



The Welfare Agitator

SPECIAL POINT OF INTEREST:

The notices that the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) sends out to consumers have a long history of being very complex and difficult to understand. You will be pleased to know that DPW has been working throughout the past year to totally redesign the notices to make them more consumer-friendly! The new notices are scheduled to roll out at the end of summer so stay tuned...

Welfare Justice Project - A Project of



CRISIS IN THE STATE BUDGET



This is a critical time for Pennsylvania programs and services because the state budget is being negotiated by the Governor, Senators and Representatives. The amount of money in the budget has a direct impact on what services will be provided and the amount of services. Pennsylvania, like many states across the country, has been hit pretty hard during the recession. We don't have enough money to pay for all of the services and programs we currently have, so that means that our Senators and Representatives will have to make some hard choices about what to fund.

The way the process works is the Governor submits his proposed budget to the Pennsylvania General Assembly in February. Each chamber of the General Assembly (Senate and the House of Representatives) determines whether or not they will support the Governor's proposed budget, make changes to his budget or draft their own version. What does the Governor's budget have in it? *The Governor's budget includes a \$388 million increase over last year's spending for the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). This increase sustains and preserves funding for the majority of the critical programs DPW provides to over 2 million vulnerable citizens. The DPW funding in the budget will:*

- Preserve services to those who need them by avoiding any additional cuts in staffing in County Assistance Offices across the Commonwealth.
 - DPW has 3,100 fewer positions this year than in 2003; budget cuts present the threat of losing yet more staff and not being able to fill vacant positions. The loss of staff has resulted in delays in services and benefits for consumers.
- Provide services to the increasing number of individuals who, as a result of the economy, will need medical assistance and cash assistance; cash grant spending is estimated to go up 5.7% in the coming year.
 - The number TANF (cash assistance) grants have increased 36% since last year.
 - Even with this increase, only 2% of DPW's budget goes toward total direct cash assistance to individuals and more than half of those who receive cash assistance are children



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Action: Tell your State Senator and Representative to make sure the budget does not cut funding to DPW because many PA families will be hurt as a result!

- Senator John Pippy * 412-262-2260 * jpippy@pasen.gov
- Senator Jim Ferlo * 412-621-3006 * ferlo@pasenate.com
- Senator Jane Orié * 412-630-9466 * jorie@pasen.gov
- Senator Wayne Fontana * 412-344-2551 * Fontana@pasenate.com
- Senator Jay Costa * 412-241-6690 * costa@pasenate.com
- Senator Sean Logan * 412-380-2242 * logan@pasenate.com

Contact Rochelle at Just Harvest, 412-431-8960, for help identifying your State Senator.

"Justice denied anywhere diminishes justice everywhere" - Martin Luther King, Jr.

BIG CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING FOR SNAP (FORMERLY FOOD STAMPS)



Effective immediately, engagement in an education and training activity is no longer a

requirement for the SNAP program.

Due to the economic recession in the U.S, Pennsylvania was granted permission to waive this requirement. *This means that no one receiving SNAP benefits is required to actively participate in an employment and training activity in order to continue to receive their benefits.* SNAP consumers who are already participating in an employment and training activity should not lose their benefits if they decide to discontinue participation in the activity.

Engagement in an employment and training activity was a requirement for mandatory participants on SNAP (formerly food stamps) in order to continue to receive their SNAP benefits. A man-

datory participant is participant in the SNAP program that does not have a barrier to employment like a disability, domestic violence or drug and alcohol. Therefore, the participant would be required to participate in an approved work activity.

Although SNAP consumers are no longer mandated to participate in an employment and training activity, they may volunteer to participate. DPW has the following options available to choose from: **On-the-job training (OJT), Job Readiness/Preparation, English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE)/Literacy, General Equivalent Diploma (GED)/High School/Remediation, Skill/Vocational Training, Work Experience, Advanced Degree Program (ADP), Job Search, Internships, Community Service and Job Retention.**

There is no specific number of hours that an individual would be required to participate in any of these programs. DPW can provide individuals on SNAP with special allowances to assist with getting to and completing the program. The following list are some of the allowances available: child care, public transportation, private transportation, car purchase, car repair, books and supplies

If you are interested in volunteering for any of the above programs are would like to request special allowances, contact your welfare caseworker. If you have additional questions or problems accessing the programs and allowances, contact Rochelle at Just Harvest, 412-431-8960.

ACTION ALERT

DPW is in the process of trying to change their special allowance regulations in a way that would harm consumers. The changes would impose low limits on the amount of critical special allowances that a family may receive. Under these proposed regulations an individual would only be able to receive \$2,000 in a lifetime to spend on books and school supplies and \$1,500 per year on transportation. These limits could potentially cause an individual to quit education and training, a job or stop looking for a job. We need your help to make sure that these changes are not implanted!!! Join us in our efforts by calling or sending an e-mail to the following DPW officials:

Harriet Dichter, Secretary of the Department of Public Welfare, 717-787-2600

Ed Zogby, DPW Office of Income Maintenance Director of Policy, 717-787-4081
ezogby@state.pa.us

You can also join us on one of our upcoming visits to Legislators to discuss this issue! If you are interested, contact Rochelle at Just Harvest, 412-431-8960.

REMEMBER, YOU CAN STILL CALL THE "CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER" AT 1-877-395-8930 TO MAKE UPDATES OR CHANGES TO YOUR CASE, CHECK THE STATUS OF YOUR APPLICATION, GET GENERAL INFORMATION OR TO REQUEST FORMS AND DOCUMENTS.

PA WILL CREATE 20,000 JOBS FOR UNEMPLOYED WITH NEW PROGRAM



The stimulus package that was passed by the Obama Administration, the American Recovery Reinvestment Act (ARRA), included emergency funds for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). These funds can be used to create jobs for the unemployed but states have to come up with a plan to use the money. **Although late, Pennsylvania came up with a plan and has received money to create 20,000 new jobs this summer through the Way to Work Initiative!** The Way to Work Initiative will fully subsidize the wages for 20,000 youth and adults. Employers include for-profit and non-profit organizations.

These will be temporary jobs but the hope is that the jobs will lead to permanent employment. The Pennsylvania Way to Work Initiative will pay \$13 per hour for adults and \$7.25 for youth. The jobs will be a minimum of 20 hours per week and the responsibilities should be equivalent to other employees within the organization at the same wage level.

2. Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board received \$200,000
3. Veterans Leadership Program of Western PA received \$230,000

For more information, contact one of the agencies above. Employers interested in participating in the Initiative should visit www.paworkforce.state.pa.us or call 1-866-858-2753.

The money received for Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh was divided among three agencies:

1. One Vision One Life received \$200,000

DPW REFUSES TO RESTORE CUTS TO SSP



~~During last year's budget discussions Governor Rendell~~ agreed to make cuts to certain programs in order to negotiate a budget deal. One such cut was to the State Supplementary Payment (SSP) which became effective February 1, 2010. The cut was negotiated by the Governor and agreed to by DPW. The SSP supplements the federal SSI payment. The state cut the supplements by \$5 per person and \$10 per couple per month to approximately 362,000 elderly, blind and disabled Pennsylvanians who were already living below the poverty level with the full SSI federal payment of \$647 a month and the state supplement of \$27 a month. These cuts are unfair and target some of our most vulnerable citizens. There is a statewide advocacy effort to roll back these cuts and to send the message that our state budget should not be balanced on the backs of the most vulnerable! To voice your opposition to these cuts, contact the individuals in the box.

ACTION: Call the following targets and tell them you oppose the cuts!

1. Governor Edward G. Rendell - (717) 787-2500
www.governor.state.pa.us/
2. Harriet Dichter, DPW Acting Secretary - (717)787-2600
3. State Senator Jake Corman - (717) 772-3146, Chairman of Senate Appropriations Committee
4. Edward J. Zogby, DPW Director of Policy ezogby@state.pa.us

Call or e-mail these people ASAP!!

CHILD CARE WORKS WAITING LIST CLEARED!



Thanks to new money from President Obama's Stimulus package, the subsidized child care waiting list has been eliminated for the first time since 2003!!! On May 7, 2010 the State Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and Child Care

Information Services (CCIS) were able to provide Child Care Works subsidy to every family on the waiting list. The Child Care Works Program helps low-income families pay their child care fees and is a combination of state and federal money that is managed by a local CCIS office.

Now is the time for families who were discouraged by the long waiting list to apply or re-apply for the subsidy! You can apply on-line at www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass/CMHOM.aspx or at one of three CCIS offices in Allegheny County.

OTHER NEWS...



INVITE WJP TO DO AN ADVOCACY CLINIC!

THE WELFARE JUSTICE PROJECT IS AVAILABLE TO COME OUT TO YOUR ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT ADVOCACY CLINICS FOR YOUR STAFF AND/OR PARTICIPANTS. THE CLINICS CAN BE GENERAL INFORMATION OR SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT A PROGRAM OR POLICY.

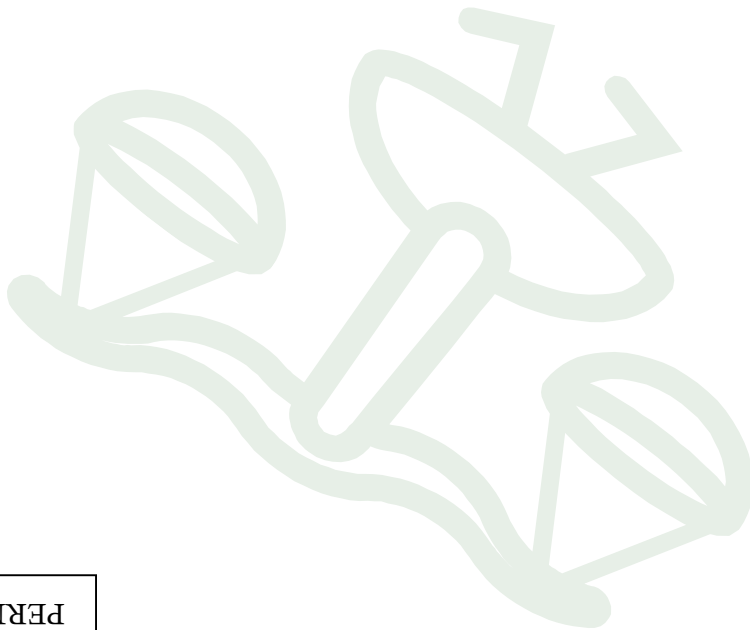
HOURS AND TIMES ARE FLEXIBLE, SO IF YOU ARE INTERESTED **CALL ROCHELLE AT 412-431-8960** TO SET UP A SESSION!

The Welfare Justice Project is currently working on:

- Stopping DPW's proposed regulations for Special Allowances
- Educating our legislators about the state of things at the Welfare offices. DPW cannot afford to lose any additional caseworkers as a result of a budget cuts.

We are recruiting consumers to go on our legislative visits. If you would like to join our efforts, please contact Rochelle at Just Harvest, 412-431-8960.

Check out the latest Just Harvest happenings on our website at www.justharvest.org!



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