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TAKING ACTION.
Improving Lives.

Indiana Community Action Network
Newsletter

Summer Edition - June, July, August 2010

GAO Report on LIHEAP Fraud Leads to Changes in HHS Policy

Article from CAPLAW Newsletter

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a report (GAO 10-621) on the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The GAO concluded that greater fraud prevention controls are needed, based on its study of LIHEAP programs in seven states. The GAO provided six recommendations to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Human Services (HHS), including requiring Social Security numbers of applicants and household members and validating applicant and household member identity information with the Social Security Administration.

HHS agreed with the GAO's recommendations and, in May, HHS's Office of Community Services (OCS) issued an information memorandum (LIHEAP-IM-2010-6) strongly encouraging states to require LIHEAP applicants and household members to provide Social Security numbers in order to receive LIHEAP benefits and recommending that states look into using Social Security numbers to access various databases to verify applicant and household member identity and income. HHS concluded that states may deny assistance to individuals and households upon refusal to provide Social Security numbers.

In June, OCS issued an action transmittal (LIHEAP AT-2010-6) to the states requesting that states submit, as a supplement to their FY 2011 State Plans, information on their program integrity measures such as applicant, household, and income verification. The plans are due on September 1, 2010. HHS will not certify state plans as complete and will not award FY 2011 grants to states that omit program integrity information or do not describe their planned program integrity measures in sufficient detail.

Community Action Agencies should stay tuned for guidance from their state LIHEAP offices, and expect changes to states LIHEAP policies, including Social Security number requirements and income and identity verification, in the FY 2011 program year.

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About the Indiana Community Action Network

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA) established over 1,000 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) at the local level to implement EOA programs. EOA programs included: VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America); Job Corps; Neighborhood Youth Corps; Head Start; Adult Basic Education; Family Planning; Community Health Centers; Congregate Meal Preparation; Economic Development; Foster Grandparents; Legal

Lincoln Hill Development Corporation Initiatives Pilot Appliance Loan Program

By Gary Zellers, Deputy Director for Development and Human Resources

Responding to the needs of clients in its service area of Crawford, Perry and Spencer Counties, the Lincoln Hills Development Corporation (LHDC) Board of Directors recently approved the implementation of a new initiative - an **Appliance Loan Program** - in an effort to alleviate the high costs to clients of purchasing appliances through "rent-to-own" arrangements, and in commercial laundering costs.

LHDC Executive Director, Larry K. Kleeman, said, "While owning their own major appliances isn't practical or feasible for some people, many clients do not own, or do not replace, appliances because they cannot afford them through high-cost purchase options such as rent-to-own arrangements. Many other clients have very old and inefficient appliances that require costly repairs and have high energy consumption. And many others without washers and dryers have no other choice than to make frequent and expensive trips to the laundromat."

Kleeman continued, "We are hopeful that this program will enable clients to save money, not only in the costs of purchasing appliances, but also in energy savings achieved through the purchase of appliances only with an Energy Star rating."

Here is how the program works:

LHDC clients with verified annual household incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level may apply to a special loan fund established by the agency for a loan of up to \$1,000.00, to be used to purchase a new Energy Star rated washer, dryer, stove or refrigerator. Appliance loans, if approved, will be made for a maximum of 90% of the total appliance purchase price; the borrower (s) must have at least 10% equity in the total appliance purchase. Loan proceeds are paid directly to the vendor, and loans will carry an interest rate of five percent (5%), and will be amortized for a maximum term of three (3) years.

"At this time, we are implementing the *Appliance Loan Program* as a pilot project as we attempt to be responsive to the ever-changing needs of our clients. If we can save them a few hundred dollars a year in the cost of purchasing a major appliance, or in laundry or energy costs, that could make a real difference in many clients' quality of life - perhaps allowing more funds for other essentials such as food or rent. We will monitor and evaluate the program to see if it is meeting the objectives for which it was established" said Kleeman, "and hope to continue it as an ongoing initiative, if it is successful."

NCCAA CSBG ARRA Summer Program

Services; Neighborhood Centers; Summer Youth Programs; Senior Centers; and others.

CAAs vary widely, with some being non-profit groups, others being city agencies, and some being community-controlled groups. Many CAAs vary greatly in how their agencies are organized and in the type of services they provide to their local communities. In fact, the number of CAAs has increased and it is now estimated that CAAs serve over 80 percent of all U.S. counties. Although CAAs were established over 40 years ago, they have a rich history of advocacy for and service to low-income people and remain important in domestic social policy to the present day.

There are 24 CAAs that serve all 92 counties of Indiana. CAAs periodically analyze community needs to identify strategies that will work best in attacking poverty. Each CAA is different because its programs reflect the needs of their local communities. These agencies are unique in their ability to deploy diverse program activities and services in meeting their mission. They operate an array of programs which include, but are not limited to: Head Start; the Energy Assistance Program; the Weatherization Program; Individual Development Accounts; Homeownership Counseling; Owner Occupied Rehabilitation; Housing Development; Foster Grandparents; Child Care; and many more programs and services.



To find your local CAA or to learn more about the Indiana Community Action Network or State Association, please visit www.incap.org.

Through the Community Service Block Grant/American Recovery Reinvestment Act (Stimulus) funds, North Central Community Action Agencies, Inc. was able to provide an educational/recreational summer program for 56 registered youths announced by Cynthia Davis, NCCAA Executive Director. The program ran from June 21 through August 13 at the George and Madeline Smrt Center at 301 Grant Street, Michigan City, IN. The program offered a variety of daily activities Monday-Thursday that included art instruction by the Lubeznik Art Center, swimming at Elston and trips to the Joy School's Challenge Park with transportation provided by the Youth Service Agencies, recreation periods at the HOPE Center and crime prevention workshops. The program provided weekly fields trips to the following destinations: Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, Shedd Aquarium, Children's Museum and Museum of Science and Industry; Deep River Park and Zao Island in Merrillville, In; South Bend Chocolate Factory; and the local Lakeshore Lanes. Daily breakfasts and lunches were provided by the Michigan City Area School Food Program. On Thursday, August 12 the program concluded with an Awards Night that featured the children in a Fashion Show and Talent Show. Special thanks were given to the Summer Recreation Program Supervisor, Lillian Sherrod-Young, the four camp supervisors, the parents and volunteers of the program. Each child was awarded a gift bag, ribbon and certificate. Trophies were awarded to the winner of the Wii Games, medals to winners of the Connect Four Games and ribbons to the Scattergories Champs and to Outstanding Campers.



Poverty Simulation Provides "Real World" Experience

Exhausting... confusing ...hard work ... stressful ..and nerve-wracking.



Photo Caption: As a participant in the poverty simulation, CANI Board member Karl Kostoff learned about the obstacles low-income families face everyday. **Photo By Lauren Caggiano, Development Coordinator**

These words and phrases describe the experiences of living in poverty, in the words of participants in the Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) hosted by CANI May 20 at the Freemasons Hall in Fort Wayne. The event was held in conjunction with Community Action Month, a national effort of the Community Action Partnership to promote the work of the 1,000 Community Action Agencies across the country.

More than 60 individuals from the community underwent the simulation, with the hopes of gaining a better understanding of poverty issues. Participants ran the gamut in profession, i.e. business executives, news media, students, pastors, lawyers and staff from social service agencies.

Using a simulation kit designed by the Missouri Association for Community Action, participants role-played the lives of low-income families. At the time of registration, participants were randomly assigned an identity. Unbeknownst to most, this step would determine their fate for the rest of the afternoon.

Jillian Miller from the Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network facilitated the simulation. As Jillian explained in the orientation, families would be at all levels of the poverty spectrum. Some would be the working poor, making just enough to make ends meet, while others would be left with a significant deficit at the end of the month.

What united the families was the common task of providing for basic necessities and shelter on a limited budget during the course of four 20-minute "weeks." Volunteers from CANI and Blue Jacket Inc. staffed the table stations, which represented human service agencies, grocers, pawnbrokers, bill collectors, job interviewers, police officers and others.

The environment was chaotic at times, as people rushed to pay bills by the end of the month. It didn't take long for participants to take their new identity rather seriously. And with the role playing came emotions like anger, frustration, and despair.

For example, what happens if your family tries to file for food stamps and you are denied? Do you have to choose paying your electric bill over feeding your family? These are real-life scenarios that thousands of Americans face daily.

The purpose of the simulation was to raise awareness about poverty issues and call people to action. The hope is that the more people who are educated about poverty, the more they will want to work to eliminate it.

"This program helps people understand the complexities and frustrations of living in poverty day to day," said Steve Hoffman, CANI Executive Director. "With a greater awareness of its impact, we can more effectively address the poverty issues in our community."

Prior to the simulation participants completed a pre-assessment about their attitudes towards poverty. Following the simulation they were asked to complete the same form to determine if and how their opinions changed. The planning committee is reviewing the results to determine if and how much the simulation impacted participants' perceptions.

CANI is considering offering the simulation on a regular basis. In the meantime, thanks to the planning committee, the Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network, Blue Jacket Inc., the Freemason's Hall, and all those who participated for helping us pull off this event.



Client Spotlight: CAPWI Helps Unemployed Worker

Submitted by worker: Rosemary P. Scott, RD, CDE, CPT



In October 2009, I lost my job. Five months later, I was very discouraged and money was running out. I had NEVER been without a job and as a professional, I NEVER thought this would ever happen to me. So when I was let go from a pharmaceutical position after 9 years of stellar sales numbers, I didn't think it would be hard for me to fall into something else rather quickly. Needless to say, that did not happen. I found myself having to make some really tough financial decisions (use retirement money, sell my house, buy or borrow a car, borrow money from my 80 year old parents). That's when I "stumbled" onto the classes offered at Work One (Lafayette) and Carol Santos. Everyone I talked with at Work One was so helpful but it was Carol that gave me hope that I really could and would find a job by "tweaking" some of my interviewing skills. I took advantage of many of the classes but it was through what Carol taught and her encouragement that I truly believe landed me the position with US Oncology. The interview questions, 'elevator' speech, and especially the Power Point class is what set me apart from the competition. I felt so prepared for my interviews with 4 oncologists. There were two things I specifically did from what I learned from Carol that gave me the "cutting edge". Those invaluable tips were: leave a hand written thank you RIGHT AFTER your interview as you are leaving the building and "think out of the box". I honestly can't believe I had the courage to do these things but I kept hearing Carol in my mind saying, "You got to do something different, something 'out of the box' so they remember you". I would have NEVER done it otherwise. You have a VERY VALUABLE employee with Carol. I know if people who are unemployed take advantage of your classes and "use" the information taught, I am confident that they too will land a job! Thanks again!

2010 ITI Training Calendar

The Indiana Training Institute has scheduled several trainings to date for 2010. Please see the trainings listed below and many more to come. To register, please visit www.incap.org, click on the Indiana Training Institute, and click on Training Schedule, and then click on the training you wish to register for. If you have any

questions, please contact Lisa Travis, Program Manger at ltravis@incap.org or 1-800-382-9895.

September

- **IHCDA Quarterly Meeting with Executive Directors - Partnership Meetings - September 8, 2010**
- **EAP South Meeting (Mitchell, IN) - Partnership Meetings- September 13, 2010**
- **EAP Central Meeting (Indianapolis, IN) - Partnership Meetings- September 14, 2010**
- **EAP North Meeting (Wabash, IN) - Partnership Meetings- September 15, 2010**
- **Time Management - Staff Development Opportunities - September 15, 2010**
- **Board Engagement - Board Development Training - September 16, 2010**

October

- **Effective Board Committees - Board Development Training -October 5, 2010**
- **Budgeting - Financial Training - October 6, 2010**

Family Development Train-the-Trainer Training - Staff Development Training - October 7-8, 2010

- **Team Building and Effective Communication - Organizational Capacity Training - October 12, 2010**
- **Statewide Indiana Community Action Agencies Conference - October 25-26, 2010**

Workshops/trainings at conference will include: *Certifeid Community Action Professional, Bridges Out of Poverty, Financial Indicators, Benchmarks, and Redflags, Financial You, How to Become a Strategically Focused Organization, and Moving Beyond Stragegic Plans, and Addictions Training.*

November

- **IHCDA Quarterly Meeting with Executive Directors - Partnership Meetings - November 10, 2010**





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