

<b>Highlights in this issue:</b>	
Apply for Energy Assistance ...	p 1
More Families Face Cut Off ...	p 1
Public Policy Workshops .....	p 2
More on TFA Changes .....	p 3
TANF Reauthorization .....	p 3

# CABHN FEVER



## It's Time to Apply for Energy Assistance!

Wondering how you'll pay your heating bills this winter? **Apply for energy assistance now...**benefits begin November 1. Deadline to apply: April 30, 2002 (*earlier if funds run out*). Here are some key points:

- You may be eligible for benefits even if heat is included in your rent payment** (*depending on your income and rent amount*).
  - Apply if your income is less than the amounts listed below:**

# in house	1	2	3	4	5	6
Annual income	\$12,885	\$17,415	\$21,945	\$26,475	\$31,005	\$35,535
Monthly income	\$1,073	\$1,451	\$1,828	\$2,206	\$2,583	\$2,961
  - 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
Annual income	\$17,180	\$23,220	\$29,260	\$35,300	\$41,340	\$47,380
Monthly income	\$1,431	\$1,935	\$2,438	\$2,941	\$3,445	\$3,948
  - Benefits may be available for households with higher income – call INFOLINE (211) to find out if they are available.** (*For example, a family of 3 with \$3171/month income may be able to get energy assistance if more federal money becomes available.*)
  - Apply at the local Community Action Agency or call INFOLINE (211) for information on the closest application site.** *Bring proof of income for everyone in the household and a copy of your fuel or utility bill.*
  - If you heat with gas from Yankee Gas, SCG or CNG, contact the gas company and apply for the arrearage forgiveness program** (*if you owe the gas company money*). These forgiveness programs are available to all households receiving CEAP or SAFA assistance.
  - Repairs or replacements of unsafe furnaces or furnaces that are not working** are available to some households.
  - More weatherization assistance** (making your home energy efficient) **is available.**
- ❖ **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 1-800-453-3320 or (860) 344-0380.**


**Community Action Agencies:**

*Bridgeport:* Action for Bridgeport Comm. Development, 384-6904  
*Bristol:* Bristol Community Org. 582-7490  
*Danbury:* Community Action Committee of Danbury, 748-5422  
*Derby:* TEAM, 736-5420  
*Hartford:* Community Renewal Team, 560-5800  
*Meriden:* Community Action Agency of Meriden, 235-0278

*New Britain:* Human Resources Agency, 223-2288  
*New Haven:* Community Action Agency of NH, 397-5223  
*Norwich:* Thames Valley Council for Comm. Action, 889-1365  
*South Norwalk:* Norwalk Economic Opportunity, 899-2444  
*Stamford:* CTE, 352-4846  
*Waterbury:* New Opportunities for Waterbury, 756-8151  
*Willimantic:* Access Agency, 450-7400. ❖

## Families in Extensions Face Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> Cut Off

Much attention has been paid to changes which will affect families reaching the 5-year limit on cash assistance on Oct. 1. Starting Nov. 1, an *even larger* group of families face the loss of their benefits. **Under new rules, most families will not be eligible for more than 3 extensions of TFA cash assistance.** However, families in special circumstances may qualify for more.

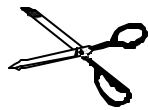
If you are nearing the end of your third (or higher) extension, it is important to do the following: 

- ✓ **Go to Your Scheduled Exit Interview.** You'll find out whether you can get another extension as well as information about medical, food and housing assistance. If you have a barrier to employment, be sure to bring proof of the barrier with you.
- ✓ **Tell Your Caseworker About Barriers to Employment.** Because a 4<sup>th</sup> (or higher) extension will be available to families with employment barriers, it's important to discuss ALL barriers to employment. Bring "proof" of the barrier. If possible, talk with your caseworker before the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> extension about these barriers.
- ✓ **Get Your Rent Lowered if You Get Housing Assistance.** If you are in public housing or get a housing subsidy (Sec. 8, etc.), tell the housing agency (in writing) about your lower income. Your rent should go down.
- ✓ **Call Statewide Legal Services** at 1-800-453-3320 or 860-344-0380. Welfare rules are very complicated. Advocates at Statewide Legal Services can review your case to make sure you get an extension or exemption if you qualify. No matter why you are losing benefits, call and find out your options. ❖

## More About the New TFA Rules & the Many More Families Affected

Page one of CABHN Fever lists a few things families who are facing a TFA cut off can do. This article will provide more detail.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) estimates that more than 2,800 families will reach the end of their third or higher extension in the next six months, at the rate of about 400 families per month. These families are very poor and have followed DSS' rules but are no longer automatically eligible for six-month extensions.



After 21 months of cash assistance, a family who is earning less than the cash benefit they are eligible for (plus \$90 to cover work expenses) can get THREE six-month extensions as long as they have complied with the employment services rules.

**But after the third extension, it will be harder to qualify for extensions.** Families will only be eligible if the adult(s) in the family:

- are unable to work because of domestic violence;
- work at least 35 hours a week and earn less than the amount of the cash benefits that the family is eligible for (this affects large families);
- work less than 35 hours a week because of a disability or the need to care for a member of the family with a disability, provided the adult works as many hours as possible; or
- can demonstrate at least 2 barriers to employment, including but not limited to: lack of child care or transportation, substance abuse or addiction, a severe learning disability, domestic violence, low literacy, a DCF case plan that precludes employment activities, a severe mental or physical health problem or a child with a serious physical or behavioral health problem.

If you know of someone affected by these changes or would like to learn more about the changes, call Deborah at CABHN 860-278-5688 x 12.❖

## Name Change Reflects Group's Mission

The Campaign to Fight Poverty and Build Economic Security has changed its name to:

**ONE CONNECTICUT**  
A Campaign to Fight Poverty and Build Economic Security

The new name reflects the Campaign's mission "to ensure that the state's policies and practices leave behind no person" and its goal of "creating one prosperous Connecticut, undivided by damaging economic disparity between its residents, municipalities and regions."

For more information, contact Jane McNichol, LARCC (860)278-5688 ext. 15 or DemocracyWorks, 860-727-1157.

## Help Spread the Word About Child Tax Credits

As a result of legislation signed into law by Congress in June, millions of low-income families will become eligible for refunds from the Child Tax Credit in 2001 and can claim them on their tax returns filed in 2002. However, because workers will not automatically receive the new credit, it will be critical to let people know how to get the credit. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) has organized a campaign kit to help you do outreach. Call the CBPP (202-408-1080).❖



## Parents Program to Begin

This innovative program is designed to enhance the lives of children by providing services to the non-custodial parent. The goal is to help these parents get jobs or better jobs through job skill training, computer training, job placement, parenting support groups, family mediation, and much more.

For information, call Victoria at 860-450-7187 or Don at 860-450-7457. This program is made possible by funds granted by State of CT OPM Workforce Competitiveness Administration through the CT Economic Resource Center, Inc.❖

## New Network Forming in Aftermath of Tragedies

Taken in part from a press release by CCLU & DemocracyWorks.

On September 11, 2001 thousands of people lost their lives in a brutal assault on the American people and the American form of government. Today and for a long time we will mourn the loss of these innocent lives and insist that those who perpetrated these acts be held accountable. Unfortunately, this tragedy requires all Americans to examine carefully the steps our country may now take to reduce the risk of future terrorist attacks.

A concerned group of organizations from throughout the state of Connecticut, crossing political, religious, ethnic and racial spectrums, have all come together to form a network to share information and to build the capacity to respond to issues about upholding fundamental principles of democracy and civil liberties. In a joint voice we are... urging a balance between national security and personal freedom

The group is developing an electronic network to share information and to build the capacity to respond to issues about upholding fundamental principles of democracy and civil liberties. Members of the group will focus on educational messages/training about tolerance and diversity and policy issues.

To get involved or information, contact [DemocracyWorks@home.com](mailto:DemocracyWorks@home.com) (860-727-1157) or CCLU [tyounger@cclu.org](mailto:tyounger@cclu.org) (860-247-9823).❖

## Free Public Policy Workshops Offered

CABHN is once again offering these helpful workshops where you can learn how to influence public policy. The workshop will outline the legislative process and how citizens can be more involved and have their voices heard.

Call Debbie at CABHN to schedule a workshop for your community group or agency. (860-278-5688 x 12 or email: [DNoble@larcc.org](mailto:DNoble@larcc.org)).❖

## Proposed Policy Priorities TANF Reauthorization

The federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant expires in 2002. The results of the adoption of the TANF block grant, which replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1996, are mixed. Many families, whether working or not, continue to struggle for economic self-sufficiency. The policy changes below would make the TANF block grant a vehicle for addressing the issue of family self-sufficiency.

✓ **Family self-sufficiency and the reduction of family poverty should be explicit goals of the TANF block grant.** Congress should adopt policies which lead to increased self-sufficiency, including credits to reward states which can demonstrate that their TANF program has increased family self-sufficiency.

✓ **All low-income families should have access to appropriate education and training opportunities.** Employment and training programs should be available to workers who need better-paying jobs to support their families and to people with disabilities who need accommodations to work, as well as to recipients of cash assistance who are transitioning from welfare to work.

✓ **All low-income families should have access to income supplements that enable a family to meet basic needs.** Design programs to ensure that all family members have access to medical care, housing, food & childcare.

✓ **Time limits should be flexible so families can address barriers to self-sufficiency.** The federal five-year time "clock" should be suspended for parents who are addressing employment barriers. States should have the flexibility to use federal funds to extend cash assistance for as long as necessary to families addressing these barriers.

✓ **Assistance, through TANF-funded programs and the Unemployment Insurance system, should be available to families during times of recession.** As the economy worsens, parents who have been working will lose their jobs through no fault of their

own. In the past, many turned to the family welfare system. Unless there are changes to UI & TANF, assistance may not be available to families in need.

✓ **States should have more flexibility in meeting work participation rates.** States which encourage and support families who are addressing their employment barriers should not be penalized by rigid federal work participation requirements. The current participation rate system should be replaced with one that requires participation by all TANF parents in activities appropriate to their situation.

✓ **Restrictions on the use of federal funds for benefits to legal immigrants should be removed.** Connecticut has chosen to continue cash, food and medical benefits to legal immigrants. But states should not shoulder this burden alone. Federal funds should be made available for benefits to legal immigrants.

✓ **Funding for the TANF block grant should be maintained at its current level or increased - but Congress should build in protections to ensure that TANF funds do not simply replace state funding for existing services.** Too many families have left welfare but remain in poverty. Families who have not left welfare often face multiple barriers to employment and need additional support services to make the transition to employment. Mechanisms are not in place to ensure that federal funds go to new services--this loophole should be closed.

*If you have comments on the above priorities, contact Debbie 860-278-5688 x12 or by email: [dnoble@larcc.org](mailto:dnoble@larcc.org).*

### Save the Dates

◆ **October 25** - CT Housing Coalition Conference. *Information: 860-563-2943 or email [info@ct-housing.org](mailto:info@ct-housing.org).*

◆ **October 30** - Breakfast NOW with Kim Gandy, National NOW President and ◆ **November 10** - Combatting Compassionate Conservatism: Making the Best of the Worst of Times. Convention and panel discussion. *Information, CT NOW 860-524-5978.*

## Communities Document Impact of TFA Cuts

Community advocates and service providers from around the state have been meeting in their regions to fashion a response to the TFA cut offs that will leave hundreds of CT families without access to cash benefits. Community groups have met in the Norwich and New Haven areas to inform service providers about the cuts and what they should expect to see in terms of the increased needs of clients. In addition to giving information, these meetings have emphasized the importance of documenting the stories of those being cut off TFA.

New Haven area providers will be adding a question to their routine intake forms asking if the family requesting services has recently lost their TFA benefits. This information will be crucial to efforts to change these policies in the coming legislative session.

Groups have also begun discussions around coordinating services and making sure that families aren't falling through the cracks. Resources that will be available to them are scarce. Many emergency and social service providers are already functioning at full capacity without the resources for additional clients. Norwich Social Services has brought together representatives from their area DOL, DSS, DCF offices and TVCCA (their CAP agency) to come up with a system for accessing information on families that are being cut off. The goal is to hook these families into all of the services that they are eligible for. The New Haven group has been convened by CT Voices for Children and Christian Community Action and has come together for several informational and planning meetings. Legislators and the media were involved in the meetings in both areas. Community groups in Hartford will be planning a similar informational and networking group.

*For more information or to share your stories about these families, call Sara at LARCC (860-278-5688 x11).*



## Answers to Managed Care/HMO Questions

If you have questions about managed care, need to understand the referral or pre-authorization process or need assistance with the appeal/grievance procedures, the Office of Managed Care Ombudsman can help. The Ombudsman Office can give you general information about managed care, explain how to file a complaint with your managed care plan and more. Call anytime (1-866-HMO-4446).✦



## Opportunities for Women in Non-Traditional Jobs

The ACCESS Agency together with Action for Bridgeport Community Development have created a comprehensive program to open opportunities for women. The goal is to place 40 women in non-traditional jobs and to provide support services to 60 women currently working. Open to women in Windham, Tolland, Fairfield & New Haven counties. *For information, call Don (ACCESS Agency) 860-450-7457.*✦

## Connecting the Elderly To Food Stamps

Many elderly people are food insecure and in need of nutrition-related assistance. According to USDA, in 1999, 1,439,000 households with elderly people reported that they did not have enough of the right types of food or simply did not have enough to eat. However, only a small proportion of low-income elderly people participate in the Food Stamp Program.

Advocates can make a difference in connecting elderly people to the Food Stamp Program by providing information and helping overcome myths about the Program. There are special Food Stamp Program rules that apply to the elderly. Visit the Elderly Resource Center at Food Research & Action Center at [www.frac.org/html/news/fsp/fselderlycenter.htm](http://www.frac.org/html/news/fsp/fselderlycenter.htm) or call (202)986-2200.✦

## Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs

80 Jefferson Street  
Hartford, CT 06106



Please visit CABHN &  
LARCC on the web:  
[www.larcc.org](http://www.larcc.org)

### Next CABHN Meeting

Meetings are held the **second** Friday of the month from 10 am - 12 pm. *Please join us.*

**Friday, October 12**  
Community Renewal Team  
555 Windsor St., Hartford

*Topics:*

TANF Reauthorization  
Energy Assistance  
TFA Changes  
& More

*CABHN meetings are a great way to get and share 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.*