

CABHN FEVER

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Policy Clarification is Good News for Connecticut Medicare Beneficiaries!

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Office of Management and Budget announced on July 19, 2004 that low-income Medicare beneficiaries who qualify for the \$600.00 annual prescription drug credit upon enrollment in the Medicare-approved drug discount program will not have to worry that this monetary benefit will be counted against them when they apply for Medicaid or other federal government benefit programs like housing and food stamps.

This clarification of policy is good news for Connecticut Medicare beneficiaries! For example, they will not have their eligibility for Medicaid delayed. A low-income beneficiary on ConnPace and on a Medicaid spenddown will still be able to use the total cost of their prescription drugs, not just their co-payments, towards their spenddown, as had been the case for years. This federal policy

clarification reverses the short-lived practice in Connecticut when the Medicare-drug discount program first became effective on June 1, 2004. In June, Medicare beneficiaries were only allowed to use the amount of their co-payments towards their Medicaid spenddown, making it far more difficult to meet the spenddown. In addition, federal policy has now been clarified in other areas. The value of the Medicare drug discount credit will not reduce beneficiaries' food stamps nor will it increase the portion of rent that beneficiaries pay in subsidized housing.

Because this policy is effective as of June 1, 2004, states were instructed to reopen public benefit cases that may have been decided before this policy clarification was issued.

If you have any questions, please contact your local Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-994-9422. ♦

SAGA Medical Program: Transition Period Extended thru 10/1/04

The Department of Social Services is in the process of shifting the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) Medical program to a managed care system. The change was supposed to be fully implemented by August 1 but as a result of concerns raised by advocates and legislators, full implementation has been delayed **UNTIL OCTOBER 1.**

Under the new system, the Community Health Network of Connecticut (CHNCT) will administer the system and the federally qualified health centers in the state will be the major providers of primary care. For the months of August and September, providers who serve SAGA Medical clients, even if the providers are not part of the CHNCT network, will be

(See page 2 SAGA)

Are You Having a Problem Registering A Child in School?

If you are the child's parent and the child resides with you...

Your child is allowed by law to attend school in the town where you reside, even if you do not have legal custody, as long as your child resides with you. The school may ask you to sign an affidavit, stating that your child lives with you, but the school cannot require you to get a custody order.

If you are not the child's parent and the child resides with you...

A child can attend school in the town where the child actually lives, even if the child lives with a person who is not their parent. The law says that a child who lives with you can attend school in your town of residence, if you intend that the child will remain there, if you are not being paid to provide the child's residence, and if the child is with you for some reason other than only going to school in your town. You do not have to have legal custody or guardianship.

If your family is temporarily homeless...

If your family is living temporarily in a homeless shelter, then your child can either go to school in the town where the shelter is located, or attend school in the town where the family had been living. If your family is living temporarily in a motel, or is sharing the housing of other persons because of homelessness, then your child can continue to attend school in the town where your child last resided, if that is what you want.

If your child is not in this country legally...

The child is allowed by law to attend school in the town where he or she actually resides, even if the child is not legally a resident of the U.S. You may be asked to show some proof of the address where you and your child reside.



Deborah Noble to Leave CABHN

With regret, we announce that Deborah Noble, who has been the community liaison for CABHN for the past six years, will leave this position at the beginning of October. CABHN staffing is funded through grants and the LARCC budget. We are unable to continue funding for a full-time staff person for CABHN at this time. While Deborah is looking forward to new opportunities closer to her home in Willimantic and will remain active in working for social change, CABHN will miss her persistent work on behalf of people struggling with the social safety net in Connecticut and her outreach efforts.

We are actively pursuing grant funding for CABHN staff and hope that this break in full-time staffing will be temporary. We anticipate that CABHN Fever will continue to be published regularly. We wish you all the best, Deb!♦

SAGA (Cont. from page 1)

reimbursed by CHNCT.

Once the system is fully implemented, SAGA participants will be assigned to and must receive primary care from a primary care provider which has a contract with CHNCT. In most cases, participants will be assigned to the federally qualified health center that is closest to their home.

SAGA Medical recipients should all have received information from CHNCT assigning them to a primary care provider. Recipients can change to a different provider in the CHNCT network

If you want to change your primary care provider, you MUST call CHNCT at 1-866-361-SAGA (7242) and request a change.

If you have other questions about this new system, you can call the same



America's Second Harvest Aids Hurricane Victims

In response to Hurricane Charley, America's Second Harvest has mobilized its Disaster Response Team. As a member of the National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD), Second Harvest is working with the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and other responders in Florida. The task is to supply food, water and other vital grocery items such as diapers and cleaning supplies. The need is great. Over 2,300 people are staying in shelters, 11,000 have applied for disaster aid, and hundreds of thousands of people are still without power.

Many of the individuals, families and children directly affected are not thinking about work or school, but where their next meal is coming from. America's Second Harvest provides them with food and water while they step back and evaluate what to do next

Your gift today will help get more trucks on the road in the effort to provide basic needs. In addition, a very special and generous donor has agreed to match donations dollar to dollar up to a total of \$45,000. For every dollar sent in, two dollars will go to support the relief efforts in Florida. To donate, please visit www.secondharvest.org/disaster.♦

number or get information from the CHNCT website: www.chnct.org.

CABHN is trying to document problems with this system as it is implemented. If you or one of your clients is assigned to a primary care provider located far from home, has other problems getting to the provider or generally has problems with this new system, please contact Deborah Noble at 860-278-5688 x12 or dnoble@larcc.org and leave details about the issue.♦

GrandParents GrandRally



Wednesday, Sept. 8th from 11am - 1 p.m. at the State Capitol in Hartford

In response to the growing number of Connecticut grandparents and relatives who are raising grandchildren and other family members, advocates across the state are coming together in a rally to push for state reforms that would provide them with additional legal and financial support in raising their kin. In Connecticut 18,898 grandparents are raising nearly 39,797 children. There are another 12,406 children living in households headed by other relatives. These family members are caring for children whose parents are either deceased or are struggling with medical problems, mental illness, economic hardship, domestic violence, or are serving in the military for the war.

For more information please call Elby Gonzalez-Schwapp at 860-547-1426 x 7572 or Linda Cobb at 860-543-8413 x. 116.

Sponsors of the CT GrandRally are: The Salvation Army of Greater Hartford Parents the Second Time Around program, the City of Hartford, the Consultation Center, the CT North Central Area Agency on Aging, New Haven Public Schools Social Development Department, the AARP-CT, and the Commission on Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

Care4Kids Accepting Applications

If you applied for Care4Kids (help with child care) and were placed on the Wait List, you need to re-apply. There might be an available Child Care Certificate for your family. Please call 1-888-214 KIDS (5437) to get an application for **Care4Kids**.

To find out if you are still on the wait list, call DSS Child Care Team at 1-800-811-6141, press 6.♦

Major Change to Overtime Pay

As of August 23rd, 2004 the federal guidelines regarding overtime pay have changed dramatically. Salaried workers earning between \$22,100 and \$65,000 may be disqualified from receiving overtime pay. Specifically, Section 13(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides an exemption from **both minimum wage and overtime pay** for employees who are classified as executive, administrative, professional, and outside sales employees. To qualify for exemption, employees must meet certain tests regarding their job duties and be paid a weekly salary of more than \$475.

The new law allows business owners who employ low-wage workers to re-classify their employees so that they will not be eligible for overtime pay. For example, the old regulations exempted professional employees from overtime if they had a professional degree. The new rule allows employers to substitute work experience and instruction in place of professional degrees and therefore disqualify an employee from receiving overtime pay.

Some of the professions that may be affected are restaurant workers, retail salespeople, nursery school and pre-school teachers, medical therapists and nursing managers. There are

certain types of workers who would still qualify for over-time pay: "blue-collar" workers. They include workers in production, maintenance, construction and similar occupations such as carpenters, electricians, mechanics, plumbers, iron workers, craftsmen, operating engineers, longshoremen, construction workers and laborers, no matter how highly paid they might be.

Do you still have questions and concerns? Please contact the State Department of Labor at (860) 263-6790. You can call for free from your local unemployment office or visit on the web at www.ctdol.state.ct.us. Also, for more information about workers rights, visit the Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT on the web: www.larcc.org

Protect your Rights! Overtime laws are enforced by the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. DOL. Your employer can be criminally charged for violating the overtime provisions of the FLSA. It is also illegal for your employer to fire or discriminate against you for filing a complaint about an FLSA overtime violation.

If you think you have been unfairly denied overtime pay, you can file a complaint with the nearest office of the U.S. DOL: 135 High Street, Room 210, Hartford or 150 Court Street, Room 423, New Haven or by calling 1-866-4-USWAGE (1-866-487-9243). The complaint may be filed in person, by letter or by telephone, but

Welfare Caseloads Declined in 2003

Across the country TANF caseloads dropped 3 percent for individuals and 1.8 percent for families during 2003. In Connecticut the number of families receiving benefits shrank from 22,484 in December 2002 to 20,975 in 2003 and the number of individuals receiving TFA dropped from 49,617 in Dec. 2002 to 43,419 in Dec. 2003.

While TFA caseloads have dropped so have the jobs available for parents trying to transition off of welfare. According to a DOL report (www.ctdol.state.ct.us) Connecticut lost 1,500 jobs from July 2003 to July 2004. In addition, both Bridgeport, with an unemployment rate of 5.9%, and Waterbury, at 6.3%, have unemployment rates which exceed the United States Unemployment Rate of 5.7%.

TANF Update:

The 1996 TANF law expired on Oct. 1, 2002, and is operating under an extension which ends on September 30, 2004. It is expected that Congress will grant another extension to TANF and not take up the legislation until after the November elections.

It also must be made in writing. Call Statewide Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 or (860) 344-0380 for information and advice.



Briefings & Hearing Scheduled

When & Where? Thursday, 9/23 Room 2D - Legislative Office Building, Hartford
Program Review & Investigation Committee (PRI)

Subjects: Medicaid Eligibility Process & Elderly/Disabled Housing

The staff of the PRI Committee of the legislature will present two briefing papers and initial information on two study topics, the Medicaid Eligibility Determination Process and Mixing Populations in State Elderly Housing Projects to the Committee at **10 am, Sept. 23**. The briefing papers will present factual material but will not include legislative or administrative recommendations, which are not expected until final reports are issued in December.

A public hearing on these subjects will be held at 4 pm. The hearing is a regular, legislative public hearing, and anyone can testify on any aspect of the two subjects. The Committee will also be holding supplemental public hearings around the state on these two studies. Those hearings have not yet been scheduled, but Norwich, Hamden, Danbury, and Bridgeport are potential locations.



Save These Dates!
CT NOW Foundation
Presents 2nd Annual
Runway Event

You're Invited to the 2nd Annual Real Women On (and off) The Runway - Wear What You Want, Say What You Think and Come As You Are!!!

Featuring Emcee Extraordinaire - Susan Campbell

Thursday, November 18, 2004
 7:00-9:30 p.m.

Location TBD in Hartford Area
 Tickets \$45.00

Scrumptious Dessert Buffet
 Coffee, Tea and Champagne

For tickets or more information call
 860-524-5978. ♦

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

Annual Housing
Conference 10/29

It's the can't-miss-it housing event of the year! "Defining Home - Housing That Works For Everyone" is the Annual Conference of the Connecticut Housing Coalition, taking place on Friday, October 29, 2004 at the Sheraton Stamford Hotel in Stamford, CT. Mark your calendar for Connecticut's largest gathering of affordable housing practitioners, advocates and resident leaders. To receive a copy of the conference brochure, please contact Keoshia Abrams at keoshia@ct-housing.org or 860-563-2943. ♦

9/3 CABHN Meeting -
Don't Miss It!

A representative from the Dept. of Social Services (DSS) will be conducting a special presentation on SAGA. ♦

CABHN Meetings
held 1st Friday of the month

9:30 - 11:30 am

Upcoming Meetings:

September 3rd

October 1st

Community Renewal Team
 (CRT)

555 Windsor St., Hartford

Topics:

SAGA Medical and more

See you there!

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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