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CABHN FEVER



It's Time to Apply for Energy Assistance!

Are you worried about how you'll pay your heating bills this winter? **Apply for energy assistance beginning November 1.** Applications can take up to 45 days to process, but immediate fuel delivery should be available if needed. Deadline to apply is April 30, 2004 (*earlier if funds run out*).

1. You may be eligible for benefits even if heat is included in your rent payment (*depending on your income and rent amount*).

2. Apply if your income is less than the amounts listed below:

# in house	1	2	3	4	5	6
Monthly income	\$1,122	\$1,515	\$1,907	\$2,300	\$2,692	\$3,085

3. If someone in the household is at least 60 years or disabled, apply if your income is less than the amounts listed below:

# in house	1	2	3	4	5	6
Monthly income	\$1,497	\$2,020	\$2,543	\$3,067	\$3,590	\$4,113


4. Apply at your local Community Action Agency or call Infoline (211) or the DSS Energy Line (1-800-842-1132) for information on the closest application site. *Bring proof of income for everyone in the house and a copy of your fuel/utility bill.*

5. If you heat with gas from Yankee Gas, SCG or CNG and you owe the gas company money, contact the company and apply for the arrearage forgiveness program. Arrearage forgiveness is a payment program that forgives back bills in exchange for making regular, agreed upon payments.

6. Ask at the energy assistance site about a repair or replacement of your unsafe or unworking furnace. Some homeowners receiving energy assistance may be able to get emergency furnace repairs. If the homeowner also receives cash assistance from DSS (TFA, AABD or State Supplement, SAGA or GA), such repairs are also available through DSS in a separate program, when necessary to allow the individual to remain in the home; contact DSS case worker to apply.

7. Protect yourself from a winter shut-off by applying for "hardship" status from your electric and gas companies.

♦ **Important:** If you are on state welfare (TFA), think about what you can really afford when you make a payment agreement. Your income may drop if you are at the end of your 21-month time limit or the end of an extension, and it may be hard to pay what you agreed upon. Call Statewide Legal Services for free advice (see below).

Call... Infoline: 211 (*can also tell you the closest application site*)
 Statewide Legal Services 1-800-453-3320 or 860-344-0380
 CT Energy Assistance Hotline at 1-800-842-1132

Community Action Agencies:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Bridgeport: Action for Brdopt. Comm. Development, 384-6904 | New Haven: Community Action Agency of NH, 397-5223 |
| Bristol: Bristol Community Org. 582-7490 | Norwich: Thames Valley Council for Comm. Action, 889-1365 |
| Danbury: Community Action Committee of Danbury, 748-5422 | South Norwalk: Norwalk Economic Opportunity, 899-2444 |
| Derby: TEAM, 736-5420 | Stamford: CTE, 352-4846 |
| Hartford: Community Renewal Team, 560-5800 | Waterbury: New Opportunities for Waterbury, 756-8151 |
| Meriden: Community Action Agency of Meriden, 235-0278 | Willimantic: Access Agency, 450-7400. ♦ |
| New Britain: HRA, 223-2288 | |

Have You Lost HUSKY A Health Coverage?

If you lost HUSKY A (Medicaid) coverage because...

- your family income was over the federal poverty limit (\$1,272 for a family of 3) **AND**

- you were **not** working at the time you lost HUSKY A, **BUT**

- you get a job within 6 months of losing HUSKY A coverage, (for example, you went off April 1 but get a job before October 1)*

...you can get back the state health insurance for up to 24 months.

What should you do if you are now working?

- ✓ Contact your DSS worker right away. Tell him/her you are working now and ask to be put back on HUSKY A.

- ✓ Call Statewide Legal Services see below for phone numbers).

**It doesn't matter how much you make at the new job. Your income can be over the federal poverty limit so long as you're working. ♦*

More on Energy Assistance

The CT Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) will open on November 1st to help low-income persons with their heating bills. Less money is available than in previous years which increases the risk that the programs will run out of funds before the heating season is over. And, unlike past years, there is almost no money to roll over from the prior winter.

(continued, see Energy p. 2)

Statewide Legal Services Open Tuesday & Thursday Until 7pm

Call for free advice and information.

Hours: Mon 9-4; Tues 9-7; Wed 9-3; Thurs 9-7; Fri 9-3.

1-800-453-3320 or (860) 344-0380

Co-Pays to be Implemented Nov. 1, but Most SAGA, HUSKY Changes on Hold

On November 1, co-pays on prescription drugs for people receiving health care through SAGA (State Administered General Assistance), for adults receiving health care through Medicaid and for parents receiving health care through HUSKY A (except for pregnant women) will be \$1.50. In addition, there will be \$2.00 co-pays on outpatient medical services for all these people. Children and pregnant women will not be required to make co-pays.

Refusing to fill a prescription or to provide health services is a violation of federal law. Visit: www.larcc.org Hot Topics for a card stating this.

Most of the other changes in the SAGA medical and HUSKY A and B programs which were authorized in the August special session will not be implemented immediately. Most of the changes to HUSKY A require a waiver of federal Medicaid rules. The Department of Social Services is working on this and hopes to get federal approval in time to make changes at the beginning of 2005. HUSKY B changes require an amendment to the state Medicaid plan which DSS is

working on.

For more information, come to the next CABHN meeting (see back page). Or contact Deborah at 860-278-5688 x 12.

Landlord Pays \$5,000 for Illegal Refusal to Accept DSS Security Deposit Guarantee

In a recent case widely reported in the Bridgeport press, a Bridgeport landlord has agreed to settle a discrimination complaint by paying \$5,000 to the tenant. The landlord had refused to rent to the tenant because the tenant could not pay a cash security deposit. The tenant, however, had a security deposit guarantee from the Department of Social Services, under which DSS will pay up to two months' rent if the tenant defaults on his or her obligations to the landlord.

The refusal to accept a state security deposit guarantee is a form of unlawful discrimination based on source of income. The only real difference between a cash security deposit and a security deposit guarantee is that the cash deposit is to be held by the landlord in an escrow account in a bank, while the guarantee is held by DSS. Under Connecticut law, a cash security deposit does not belong to the landlord but remains the property of the tenant. The landlord is merely the trustee.

In the Bridgeport case, the tenant had complained to the City of Bridgeport's Fair Housing Office, where fair housing officer Joseph Wincze had helped her file a formal complaint with the

state Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). The CHRO investigator found reasonable cause to believe that the Fair Housing Act had been violated. Rather than continue to a hearing, the landlord agreed to the settlement payment.

This is at least the second time that a landlord has settled a discrimination case involving a security deposit guarantee case after CHRO had made a preliminary finding of discrimination. In 2000, a landlord paid \$8,750 for a similar violation.

These actions before CHRO make clear that the refusal to accept a security deposit guarantee is illegal. Many landlords, however, remain unaware of the requirements of the law. As a result, it is important that those who deal with the property owner community spread the word that failure to comply with the law can prove expensive to the landlord.

Discrimination based on source of income is against the law.

For more, contact Michelle Dumas or Erin Kemple at the CT Fair Housing Center (860-247-4400), Erin Boggs at the CT Civil Liberties Union (860-247-9823 x212), or Rafie Podolsky at the Legal Assistance Resource Center (860-278-5688 x13).

Energy Assistance (con't. from p. 1)

Two years ago, the Contingency Heating Assistance Program (CHAP) provided heating assistance to households with higher incomes than those usually able to get energy assistance. This program will not open this winter unless the state receives federal funding. To check throughout the winter, call 1-800-842-1132, the DSS energy hotline.

Benefits are reduced: Energy assistance benefits are less compared to those paid last winter—they vary between \$200 and \$535 (or \$60 to \$90 if heat is included in the rent). While it is possible benefits will increase if more federal funding is available, it is not likely.

Limit on Safety-net benefits: In past years there has been no cap on the receipt of safety-net benefits, the last resort for those heating with deliverable fuel. This year's plan caps these benefits at \$1000, regardless of need. DSS Commissioner can make exceptions to this rule.

Homebound disabled persons: The Community Action Agency must help homebound disabled persons who need help applying for energy assistance. Mail-in applications should be available, but if more help is needed such as a home visit, ask for such a visit.

Utility arrearage forgiveness programs are available to all households receiving CEAP for their gas bills. In winter 2004-05, this program will be extended to all households receiving CEAP for their electric bills. If you have a back bill, apply today with your electric company as they may have openings in current programs.

Weatherization assistance will be dramatically reduced. Call Infoline (211) for information on using this program.

KIDS COUNT Data Online

The CT Association for Human Services announces an interactive web site where you can access the data from *A Tale of Two Connecticut* data book, as well as data from other states. Provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, CLIKS Online Data is found at <http://www.aecf.org/cgi-bin/cliiks.cgi>. Call Stephanie at 860-951-2212 x24.



A Special Legislative Session - Will They or Won't They?

CT House and Senate Democrats caucused on October 14 and at that point, indicated that they would be meeting in special session after the November 4th elections. This appeared to be necessary to take care of a bonding package for CT Universities and Community Colleges. Since that meeting however, sentiments have changed. As of press time, leadership and the Governor were looking for ways to take care of the various bonding projects without a special session. Advocates were hoping to insert possible implementer changes (including the restoration of benefits for legal immigrants and SAGA restorations) onto any special session agenda. Any efforts to change these policies may now have to wait until the regular session. ♦

Immigrant Stories Needed!

The budget implementer language that was passed in August did not change the sunset provision for legal immigrant benefits. This means that current state law prohibits the granting of state-funded benefits to non-citizens after June 30, 2003. Any legal immigrant applying for food stamps, medical assistance, SAGA cash or medical, TFA or home health care after June 30, 2003, will be turned away. Advocates are working to restore these benefits and are asking legislators to make sure this is on any special session agenda and a priority for the regular session in February.

As part of this effort, LARCC will be putting together a booklet of stories of immigrants and immigrant families. These stories can include those who have needed benefits in the past, those on benefits now or those who need benefits but have been turned away. It is crucial that legislators get a clear picture of who the people are who are potentially impacted by their failure to keep these programs open for new applicants.

Please contact Sara Parker McKernan at LARCC, 80 Jefferson St., Hartford, CT 06106, 860-278-5688 x11, or by email SParkerMcKernan@LARCC.org.

TANF Bonus Money

Connecticut has received \$11.7 million in bonus TANF funds in recognition of work in moving families from welfare to work. The funds can be used to meet TANF purposes and must be appropriated by the legislature. TANF rules bar the use of the funds for medical benefits or benefits for legal immigrants. The Welfare Working Group, with suggestions from CABHN, is proposing the following distribution of these funds:

■ **\$5 million to re-open the working parents portion of Care4Kids**, which currently has a waiting list of 8,000 families. Lack of affordable child care is often cited by families as a major obstacle to employment.

■ **\$3 million for intensive intervention with families receiving TFA, or who have left TFA because of time limits, to deal with barriers to employment.**

● \$1 million to open the Safety Net program to families who lose benefits because of time limits but have been unable to get employment.

● \$2 million to continue the early assessment and intervention programs funded at \$1.9 million with bonus funds last year.

■ **\$1.3 million for housing programs, including:**

● \$1 million to supplement funding for the Temporary Rental Subsidy Program created with last year's bonus funds;

● \$300,000 for a pilot program of supportive housing for families.

■ **\$2.4 million for education and training programs for families receiving TFA**, including English as a Second Language (ESL), GED and Adult Basic Education courses and apprenticeship programs and career ladders for low-wage parents.

These suggestions have been sent to the Office of Policy and Management, DSS, the Department of Labor and legislative leaders. The Welfare Working Group will be meeting with these decision-makers. **What Can You Do?** You can help by calling your legislators to let them know how important it is that TANF bonus funds be directed to these programs. To contact your legislator, go

TANF Reauthorization

The reauthorization of TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the federal family welfare program) remains stalled in Congress. Because reauthorization has not happened, the current law has been extended until March 31, 2004.

This year's history: The House of Representatives passed its reauthorization bill, HR4, in February. The House bill incorporates President Bush's proposals for requiring more work hours, limiting what counts as work, authorizing a "superwaiver" and including \$1.5 billion for Marriage Promotion Programs. This summer, the Senate Finance Committee passed a TANF reauthorization bill which was also close to the President's proposals although it does include modifications to the number of work hours required and permits some education to count as work. The Senate Finance Committee bill also limits the superwaiver. The full Senate is not expected to take up the bill until after the first of the year.

Advocates at the federal level are working to improve the Senate bill before the full Senate votes on it. Areas for improvement include: ● expanding the definition of "work" to include more activities to address barriers to employment, such as post secondary and vocational education; ● increasing funding for child care to \$11.5 billion; ● limiting funding for marriage promotion activities; ● eliminating the superwaiver provision; ● permitting the use of federal funds for benefits to recent legal immigrants.

Advocates, such as NOW Legal Defense & Education Fund and Welfare Made a Difference, are proposing reauthorization of the current law as is for two years. Several actions are planned in Washington, DC to bring attention to these. *For more information, contact Deborah at 860-278-5688 x 12. ♦*

to www.cga.state.ct.us. If you want more information, contact Deborah at 860-2478-5688 x 12 or dnoble@larcc.org. ♦

Poverty Law Seminar Offered

Statewide Legal Services of CT will hold two free seminars on Poverty Law for social service agencies. We'll explain how the Connecticut legal aid programs work and how employees of social service agencies can better serve their clients by understanding the legal issues their clients are facing. Topics to be covered are Landlord/Tenant, Consumer, Employment, Family, and Public Benefits law.

The seminars are from 9 am - 1pm on **November 14** at Quinnipiac School of Law and on **November 17** at Community Renewal Team. A continental breakfast is included. Seating is limited. Please call Mary at 860-344-8096, x 3014 for a registration form. ♦

Summary of 2003 Public and Special Acts

This book is a detailed description of new CT legislation impacting the poor. Subject areas include welfare, housing, elder, family, disability and more.

To order, fill out the form below and mail it with your \$15 payment to LARCC, 80 Jefferson St., Hartford, CT 06106. Call (860) 278-5688.

Name _____

Street _____

Town _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____

Covering CT Kids Meeting

The next Covering CT's Kids and Families coalition meeting will be Thursday, November 20 from 8:45am - noon at the Department of Transportation in Newington. There will be an interactive session on current and proposed changes to HUSKY. Future strategies for the CCKF initiative as the Children's Health Council merges with CT Voices for Children will be discussed. The meeting is open to organizations interested in HUSKY outreach. *Contact Judith Solomon at (860) 570-1086. ♦*

CABHN Meetings *held 1st Friday of the month*

9:30 - 11:30 am

Upcoming Meetings:

November 7th

December 5th

Community Renewal Team
(CRT)

555 Windsor St., Hartford

Topics:

"The State of Health Care in Connecticut"; TANF Update, Energy Assistance, and more.

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.

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

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