



3435 Liberty Drive
Springfield, IL 62704
217-789-0125
www.icaanet.org

e-news

January 2007



LIHEAP Roundtable

ICAA held a roundtable on January 29th to update the membership on the enhancements to the state-wide Call Center. Alie Kabba from the Department of Healthcare and Family Services shared the vision of the Department to utilize technology to help the agencies focus more of their resources on case management than on answering basic questions about energy assistance. The speakers representing the state, ICAA, the liaison for the network and CEDA, the administrators of the system, each echoed the benefits of the Call Center technology to the local administering agencies which includes:

- ✦ ICAA serves as the liaison to the LAA network instead of a state employee
- ✦ A customer service rep available to answer eligibility questions *prior* to the customers calling us
- ✦ An extra phone line (at no cost to the local agency)
- ✦ Customer Service Reps will be available later in the day and earlier in the morning
- ✦ 24 hour automated service for status checks will free agency phone lines for new customers
- ✦ An automated service for status checks is a convenience for customers

During this meeting, ICAA announced the hiring of a new staff person, Dan Manfredo, who will be trained to be the Energy Specialist for ICAA. With the numerous programmatic issues facing LIHEAP and Weatherization, it became apparent to the President/CEO and the ICAA Board that ICAA needed expertise on the programmatic side of these programs not just public policy, to better serve the membership.

To help ICAA fulfill its role as the liaison, ICAA passed out a survey to the agencies to find out about the outreach sites and the technology utilized at those sites. This information will be shared with the Call Center to help the Call Center agents better respond to inquiries especially those that occur outside of the local agency's operating hours. Dan Manfredo will be following up with agencies to complete this survey.



Dan Manfredo, ICAA Energy Specialist

Save the Date!

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| March 12, 2007 | CSBG Roundtable - 10:00 am, ICAA Office, Springfield |
| March 27, 2007 | ICAA Advocacy Day - Springfield |
| March 28-29, 2007 | LIHEAP Conference - Crowne Plaza Springfield, 800-589-2769 or 217-529-7777 |
| May 6-8, 2007 | ICAA Annual Conference - Hilton Springfield, 217-789-1530 |

More information will be forthcoming on these big events!

Keep an eye out for a Spring Micro-Enterprise Workshop for Community Action Agencies - Learn from peers how to transform your Community Action Agency into a revenue generator.

FCD Specialist Training Update

Training is underway for the Winter Session of FCD Specialist Training. ICAA and UIS trainers welcome staff from ERBA, IVEDC, MCS, PCCEO, St. Clair, Tri-County, and Western Egyptian as participants and future FCD Specialists. This class is part of the second group to go through the blended curriculum, in that, eight days classroom and four days online.

Look for more FCD Specialist training beginning in March.



CALLING ALL FCD SPECIALISTS...

ICAA is researching and planning for Advanced FCD Specialist training. It is our hope to have a Session ready to roll prior to June 30. We envision the Advanced training to be three days in length, with a focus on the Framework for Understanding Poverty, family structure and dynamics plus one full day of motivational interviewing. We are especially interested in the opinions and interests of current FCD specialists and would love to hear from anyone who would like to voice their opinion.

Please email Christine at cwesterlund@icaanet.org or call at 217/789-0125.

Legislative Update for the Illinois General Assembly

The Spring General Assembly Session is off to a slow start following all the inaugural ceremonies that dominated the Springfield scene during second week of January. Not many bills have been introduced due to the GA not being in town until early February. However, there are three bills that are of interest to CAAs. All three bills are energy related.

HB 295 – Rep. Marlow Colvin (D-Chicago) - Amends the Energy Assistance Act. The bill would change the repeal date of the Supplemental Low-Income Energy Assistance Fund from December 31, 2007 to December 31, 2013. It would be effective immediately. This means the IL LIHEAP Fund would continue for six more years. The IL LIHEAP fund makes available approximately \$70-\$80 million per for the LIHEAP program.

ICAA is in favor of this bill, and we are working with other advocates and the Illinois Energy Association to advocate for its passage. Stay tuned for updates and possible action requests from the membership.

HB 245 – Rep. Dan Reis (R-Olney) – This bill would amend the Energy Assistance Act. It would provide that if a recipient of energy assistance ceases to receive winter energy service from an energy provider before the end of the winter for which that energy assistance is provided, the energy provider shall credit the remaining unused balance of that recipient's energy assistance to the Local Administering Agency (LAA). The LAA would then hold those moneys in escrow until the recipient resumes receipt of winter energy service. When the recipient resumes receipt of winter energy service, the LAA shall ensure that the escrowed moneys are credited to the recipient's new winter energy service account for the remainder of that winter. The LAA may transfer the escrowed moneys to a different LAA if the recipient establishes an account for the supply of winter energy service in an area under the jurisdiction of a different LAA, and in that case the new LAA shall pay the moneys to the energy provider supplying winter energy service to the recipient. If the recipient does not establish another account for the supply of winter energy service during that winter, the original LAA may use the escrowed moneys to make energy assistance grants for the following winter.

ICAA is opposed to this bill as drafted because of the cumbersome bureaucratic system that it proposes. The IDHFS is working to satisfy the parties involved with a solution that would not require the passage of a law. Stay tuned for updates and possible action requests from the membership.

SB 175 – Sen. Martin Sandoval (D-Chicago) - This bill would amend the Energy Assistance Act. It would have the Department of Healthcare and Family Services authorized to institute an outreach program directed at low-income minority heads of households and heads of households age 60 or older. It would have the Department permit Case Coordination Units, under contract with the Department on Aging, to prepare and submit applications for energy assistance in the names of their clients. It would also have the Department establish a web-based application for use by applicants for energy assistance.

ICAA is opposed to this bill as drafted due to the fact that most of what is being proposed is already happening. ICAA would be opposed to IDHFS transferring any resources to another state agency to achieve LIHEAP outcomes. ICAA will work with IL Department on Aging and the IDHFS to try and satisfy the interested parties without having to move this legislation. Stay tuned for updates and possible action requests from the membership.

RCAP Update



RCAP Staff receive rate study training

The Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) is pleased to announce the addition of two new services to its repertoire: utility board training and utility rate setting. RCAP's inaugural board training took place in Emden on January 8. Under the auspicious guidance of ICAA training specialist Christine Westlund, Emden's board of trustees learned about their legal, managerial, and fiscal responsibilities as they relate to the village's water system. RCAP's goal is to empower Emden's board, and boards like it across the state, to be proactive stewards of the valuable services that are water and wastewater. Later in the month the Illinois RCAP staff was the trainee, rather than the trainer, as they welcomed two staff members from the Ohio RCAP, John Rauch and Tom Fishbaugh, for a two-day rate study training. This new service will allow Illinois RCAP to analyze a system's water or sewer rate structure and make recommendations for future rate increases and improvements.