

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: David Dearborn, 860-424-5024

January 4, 2010

David.dearborn@ct.gov

More Residents Turning to State for Help, Pushing Up DSS Caseloads by 18%

Food, Medical, Family Assistance Among Growth Programs

Connecticut residents are increasingly turning to state government for help in meeting the basic needs of food, medical care and financial support, as the economic downturn continues to fuel higher enrollment in a wide range of programs run by the Department of Social Services.

Nine key DSS programs showed total enrollment of nearly 924,000 in November 2009 – **up 18% in just one year**, Commissioner Michael P. Starkowski said today.

While individuals are counted more than once if receiving multiple services, such as medical and food aid, the numbers still represent a “tremendous increase in safety net services for the public and a corresponding increase in casework by our dedicated DSS staff,” Commissioner Starkowski said.

The five-year enrollment growth rate of 40% represents a steady upward trend that also reflects factors like higher eligibility standards for public health coverage, the Commissioner said.

“Enrollment is booming in Food Stamps, now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, as well as in the HUSKY health care program for children and eligible parents,” the Commissioner said. “We have also experienced significant growth in State-Administered General Assistance, which helps single, unemployable people struggling to make ends meet.”

Individual program growth highlights include:

- Over 295,600 Connecticut residents receiving federally-funded SNAP/Food Stamp benefits in November 2009, up 32% in one year and 58% in five years.
- Over 445,700 individuals receiving Medicaid coverage in November 2009, up 7% in one year and 33% in five years. Medicaid accounts for over \$4 billion of the over \$5 billion annual DSS appropriation.
- For the first time in several years, more families with dependent children (including grandparents caring for grandchildren) eligible for Temporary Family Assistance, generally known as family cash welfare. Connecticut’s TFA caseload plummeted from about 57,000 families in 1995 to under 18,500 in November 2008, but has since risen to 19,689.

To track caseload growth, DSS listed client participation across nine selected entitlement programs – Temporary Family Assistance; Medicaid (including HUSKY Part A); state-funded medical assistance; CT AIDS Drug Assistance Program; State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA) cash assistance; SAGA medical assistance; Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps); and the Charter Oak Health Plan.

The enrollment numbers showed one-year increases ranging from 5.3% in State-Administered General Assistance cash aid to 42% in the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program, which helps low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities afford the cost of Medicare premiums.

“While these services are providing for basic needs of children, families, our elderly and citizens with disabilities, we can’t forget the financial cost the state is experiencing to support the burgeoning rolls in our entitlement programs,” Commissioner Starkowski said. “Our responsibility is to administer these statutory entitlement programs in as cost-effective a manner as possible.”

--30--

**CT Department of Social Services
Entitlement caseload growth:
November 2004 to November 2009, points in time**

Program	Recipients served, November 2004	Recipients served, November 2006	Recipients served, November 2008	Recipients served, November 2009	Pct. Inc., last 5 years	Pct. Inc., last 3 years	Pct. Inc., past year
Temporary Family Assistance	48,964 in 22,292 households	41,851 in 19,574 households	39,189 in 18,492 households	42,469 in 19,689 households	-13%	1.5%	8.4%
Medicaid (including family, aged/ blind/ disabled, long-term care)	335,460	377,566	417,832	445,773	33%	18%	6.7%
State-funded Medical, including DCF, CT Home Care Program	5,471	4,182	5,179	5,475	--	31%	5.7%
CT AIDS Drug Assistance Program	1,543	1,717	1,852	1,992	29%	16%	7.6%
State-Administered General Assistance/ Medical	29,142	31,410	36,545	43,500	49%	38.5%	19%
State-Administered General Assistance/Cash	4,051	4,200	4,671	4,918	21%	17%	5.3%
Qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program	46,636	47,593	50,660	71,868	54%	51%	42%
Food Stamps/ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	187,704	196,039	224,138	295,677	58%	51%	32%
Charter Oak Health Plan	Not applicable	Not applicable	2,687	12,314	--	--	358%
TOTAL	658,971	704,558	782,753	923,986	40%	31%	18%