a charge of \$5.00 to obtain a birth certificate. Under the state's Freedom of Information Act, the fee for obtaining a birth certificate can be waived for someone who is "indigent" (poor). However, there is no definition of who is considered indigent for purposes of obtaining a copy of a birth certificate. If you believe that you qualify as indigent, you should request that copies of needed birth certificates be provided for free under the Freedom of Information Act.

3. Proof of citizenship should only be required once. In some cases, the state will already have some of the needed documentation (for instance, applicants for TFA already have to supply a birth certificate).

Information on how to obtain copies of birth certificates is available from Infoline. Call 211 or access the Infoline fact sheet on Birth Certificates at <http://www.infoline.org/informationlibrary/Documents/Birth%20Certificates%20pt.asp>

CABHN Meetings
held 1st Friday of the month

9:30 - 11:30 am

Upcoming Meeting:

Friday, June 9

The Lyceum
227 Lawrence St., Hartford

Topic:

Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Universal Health Care Models

Planning for the Coming Year

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