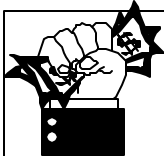


Highlights in this issue:	
Rental Assistance Opens	p 1
Security Deposit Program	p 2
Food Stamp Reauthorization ..	p 2
Special Legislative Session	p 3
TANF Reauthorization	p 3

CABHN FEVER



Public Housing Residents: Ask for A Rent Freeze

Do you live in Federal public housing? If your income has gone up because of a new or better-paying job, you may be able to get a rent freeze. You need to ask your housing authority in writing for this rent freeze. To qualify, when you got the job, you must have been:

- Getting TFA welfare benefits within the past 6 months; or
- Unemployed for a year or more, or earned less than \$3200 in the past year; or
- In job training or some other economic self-sufficiency program.

This rent freeze is called the Earned Income Disregard. There are many rules about how the Disregard works, but for most people it is a simple rent freeze. The Earned Income Disregard goes in steps. *First 12 months:* No rent increase. *Second 12 months:* The rent goes up halfway. *After these 24 months:* You pay your full share of the rent. If you have a change in some other income, such as child support, or if you stop working while on an Earned Income Disregard, special rules apply. Talk to a lawyer or your worker at the Housing Authority.

How do I get the Earned Income Disregard? Write to the Housing Authority. Call Statewide Legal Services for information on what to write. If that doesn't work, ask for a grievance hearing (in writing).

I think I should have gotten this a long time ago. Talk to your Housing Authority and Statewide Legal Services. Ask for a grievance hearing (in writing). You may have a right to get some of your rent back.

Once I get the Earned Income Disregard, do I need to do anything? YES! If you stop working, report it. You can save what is left of your Earned Income Disregard and use it later, BUT you only have four years from the start of your rent freeze to use up your 24 months. (See "This rent freeze..."above).

For more information, call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320.♦

Rental Assistance Program Opens for Some Families



Usually to get a Rental Assistance Program (RAP) certificate, families would need to get on a waiting list. Now, 150 RAP certificates have been set aside to help certain families (100 for families leaving TFA and 50 for families in homeless shelters). Families who may qualify include those leaving TFA because of the new 60-month and 3 extension time limits, and families living in homeless shelters. The Department of Social Services Regional offices can authorize these certificates.

To qualify for this emergency RAP certificate, the families must have been assessed by a DSS social worker; must not be living in subsidized housing or have a voucher or certificate; as well as other requirements. DSS will give priority to families who have significant barriers to employment and to low wage working families.

And, for those families already on the waiting list, advocates are hoping for news on this in mid-November. Watch newspapers or call Debbie at CABHN, 860-278-5688x11.♦

Community Partners for Food is Throwing a Party

You're invited to find out more about how the Food Stamp Program can benefit you, your neighbors and those you work with. Please join us on Thursday, **November 27**, 5:30 - 7pm at Community Health Services, 500 Albany Ave, Hartford. Already many individuals and organizations in Hartford's North End have agreed to share information about food stamps with friends and neighbors. We'd love to have you be a part of this project. For information, call Sally Mancini at (860)296-1127.

Community Partners for Food is a project of End Hunger CT! & the Hartford Food System.♦

Help Starts Here: Dial 2-1-1

Whether you want to give or get help, Infoline at 2-1-1 is the confidential, free, number to call. An Infoline caseworker can help you find information, learn about your options, or deal with a crisis. As we get ready for winter, Infoline can help by telling you about:

- Over 200 places that offer Thanksgiving Baskets
- Over 150 places that offer children's toys & holiday baskets in December.
- Where you can get winter coats or energy assistance.

Call today...Thanksgiving & winter are right around the corner.♦

Two Tips for Those On Unemployment

✓ Avoid the busy phone lines on Mondays & Tuesdays at the Unemployment Compensation call centers. As long as you call by Friday before 3pm of any week, your claim will be accepted for the previous week. For example, if you call by Friday, November 9, your claim is effective for the week beginning November 4. (*Note:* plans are in the works to change this system to have claimants call on assigned days.) (See *Unemployment...* page 2)



**Helping tenants in crisis find a new apartment.....
The Security Deposit Guarantee Program**

Important changes made during the 2001 legislative session make the Security Deposit Guarantee Program **easier to use** and **more attractive to landlords**. Social services providers who help families in crisis find permanent housing need to use this program assertively to best serve clients.

The major changes in the Security Deposit Guarantee Program include:

✓ **A guarantee can be obtained earlier in the process.** Tenants who have received a notice to quit might now be eligible for a guarantee. Prior law did not kick in until an eviction action had gone to judgment.

✓ **It should be easier to get a 2-month guarantee.** The requirement of special documentation to get a guarantee which exceeds one month's rent has been eliminated from the statute. While the amount of a guarantee is still subject to DSS discretion, guarantees above one month should no longer be treated as requiring special administrative exceptions. In addition, these changes make clear that, in certain emergency situations, DSS can combine a one-month guarantee with a one-month cash deposit.

✓ **The lookback period is limited to 18 months.** A tenant who has previously used the program and against whom a damage or nonpayment claim was made will no longer effectively be barred for life from the program. Once 18 months have passed since a previous pay-out on a guarantee, the tenant's slate is wiped clean and future eligibility restored.

Social service providers should not accept a landlord's rationalization that a guarantee "is not as good" as a cash deposit.

✓ **A guarantee is as good as cash.** Landlords who have used the program report it is not difficult to get payment from DSS upon filing of a claim. The Section 8 program for many years routinely provided security deposit guarantees, which were commonly accepted by landlords without protest. In fact, a guarantee saves landlords the work of holding the deposit in an escrow account (a legal requirement which is routinely ignored by many landlords, therefore putting them at risk of legal action). It also relieves the landlord of calculating and paying interest on the deposit.

✓ **Refusal to accept a guarantee is illegal if the landlord would have accepted the same dollar amount of security had it been paid in cash.** Source of income discrimination violates the Connecticut Fair Housing Act. This law needs to be explained to landlords who refuse to accept a guarantee which otherwise satisfies their security deposit standards; and landlords who persist in violating the law should be reported to the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities.

In the absence of a state-funded cash security deposit program, this program must be used to help families find housing. *For more information, call Debbie at CABHN 860-278-5688 x 11.* ❖

On the Federal Level: Food Stamp Reauthorization

The Senate Agriculture Committee will soon be considering proposals affecting the Farm Bill, which will reauthorize funding for the next 5-10 years for the federal Food Stamp Program. Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), is sponsoring his own farm bill proposal (S. 1571) that includes a very strong Food Stamp component, allowing access for legal immigrants to the Food Stamp Program, excluding household vehicles in determining eligibility and significantly simplifying food stamp rules. This proposal builds upon the version passed by the House (H.R. 2646) that makes significant but limited changes to the Food Stamp Program.

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, will be developing his own version of the Farm Bill very soon. **Please**

contact Senators Dodd and Lieberman and ask them to urge Senator Harkin to include the improvements offered in the Kennedy-Specter/Walsh-Clayton bill (S. 583) and Senator Lugar's Farm Bill nutrition title, in his Farm Bill proposal. Among other things, these proposals allocate significant funding through the nutrition title to the Food Stamp Program and restore eligibility to legal immigrants.

The Senate switchboard number is (202) 225-3121; just ask for the Senator's office. Please do this today - your call is very important to impact this quickly moving bill.

For information, call End Hunger Connecticut! 860-296-1127. ❖



Helpful Tools on the Web

Trying to find out how much a car is worth? Visit www.kelleybluebook.net to find out a car's value.

To get an estimate of the weekly unemployment benefits a worker might receive, visit the Economic Policy Institute at www.epinet.org. You'll find info for policymakers and those collecting unemployment. ❖



Unemployment Compensation Tips (continued from p. 1)

✓ **Keep a list of where you look for work.** To keep getting unemployment, you must be looking for work (at least 3 job contacts a week on 3 different days). Keep a written list of the places you apply which includes: where you went, the dates, and address and names of people you spoke with. Job contacts should be made in person. Ask to fill out an application—it makes it easier to prove that you have applied.

Important: If you cannot give this information to the UC office, you might have to pay back the money you received. Bring a copy of this list with you whenever you go to the UC office. ❖

**On the Federal Level:
Rep. Introduces Fixes
to 1996 Welfare Law**

Representative Patsy Mink, HI, and other members of the Progressive Caucus recently introduced a comprehensive bill in an effort to fix the 1996 welfare law. This bill, "TANF Reauthorization Act of 2001" **HR 3113**, seeks to eliminate poverty at all levels, not by reducing caseloads, but by helping families achieve economic security.

The bill contains the same basic structure of the previous law; however, Rep. Mink has paid careful attention to the barriers that still exist. Supports such as child care, adequate education and training, and addressing barriers like mental and physical disabilities, substance abuse and domestic violence are the focus of the bill. Finally, it restores full access to qualified legal immigrants.



For more information about this bill, call Anne Stewart at Rep. Mink's office (202-255-4906). For a copy or summary of the bill, call Debbie at CABHN, 860-278-5688x 12.♦

**National Center Offers Paper
Explaining Rent Freezes**

In 1998, Congress passed federal legislation designed to promote work among residents of public housing. The legislation requires that an earned income disregard be applied in calculating the rent that certain public housing residents must pay, so that rents do not jump substantially when a family's income rises. (See p. 1 also). Unfortunately, many families eligible for the earned income disregard are not currently benefitting from it. Although this disregard is mandatory, many public housing agencies have been slow to implement it and many do not understand the full range of residents that can qualify.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has written a helpful paper on the earned income disregard. Call: CBPP at 617-566-1154 or visit their website www.cbpp.org/10-17-01hous.pdf.♦

Five Alternatives To Cutting Social Services

On November 13, the Legislature will meet in special session to consider how to deal with a potential budget deficit - a situation we have not faced in Connecticut in many years since the passage of the state income tax in 1991. In the course of one week, the estimates of the potential deficit grew from \$89 million to \$300 million.

Call your legislators...
tell them there **ARE**
alternatives to cutting
funding for needed
social services.

The Governor has proposed dealing with the projected deficit by cutting \$87.8 million in regular budget spending and holding back \$57.3 million in expenditures from the state surplus which were approved by the legislature this June. Holdbacks in surplus spending would result in major cuts in new spending on mental health and transportation programs, a small cut in funding for Individual Development Accounts and elimination of CEIP (the Community Employment Incentive Program). Many social service programs, including the Safety Net program and services for people with AIDS, people who are homeless and people addressing substance abuse, are targeted for cuts.

Before adopting budget cuts which would negate many of the commitments made in the budget adopted in June, the Governor and the Legislature should look at other ways to address the projected budget deficit.

Here are 5 things CT could do before cutting needed social services:

1 Stop the Tax Cuts. In the past ten years, Connecticut has adopted many tax cuts, often benefitting businesses. Some of these cuts have not yet taken effect but are scheduled to do so in coming years. CT Voices for Children estimates that tax credits, exemptions and deductions will cost us \$3.8 billion in revenue in 2002.

2 Go Back to Bonding for Construction of Public Buildings and Purchase of Public Lands. Bonding (selling state bonds on which interest is paid and using the money from the bond sale for government activities) is generally used to pay for construction of public buildings, for development of state parks, for purchase of open space and for other capital and economic development projects. This strategy is similar to a person borrowing money to buy a house by taking out a mortgage. In recent years, the state has avoided the need to bond because of a budget surplus. This year, the Legislature approved the use \$135 million in surplus funds for school projects and \$30 million in surplus funds for purchase of public space. If these projects are paid for through bonding, the \$165 million in surplus funds will be available to meet current expenses.

3 Collect All Federal Funds For Which The State Is Eligible. Recently state agencies have been discouraged from looking for and applying for federal funds because revenues already exceeded the amount that the state could spend under the state spending cap. Now that state revenues are falling, federal funds could provide needed revenue to fill holes in the state budget.

4 Use the Rainy Day Fund. CT has maintained its Budget Reserve Fund (nicknamed the Rainy Day Fund) at the maximum level of about \$600 million. This fund is designed to be used to cover a budget deficit if the state ends the year without enough revenue. If other strategies don't eliminate the projected deficit by the end of this fiscal year, the Rainy Day Fund will be available to fill in holes.

5 Raise the Cigarette Tax. An increase of 50¢ in the cigarette tax would raise over \$100 million and would have the added benefit of discouraging smoking, thereby eliminating significant health risks to smokers.♦

Election Reform Still Needed

It has been almost a year since the Presidential election which exposed the faults in our election system and highlighted the critical need for election reform. Many Americans have urged Congress not to rely on a patchwork of half-measures, but to use the powers of the federal government to fix the system nationwide. Fifty-one senators have responded by co-sponsoring the Equal Protection of Voting Rights Act, also known as the Dodd-Conyers bill. Still, some legislators would like to adjourn, leaving election reform unfinished.

Don't let another year pass by without election reform. **Contact Senators Dodd and Lieberman** today. Thank them for supporting this legislation and urge them to pass the Dodd-Conyers election reform bill before they adjourn.

Sen. Dodd (860) 258-6940. Email: Senator@dodd.senate.gov.

Sen. Lieberman (860) 549-8463. Email: <http://lieberman.senate.gov/newsite/index.html> ❖

Save the Dates: One Connecticut

A Campaign to Fight Poverty and Build Economic Security

December 5, 6pm-8pm. Gubernatorial Candidate Forum. Information: Leslie at SEIU, 860-251-6032.

December 12, 9am - 3pm. Alliance for Justice Effective Non-Profit Advocacy Training. One CT and the CT Association of Nonprofits are hosts. Register by Nov 16. Information: DemocracyWorks (860) 727-1157.

December 14, 11:30 - 2:30. Self-Sufficiency Standard Strategy Meeting. Information: Leslie Brett at the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (860) 240-8300.

January 8, 9am -5 pm. State Budget Connections. CT Voices for Children, in partnership with the One CT offer this session about the budget and the budgeting process. Contact Matt Rowland, (203) 498-4240 x113.



Upcoming CABHN Meetings:

Friday, December 14
10 am -11:30 am
Community Renewal Team
555 Windsor St., Hartford

Note: *We're ending at 11:30 so members can attend the Self-Sufficiency Standard Strategy Meeting (see article at left)*

In case of bad weather, listen to WTIC AM 1080 for cancellation information.

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. www.larcc.org

CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)
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📞 Please visit our website: www.larcc.org