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CABHN FEVER

How to Apply for Energy Assistance For Winter 2009-10



Applications are now being taken for energy assistance, and program benefits begin in November. 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 3, 2010, except utility heated households with a shut-off notice can apply until May 17, 2010. Apply early to ensure you get needed benefits. Even if heat is included in your rent payment, you may be eligible for benefits.

Who is Eligible?

If you pay your own heating bill, you may be eligible for assistance if your income is less than the amount in this chart:

Household Size	Monthly Income Limit	Annual Income Limit
1	\$2,540	\$30,485
2	\$3,322	\$39,865
3	\$4,104	\$49,245
4	\$4,885	\$58,625
5	\$5,667	\$68,005
6	\$6,449	\$77,385

If your heat is included in your rent, and your rent is more than 30% of your income, you may be eligible for assistance if your income is less than the amounts in this chart:

Household Size	Monthly Income Limit	Annual Income Limit
1	\$1,354	\$16,245
2	\$1,821	\$21,855
3	\$2,289	\$27,465
4	\$2,756	\$33,075
5	\$3,224	\$38,685
6	\$3,691	\$44,295

Where to Apply

Apply at your local Community Action Agency (CAA). If you cannot go to the CAA due to a disability or illness, ask the CAA for assistance. Call 1-800-842-1132 or Infoline at 2-1-1 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, if possible (see below).

Social Security Number

Requirements and Immigrants

With limited exceptions, the Department of Social Services (DSS) requires that each person in the household applying for energy assistance provide a Social Security number (SSN) or proof that one has been applied for. There are many people who are eligible for assistance but do not have or know their SSN. Legal immigrants who are not permitted to work have particular problems with this. Even if an immigrant is not eligible for energy assistance, others in his or her household may get benefits.

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, Propane or Kerosene

Each winter, the energy assistance program requires oil, propane and kerosene dealers to sign a vendor document which provides some consumer protections in order to get paid by the program and gets recipients a modest discount in oil costs (similar to provisions in contracts the state signs with dealers to provide fuel to state facilities). Not all oil, propane and kerosene dealers are willing to sign the documents to deliver fuel to energy assistance recipients. If your fuel dealer does not participate, you can contact other dealers to find one who does – the CAA 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.

Arrearage Forgiveness Programs

If you heat with electricity from CL&P or UI, or gas from Yankee Gas, SCG or CNG, apply for the arrearage forgiveness program. In this 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 to evaluate you for a lower payment. The CAAs and many volunteer application sites are doing these evaluations at the same time they take the application for energy assistance, along with providing applications for conservation assistance. It is possible to arrange for payments as low as \$50/month if that is all you can afford. If all required payments are made by April 30th and you are granted energy assistance, the utility will match your payments and

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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 -- those payments will be matched on October 31st.

CL&P and UI also have special payment programs for non-heat customers; apply with the utility if you have a back bill. These programs also forgive back bills when you make required payments.

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 or Boiler 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 or boiler 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.

Apply for Hardship Status

Protect yourself from a winter shut-off by applying for "hardship" status from your electric and gas companies when you apply for energy assistance. 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.

SNAP (Food Stamp) Recipients

Some households who have not been eligible for energy assistance in the past because their heat is included in their rent and rent is less than 30% of their income, will get a small benefit paid by DSS and their SNAP benefits will be recalculated. DSS will use the "standard utility allowance" to recalculate the SNAP benefits. Most households in this situation will receive additional benefits. You do not need to apply for this benefit – it will happen automatically if you currently receive SNAP benefits. If you are not receiving SNAP benefits, consider applying at DSS. The income limits have been raised (for example, a household of ~~two~~^{one} can have gross income up to \$20,035/yr. or \$1,670/mo. and there is no asset limit, and households with a member over 60 or who is disabled can have higher income, but they will have an asset limit).

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 "limited income" and your utility company's name. CL&P customers can contact the WRAP program at 1-800-388-9727; UI customers can contact UI at 1-877-947-3873 and ask for weatherization assistance. Gas conservation is coordinated with CL&P and UI. Municipal utilities also have assistance available and can be called directly: Bozrah - 860-889-7388; Groton - 860-446-4000; Jewett City - 860-376-2955; Norwich - 860-887-2555; S. Norwalk - 203-866-3366; Norwalk Third Taxing District - 203-866-9271; Wallingford - 203-294-2263.

Fuel Banks

Operation Fuel fuel banks and others provide assistance with energy and utility bills. Contact INFOLINE at 2-1-1 for local application sites.

Soldiers, Sailors and Marine Fund

This fund provides emergency assistance, including help with utility and energy bills, to honorably discharged veterans who served during specific time periods. Spouses and dependent children can also get assistance. Contact Infoline 2-1-1 to get information on where to apply.



Poverty Rate Increase in Connecticut:

Largest in the Nation

The latest results from the American Community Survey show that Connecticut has had the largest increase in the number of people in poverty from 2007 to 2008. The percentage of people with incomes under the Federal Poverty Level in Connecticut increased from 7.9% in 2007, to 9.3% in 2008—the largest increase in the nation. Connecticut children under 18 are also affected by the drastic increase in poverty. In 2007, 11.1% of children under 18 lived in families with incomes under the Federal Poverty Level, compared to 12.5% in 2008.

Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based think tank that analyzed the survey's results, noted that poverty estimates for 2008 were only for the first half of Connecticut's recession, which began in March 2008. Given that Connecticut's unemployment rates are the highest they have been since 1977, rising from 6.1% in August 2008 to 8.1% in August 2009, the organization also warned that the poverty rate would most likely increase in 2009.

Cities such as New Haven, Norwalk, and Stamford have seen the largest increases in poverty rates; child poverty

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Homelessness in Connecticut: Connecticut Counts 2009

Connecticut conducted its third annual statewide count of homeless individuals and families on January 28, 2009. Connecticut Counts, which is a group of non-profits, local and state government agencies, and concerned volunteers, attempts to obtain a snapshot of single point-in-time homelessness. The information provided by this count is required by the federal government to allow the state to apply for federal funds for programs that are aimed at reducing the number of people who are homeless. By comparing recent data to that of past years, Connecticut Counts can relay information to policy makers and service providers about addressing the needs of the homeless.

This year's results from Connecticut Counts 2009 are generally consistent with the 2007 and 2008 results. The approximate number of total people counted and the total number of families counted is identical to the 2007 results. Similarly, the count of homeless single adults in the state has shown little fluctuation. One of the main differences from the results of previous years is that there has been a 33% increase in the number of families and children in families that are homeless in rural and suburban areas.

When looking at specific information of the respondents, differences were noticed among all categories. The majority of sheltered single adults were male, compared to sheltered adults in families, which were predominantly female. Also, 59% of single adults were over the age of 40, while 65% of adults in families were between the ages of 22 and 39. Most sheltered single adults, unsheltered single adults, and unsheltered adults in families identified their race as "White"; however among sheltered adults in families, most identified themselves as "Black or African American". In regards to education,

the most commonly reported last level of education attained was 12th grade. When comparing single adults and adults in families, 49% of single adults reported receiving a GED, high school education, or higher, compared to 60% of adults in families.

The most commonly reported reason for leaving one's place of residence amongst all of those surveyed was "rent problems". Also, "domestic violence", "conflict with family or friends" and "eviction" were other commonly reported reasons. Chronic homelessness, meaning a person who has been homeless (in a shelter or on the street) for a year or more or has had at least four episodes of homeless in the past three years, largely affects unsheltered single adults and unsheltered adults. The most commonly reported sources of income were food stamps, employment, Social Security, and TANF. Also, a large number of those surveyed were currently employed during the time of the count. Many more adults in families (93%) had health insurance when compared to single adults, of whom 55% reported having health insurance. 57% of single adults reported a history of using hospital, detox, or rehab services for a substance abuse problem; only 17% of adults in families reported the same. Similarly, a much higher number of single adults reported having a mental illness or disabling condition compared to the number of adults in families.

National experts predict an increase in the number of homeless given the current recession, and expect to see results of this within the next two to three years. Given this prediction, an increase in the supportive housing system is necessary, along with improvement in the availability and accessibility to affordable housing. An increase in preventative measures is also necessary if Connecticut is to decrease the number of people who are homeless.

Health Coverage & Legal Immigrants

Recent legal immigrants who will lose health coverage as a result of new laws adopted in October will receive written notices at least ten days before their coverage is terminated. These letters are expected to go out in November and the termination date for coverage will be December 1. Any recent legal immigrant who receives a notice of termination of health care coverage should contact Statewide Legal Services (1-800-453-3320), Attorney Nicholas Yorio, Greater Hartford Legal Aid (860-541-5053), or Attorney Sheldon Toubman, NHLAA (203-946-4811 ext. 148) to see if they are eligible for another health care program or if there are other ways to challenge the termination.

Jobs First Program Starting

The Jobs First Employment Services program for families in the time-limited Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program is starting up again after having been closed since June 30. Current TFA participants who are required to be in work activities will be getting a letter about this from the Department of Social Services or the Department of Labor. The re-start will be gradual over the next 4 months so not every family will get a letter at the same time. New applicants who are required to be in work activities will be referred to the Department of Labor when they apply.

SustiNet Board Set

The nine-member SustiNet Board, which will design the SustiNet health care program, has been named and has begun meeting. Membership of the required task forces is in the selection process. Find information on SustiNet, including the Board of Directors and meeting schedules at www.ct.gov/oha.

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rates have also increased in Norwalk. Given the alarming increase in the number of those in poverty, Connecticut Voices requested that the Governor and General Assembly refrain from making further budget cuts. They also requested an increase in support for Connecticut families through expanded support for education, a state-earned income tax credit, and improved access to the HUSKY health insurance program.

Connecticut acknowledged the need to address poverty in 2004 by creating the Child Poverty Council. This initiative, which was the first of its kind in the nation, aims to reduce child poverty in the state by half by the year 2014. Based on 2003 census results, which showed that 10.8% of Connecticut's children in families had incomes below the poverty line, Connecticut set the goal of reducing this number to 5% by the year 2014. The

large increase in the number of children in poverty due to the recession means that Connecticut has a lot of ground to cover if it is to meet its goal in the upcoming years.

Connecticut Voices argues that the Federal Poverty Level is inadequate due to the higher cost of living in the state of Connecticut. In 2008, census data showed that approximately one in four children in Connecticut lived in families with income under 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Similarly, an increase in poverty in all Americans rose steeply from 13% in 2007, to 13.2% in 2008. Given these alarming statistics, both the state and the nation have large steps to take to provide relief to the large number of those in poverty.

For more information on the American Community Survey and poverty in Connecticut please visit the Connecticut Voices website: www.ctkidslink.org/censuspoverty.html.

Upcoming CABHN/ FESN Meeting

November 20, 2009

9:30- 11:30 A.M.

**Location & Topics:
Community Renewal Team**

(CRT)

555 Windsor Street

Hartford

Tentative:

**Representatives from the
Department of Social
Services and Department
of Labor**

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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**Legal Assistance Resource Center of CT and
CABHN (Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs)**
44 Capitol Ave., Suite 301
Hartford, CT 06106



September 2009

Dear Friend,

We are writing to ask for your support at a critical time for CABHN, the CT Alliance for Basic Human Needs. **We are turning to you, as past supporters and current participants in CABHN, to ask that you renew your support so that we can continue to produce and distribute *CABHN Fever* and to bring the voices of low-income people to the policy discussions that affect their lives.**

Over the past year, we have gratefully received continuing support from dedicated supporters.

With these resources, we have:

- **published ten editions of *CABHN Fever* per year**, with articles updating readers on health care, welfare, the state budget, and other important state and federal issues;
- convened twelve joint meetings of CABHN and the **Family Economic Success Network**.
- maintained an **e-mail alert and information network** for immediate contact with the most active members of CABHN;
- worked with partner organizations to host the 2008 ***Prospering Communities, Thriving Families* conference**, and are currently working to plan the 2009 conference.
- partnered with Connecticut Voices for Children to present **information on the state budget and revenue solutions** to over 30 diverse groups statewide
- initiated a project to address the issue of TANF Reauthorization in 2010.

Unfortunately, CABHN faces reduced funding and the necessity of finding new financial resources. ***The majority of CABHN funding goes to publishing CABHN Fever.***

Please help us continue to publish this important resource. Organizational donations of \$100 or more and individual donations of \$25 or more would help us continue the work of CABHN in the coming year.

Thank you for your support and for all the important work that you do.

Sincerely,

Ellen Small
CABHN Coordinator

Jane McNichol
Executive Director, LARCC

YES, I would like to support the important work of CABHN through my contribution of:

_____ **\$100**

_____ **\$75**

_____ **\$50**

_____ **\$25**

_____ **Other amount**

Please send donations to:

**CABHN
c/o LARCC
44 Capitol Avenue, Suite 301
Hartford, CT 06106**

In addition, I would like to be added to the following CABHN email lists:

_____ **CABHN Fever electronic version**

_____ **CABHN action alerts and important updates**

_____ **CABHN's monthly request for submission list**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Organization Name: _____