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CABHN FEVER

Energy Assistance Programs 2007-2008

Are you worried about how you'll pay your heating bills this winter? The energy assistance program benefits began on November 1st. Applications can take up to 45 days to process, but immediate fuel delivery should be available if needed, after November 1. The deadline to apply is May 1, 2008, except utility heated households with a shut-off notice can apply until May 15, 2008. Apply early to ensure you get needed benefits. Even if heat is included in your rent payment, you may be eligible for benefits (depending on your income and rent amount).

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

Household Size	Monthly Income
1	\$2,397
2	\$3,135
3	\$3,872
4	\$4,610
5	\$5,348
6	\$6,085



Where to Apply

Apply at your local Community Action Agency (CAA). If you cannot go to the CAA due a disability or illness, ask the responsible CAA for the assistance needed to apply. Call 1-800-842-1132 or Infoline at 211 for local application sites. Bring proof of income for everyone in the house, a copy of your fuel/utility bill, and either a Social Security number for everyone in the house or proof that anyone without a Social Security number has applied for one.

Social Security Number Requirements

This year the Department of Social Services (DSS) is requiring that each person in the house provide the CAA with

a Social Security number (SSN) or proof that one has been applied for, as part of the application process. There are many people who do not have an SSN or have one readily available, including newborn children, victims of domestic violence who have fled without their paperwork, victims of catastrophic events such as fires, households which have recently experienced homelessness, immigrants who are eligible for energy assistance but who are not permitted to work and therefore are not provided with an SSN. Anyone having difficulty getting energy assistance because they either don't have an SSN or have difficulty getting one, should contact Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 for assistance.

Special Note for Households Heating with Oil or Kerosene

Each winter, the energy assistance program requires fuel dealers to sign a vendor document which gets recipients a modest discount in their fuel costs and provides some consumer protections in order to get paid by the program, similar to provisions in contracts the state signs with dealers to provide fuel to state facilities. Not all oil and kerosene dealers are willing to sign the documents to deliver fuel to energy assistance recipients. If your fuel dealer does not participate this winter, you can contact other dealers to find one who does – the Community Action Agency handling your energy assistance application has a list of participating fuel dealers. You can also call the Department of Social Services hotline and ask for names of participating dealers in your area: 1-800-842-1132. Kerosene dealers are new to this special purchasing arrangement and you can suggest they also call this hotline to find out how to become an energy assistance program vendor.

Arrearage Forgiveness Program

If you heat with electricity from CL&P or UI, or gas from Yankee Gas,

SCG or CNG, contact the company and apply for the arrearage forgiveness program. In the arrearage forgiveness program, back bills are forgiven in exchange for making regular, agreed upon payments.

If you cannot afford the amount the utility asks you to pay each month, ask for a referral to a social service agency working with the utility that can evaluate you for a lower payment. It is possible to arrange for payments as low as \$50/month if that is all the household can afford. If all required payments are made by April 30th and you are granted energy assistance, the utility will match your payments and any amount you receive for energy assistance, to reduce your debt. The utility will also allow you to continue to make payments at the same amount throughout the summer and avoid a utility shut-off, and those payments will be matched on October 31st.

Call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-344-0380 for assistance if you cannot negotiate a payment agreement you can afford.

Furnace Clean, Tune and Test

A furnace clean, tune and test is available to energy assistance recipients who heat with oil, kerosene, coal or wood. The cost will not be deducted from your benefits.

Emergency Furnace Repair/Replacement

If you are a homeowner, ask at the Community Action Agency responsible for your energy assistance application about a repair or replacement of your furnace if it is unsafe or broken. If a homeowner receives cash assistance from the Department of Social Services (DSS) - TFA, AABD or State Supplement, or SAGA - repairs are also available through DSS in a separate program, when necessary to allow the family to remain in their home; contact your DSS case worker to apply.

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A.B.C.D. and TVCCA Use New Approaches to Address Poverty

The Board of Directors of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA), the statewide network of Community Action Agencies, has adopted a new three-year Strategic Plan which focuses on supporting Connecticut in its effort to reduce child poverty by 50 percent. Local community action agencies have developed model programs to help families move out of poverty. Last month, we highlighted programs at CRT in Hartford and NOW in Waterbury. This month, we spotlight the Total Learning approach sponsored by Action for Bridgeport Community Development (A.B.C.D.) and the Team Pathways case management of Thames Valley Community Action Agency (TVCCA).

A.B.C.D. - Total Learning

A.B.C.D., in partnership with the Bridgeport Board of Education, arts education IDEAS, Music Together and the Michael Cohen Group are revolutionizing the way children are taught. The model incorporates a Total Learning approach which emphasizes learning how to learn. The full model includes smaller child-staff ratios in the classroom, extended hours for academic studies, intensive family case management, and strong parental involvement.

Today's traditional education approaches have failed to meet the needs of low-income children and children of color. Across the country, half of eighth-grade African American and Latino students function below the fourth grade. In 2007, only 7% of Bridgeport's 10th graders met or exceeded the state goal for reading and 9% for math. Nationwide boys make up two-thirds of special education students. They are 30% more likely to drop out of school, 200% more likely to attempt suicide before the age of 14 and five times more likely to be expelled from pre-school than girls. Simply put, today's approaches to education are not working for these, and many other children.

After a successful pilot year in

2006, ABCD's Total Learning initiative has grown from serving a total of 50 children and families to serve more than 800 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in 2007-08. These children participate in early learning environments each year and leave prepared to succeed in kindergarten. Results from the National Reporting System have confirmed A.B.C.D.'s effectiveness in early childhood education. The research component of Total Learning will allow for expansion of the program from a small project in Bridgeport, Connecticut to a project with implications for education reform across the State, and indeed, the country.

TVCCA - Team Pathways

Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) in Southeastern Connecticut is working with the Move the Mountain Transformational Leadership Center to develop high impact strategies around an 'ending poverty agenda'. The agency has implemented Team Pathways as an agency case management component. Team Pathways is modeled after the Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) initiative and is designed to provide clients holistic access to the services offered through TVCCA, as well as assistance accessing services offered by local community agencies, other service providers and the State of Connecticut. Universal intake for all programs is a driving principle for the Team Pathways case managers.

Team Pathways offers a variety of case management services ranging from "one time" information and referral services to intensive case management where a Team Pathways Case Manager assists clients with completing the goals and objectives they feel are important to them and their family. Team Pathways also offers a Pharmacy Assistance Program, and is the referral resource for the United Way Furniture Bank and various food banks throughout southeastern Connecticut. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is offered during tax season.

There are no eligibility requirements to meet with a TVCCA Team Pathways Case Manager. Team Pathways case managers provide interested individuals with a quick assessment and listen to the needs of clients before offering referrals or suggestions.

Unique to TVCCA and critical to the accountability of Team Pathways is a client tracking software developed by TVCCA, Keyware. Keyware assists the client and staff in achieving the goals established for self-sufficiency while tracking outcomes every step of the way. Keyware integrates with all other program databases.

Our vision for client services is to offer solutions, suggestions and services that meet the needs of the individual and that assist them and their families to achieve self-sufficiency.

Keep Your Budget This Holiday Season

It's always difficult to make ends meet on a limited budget, especially during the holidays when budgets are stretched to the max. It can be hard to figure out how to make the holidays joyful for your family as well as pay the rent and other bills.

Advocates in the housing unit at Statewide Legal Services notice an unhappy trend after the holiday season passes each year. Landlords who have not been paid January rent show up with a piece of paper and it's not a belated holiday greeting, but instead a notice to quit possession for failure to pay rent.

There may be a way to approach the holidays that will help to alleviate the financial stress. There are many community resources established to help families with gifts for children. Toys for Tots, the Salvation Army, your town's Social Services or Human Services Department, or local churches that have "angel trees" are just a few of the possibilities. Call INFOLINE at 211 for more information. And remember - if you can help out any of these organizations by giving a gift or two, please do!

Medicare Part D (Prescription Drug) Annual Enrollment Period Begins Nov. 15th



Enrollment in Medicare Part D, prescription drug coverage, is opening again on November 15. You can enroll in a plan for 2008 between November 15 and December 31, 2007. You can also change plans during this period if you are currently in a Part D plan. There will be new Part D plans and new charges and provisions in existing plans.

If you are enrolled in a plan, you don't have to do anything to stay in that plan. But you should review the provisions of your plan for 2008 to make sure that the plan's coverage and costs still meet your needs. If you aren't satisfied with your plan, or if you aren't enrolled and want to be, now is the time to study your Part D options so that you can make the right decision and act between November 15 and December 31.

Special Provisions for People Receiving "Extra Help":

PCSW Report on Income Inadequacy

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), has released a new report "Overlooked and Undercounted: Where Connecticut Stands" – a region by region analysis which identifies characteristics of families with inadequate income, i.e., income below the Self-Sufficiency Standard developed by the State of Connecticut. Among the key findings of the report:

- 1 out of every 5 Connecticut families lacks income adequate to meet their basic needs.
- Families of color, particularly Latino families, are more likely to have inadequate income.
- The likelihood of having inadequate income is significantly higher if the family is foreign-born or is composed of non-citizens.

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If you are receiving the Part D low-income subsidy ("Extra Help") and were autoenrolled in a plan which no longer is available to people with a low-income subsidy, you will be automatically switched to an eligible plan. If you received a low-income subsidy automatically (without having to apply) in 2007, but will have to apply in 2008, you should receive a letter from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), informing you that you must reapply for benefits. The letter will include an application for a low-income subsidy.

You can get help finding out about Part D plans and how to pick a plan from:

The CHOICES program at (800)994-9422, the Center for Medicare Advocacy at 1(800)262-4414 or (860)456-7790 and at www.medicareadvocacy.org and the Medicare program at 1(800)MEDICARE



SCHIP Update

Congress continues to work on reauthorizing the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The first reauthorization bill was vetoed by the President and the vote to override that veto was unsuccessful in the House of Representatives. On October 25, the House passed a new reauthorization bill with modifications to address Republican concerns. This bill passed but without a veto-proof majority. The Senate is expected to take up and pass this revised bill, perhaps with additional changes to encourage Republican support soon. The current SCHIP extension runs out on November 16. Presumably, if no full reauthorization is passed by then, some form of extension will again be adopted. The full Connecticut delegation has supported the SCHIP reauthorization bills.

Energy Assistance (Cont. from p. 1)

Apply for Hardship Status

Protect yourself from a winter shut-off by applying for "hardship" status from your electric and gas companies. If your utility service was turned off and you qualify for "hardship" status, the utility company must turn your gas heat service or electricity back on by November 1 and keep it on through May 1. If you are a gas heating customer and your service was on last winter because you were a "hardship" case, the utility can require you to pay up to \$100 to get service turned back on. However, it is better to get on the arrearage forgiveness program and make monthly payments to resolve a utility shut-off, as this allows you to reduce your debt to the utility and avoid a shut-off in the future.

Food Stamp Recipients

If you receive food stamps, ask your DSS worker if the "standard utility allowance" was used in calculating your food stamp benefits. Energy assistance recipients are entitled to have this figure used. It often results in the household receiving additional food stamp benefits.

Weatherization Assistance

You may be able to get conservation assistance to help reduce your bills. There is a website that can help you find free conservation assistance: www.CTSavesEnergy.com – click on "for your home" and then click on "low income" and your utility company's name. CL&P customers can also contact INFOLINE at 211 or CL&P's WRAP program at 1-800-388-9727. UI customers can contact UI at 1-203-499-2648 and ask for weatherization assistance. Gas and municipal utilities also have assistance available and can be called directly.

Soldiers, Sailors and Marine Fund

This fund provides emergency assistance, including help with utility and energy bills, for honorably discharged veterans who served during specific time periods. Spouses and dependent children can also get assistance.

Water Bill Assistance

Effective May 1, 2007, Aquarion Water Company of Connecticut announced an allocation of \$50,000 to its Customer Assistance Program as a pilot offering to help customers with their water bills. A one-time voucher of \$50 will be granted to 1,000 customers who are either homeowners in Aquarion's service territory or contractual renters (water bill must be in owner's or renter's name) who pay a quarterly water bill. Once the \$50,000 has been allocated, the program will conclude for 2007.

Aquarion provides water to 36 cities and towns throughout Fairfield, New Haven, Hartford, Litchfield and New London Counties.

The application can be printed from this website: <http://www.aquarion.com/Customerassistanceprogram.html>, or contact Goodwill Industries of Western Connecticut at (203) 368-6511 or toll-free at (800) 423-9787 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., M-F, for additional

program details or email at Aquarion@goodwillwct.org. You may also contact Aquarion Water Co. at (203) 445-7310 or toll-free at (800) 732-9678.

PCSW Report

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- Employment is key to income adequacy, but in some jobs, even working full-time, year-round does not result in income adequacy.

The Commission makes recommendations in three areas to address income adequacy:

- targeted state investments
- tax policy
- income support.

The Executive Summary (in Spanish and English), the full report and more information on the Self-Sufficiency Standard are available at the Commission website: www.cga.ct.gov/PCSW

CABHN Meetings

Upcoming Meeting

CABHN/FESN Meeting

Friday, December 14

9:30-11:30 am

Place TBA

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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