

**2011
Public Benefits Conference**

Tuesday, November 29th_

7:45am - 8:55am Continental Breakfast

8:55 am - 9:00am Welcoming remarks

9:00 am - 10:30am

2011-12 Welfare Budget Cuts and Policy Changes 1.5 CLE

This year's state budget requires \$400 in budget cuts to the Department of Public Welfare. This, along with the transition to a new administration, has resulted in extensive changes to programs vital to low-income Pennsylvanians -- with more to come. The session will include discussion of: (i) already implemented changes, such as severe reductions in Employment and Training program services, annual and lifetime limits on Special Allowances, and child care co-pay increases; and (ii) the implications of Act 22 and the unprecedented authority it grants DPW to change policies, payment levels, co-payment scales, and more via expedited rule-making. Finally, we will discuss strategy ideas for how we can best prepare our clients for the changes implemented already, those we can expect, and those we can only speculate about at this point.

10:30am - 10:45am Break

10:45 am – 12:15 pm

National Health Law Program (NHELP) on Medicaid and the Exchange: Connecting the Pathways to Coverage 1.5 CLE

As 2014 approaches, states like Pennsylvania are contemplating the required steps to successfully integrate their Medicaid program and the new health insurance Exchange. There are many considerations for states including eligibility and enrollment processes, benefit design, and consumer outreach and inclusion. Seamless integration is critical for populations transitioning between programs to ensure continuity of care and good health. On the national front, several sets of proposed federal regulations have been issued in the past few months that provide guidance on these issues. This session will cover how the landscape appears to be developing based on the proposed regulations (e.g., protecting low income persons so that eligibility and enrollment is handled efficiently and families do not fall through the cracks between programs)

12:15pm – 1:15pm

Lunch and Presentation: Setting the Context of Our Work: Update on Federal Policy and Political Landscape and the Impact on Our Work

Presentation by Leo Cuello, National Health Law Program (NHELP): What happens in Washington DC—politically, policy-wise and legally—certainly shapes our work as we continue to implement the

ACA. NHeLP is keeping an eye on the various moving pieces in Washington that affect Pennsylvania's Medicaid program and our state implementation of federal health reform. This lunchtime presentation will be interactive and include matters such as the Medicaid case about private right of action pending before the US Court, the work of the Super Committee on deficit reduction and its impact on Medicaid, and the challenges for Pennsylvania's Medicaid program in serving an additional 800,000 newly eligible adults.

1:15pm - 2:15pm

Customer Assistance Programs and Benefits 1.0 CLE

Customer Assistance Programs are required by statute. These programs, which provide significant benefits to low-income households, are undergoing changes which may adversely affect your clients. Advocates will learn about:

1. How LIHEAP Cash payments are to be applied to CAP customers' accounts and the recent application by companies of CAP-Plus payment plans;
2. The limitations on CAP benefits being imposed through maximum CAP credits and the ability of customers to be exempted from this 'control feature'; and
3. Current issues, dangers and limitations for CAP customers entering the electric generation shopping arena.

2:15pm – 3:15pm

WAIVERS: What Are They and How Can You Get One 1.0 CLE

We frequently see clients with SSI and Social Security OVERPAYMENTS ranging from a few dollars to over \$50,000. Clients come to our offices in crisis afraid that they will lose everything. There are often easy steps you can take to solve this problem that will result in the client keeping all or almost all of their income. You can frequently accomplish these goals with a small investment of time and effort. Learn how at this fast paced 1 hour session.

3:15pm – 3:30pm Break

3:30pm – 5:00pm

“Logjam July”: the Train Wreck Wrought by Severe CAO Understaffing and Unreasonable Demands Placed Upon These Offices by the Department 1.5 CLE

This session will discuss the massive reduction in CAO workforce and its implications for our clients who rely on Medical Assistance, TANF, SNAP, and LIHEAP. One specific example that will be closely examined is the impact of DPW's directive early last summer to its understaffed CAO's requiring them to review a massive number of cases (including TANF work waiver, E-TANF, and overdue Medical Assistance renewal cases) within only a month's time. The predictable chaos that resulted has caused tens of thousands of needy clients to lose their Medical Assistance and other benefits. Reviews on this scale with the minimal forethought that went into this one have an especially severe impact on clients with Limited English Proficiency, which we will also examine.

5:00pm – 6:00pm

LIHEAP Update and CAUSE 1.0 CLE

The 2011-12 Pennsylvania LIHEAP is expected to have significantly reduced federal LIHEAP Funding this year. Advocates will learn about changes in program requirements, policies, program calendar, eligibility levels and benefit amounts. In addition, this session will discuss **CAUSE-PA**, The Coalition for Affordable Utility Service and Energy Efficiency in Pennsylvania, and how your clients can participate to affect public policy.

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7:30am - 9:00am Breakfast

9:00am - 10:00am

Dental and Prescription Service Reductions **1.0 CLE**

This session will review reductions in dental and prescription services in the Medical Assistance program implemented by DPW as budget cutting measures. This session will also look at appeal rights regarding denial of MA services, which include both the right to a fair hearing, as well as the opportunity to file a grievance with the Managed Care Organization.

10:00am – 10:15am Break

10:15am – 11:45am

Medical Assistance Categories **1.5 CLE**

This session will review the various categories of Medical Assistance – an understanding of which is essential to handling Medical Assistance cases. It will also cover the Medical Assistance/Medicare interface, e.g., “buy-in” programs, and the obligation of MA Managed Care Organizations to provide interpretation for LEP clients at their medical appointments.

11:45am - 12:45pm **Working lunch** - Presentation of FVO honorees and panel discussion on administrative advocacy.

12:45pm - 1:45pm

TANF Employment and Training Sanctions **1.0 CLE**

This session will discuss the alarming increase in TANF work sanctions, review of the sanction process (including the often overlooked requirement to explore good cause), strategies for outreach to clients, and how to win appeals in these cases. We will also look at Americans with Disabilities Act issues that can arise in the context of sanctions.

1:45pm - 2:45pm

Ethical Problems in Medical Assistance and SSI Cases **1.0 CLE - ETHICS**

This session will explore several ethical issues that arise in medical assistance cases, including: (i) whether it is permissible to file appeals of medical assistance denials solely on the grounds of notice or other procedural defects; and (ii) reconciling an application by the same person for medical assistance based upon disability with receipt of benefits, such as U.C., predicated on being able and available for work. We will also look at several difficult scenarios that can arise in SSI cases, including: (i) what to do with unhelpful evidence (are we obligated to submit it or not?); and (ii) what to do about directions from clients regarding impairments to be raised or evidence to be used (are we obligated or not to abide by this or not when it conflicts with what we think is the best strategy to win the case?)

Adjourn