

FAIRFIELD SOCIAL SERVICES

WINTER NEWSLETTER

203 256-3170

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EVICITION RESOURCES

Evictions in CT are on the rise now that the extended pandemic protections are behind us. If you're facing potential eviction, timely action can make a big difference. Make sure you know exactly what your rights and responsibilities are. Some helpful resources to get you started include the Connecticut Fair Housing Center and CTLawHelp.org. You'll find fact sheets, brochures, tips to help you stay in your residence, the legal definitions of *discrimination* and *good cause protection*, among other self-help tools and guidance. If you're unable to work out a solution with your landlord, you'll find resources to help you navigate that challenge, too. And once you reach that point, contact an attorney right away. However, if you can't find one, CTLawHelp.org maps out next steps with links to the various court forms that must be filed (failure to do so means you could lose your case without ever going before the judge).

- **CTLawHelp.org:** <https://ctlawhelp.org/evictions-process-laws-connecticut>

- **Connecticut Fair Housing Center:** <https://ctfairhousing.org> or call 800-247-4400
- **Statewide Legal Services:** 860-344-0380
- Finally, **2-1-1** is the phone number to call for help finding emergency housing

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Free Bus Fares Statewide – Through March 31, 2023 - Free services include all CTtransit local buses statewide, CTtransit Express and CTfastrak services. ADA Paratransit is also fare free statewide through March 31.

Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP) – CEAP assists eligible Connecticut residents with primary heating costs. You may apply in one of two ways:

1. Schedule an appointment at Alliance for Community Empowerment at **203-384-6904**.
2. For those needing assistance with the application process, you may call The Town of Fairfield Department of Social Services at 203-256-3170.

Income Eligibility Guidelines for Energy Assistance

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Annual Income	\$39,761	\$51,996	\$64,230	\$76,465	\$88,699	\$100,933	\$103,227	\$105,521

Operation Fuel - This program assists with utility bills including electric, gas and water. In some cases, it may assist with primary heating costs as well. Eligible households are now able to apply once each Operation Fuel season (Winter/Spring & Summer/Fall); income guidelines apply. In light of increased energy costs this year, the maximum grant amount has been raised to \$1000. To apply directly online, go to <http://opf.toapply.org>; for more information, visit <https://operationfuel.org/> if you are unable to navigate the application process on your own, please call the Town of Fairfield Department of Social Services at 203-256-3170.

Income Eligibility Guidelines for Operation Fuel

Family Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
75% State Median	\$48,783.93	\$63,794.37	\$78,804.81	\$93,815.25	\$108,825.69	\$123,836.13	\$126,650.59	\$129,465.05

SNAP Demonstration Project for Older Adults and Those with Disabilities - The Department of Social Services recently announced a new program called ESAP (Elderly Simplified Application Project). Eligible applicants must be 60 years or older, or disabled according to DSS definitions. The program will include an expanded three-year certification period of eligibility and other so-called “flexibilities”. For more information, go to <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/SNAP/Elderly-Simplified-Application-Project> or call 855-626-6632.

New Assistance Options for Seniors with Reverse Mortgages - In December 2022, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) announced new flexibilities to help senior homeowners with FHA-insured Home Equity Conversion Mortgages who have fallen behind on property charge payments due to the pandemic. This will allow mortgage servicers to offer eligible homeowners up to 5 years to repay property charges, such as taxes and homeowners insurance. For more information about HUD and its programs, go to www.hud.gov and <https://espanol.hud.gov>

COVID Recovery Fund - The Town of Fairfield Social Services Department continues to screen applications for those still struggling financially because of the pandemic. For more information, including criteria for assistance, required documentation, and a printable copy of the application, go to www.fairfieldct.org/covidrecoveryfund or call Social Services department at 203-256-3170.

Affordable Connectivity Program & SafeLink Partnership – ACP is a benefit program that helps low-income households afford essential broadband service. Eligible households receive a discount on broadband service. Eligible household can also receive a one-time discount to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers. For more information, go to the Federal Communications Commission’s ACP webpage: www.fcc.gov/acp or call 877-384-2575.

SafeLink - Customers are eligible for free monthly benefits through the ACP program while keeping their device and number. If you receive government assistance (e.g. SNAP, Medicaid, or Lifeline); participate in the free and reduced lunch program; or receive a Federal Pell Grant, you may qualify. For more information, call SafeLink customer service at 203-723-3546.

MyHomeCT - A federally funded Mortgage Relief Program for Connecticut homeowners who have experienced financial hardships due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is administered by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) and may award up to \$30,000 in grant assistance, paid directly to the mortgage servicer or debt provider. Eligibility criteria and program parameters may be found at www.chfa.org/MyHomeCT, or call 877-894-4111.

BNT (Building Neighborhoods Together) - BNT is a HUD-approved Housing Counseling Agency offering comprehensive financial and housing counseling services, ongoing education and training through the Empowerment Resource Academy. Some of the educational opportunities this month address systemic issues like fair housing and discrimination, and foreclosure prevention strategies. To learn more about BNT’s services and programs, see www.BNTWEB.ORG; any questions, call 203-290-4255.

The WorkPlace - The WorkPlace helps people prepare for careers by overseeing job training and preparation funds distributed by state and federal agencies. It serves many of the neediest people in southwest Connecticut; the majority are dislocated workers, low-wage workers, long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, mature workers, veterans, and out-of-school youth. The WorkPlace operates American Job Centers (AJC) in Bridgeport, Ansonia, Derby and Stamford as well as providing targeted programs and employment services designed to overcome barriers to employment and to help job seekers identify or regain a career that will facilitate their success. It also ensure that employers are able to find the workforce talent they need to operate and compete in a global marketplace. Business customers can benefit from customized recruitment services, access to a pool of pre-screened job applicants and other resources. Services are provided at no cost, including workforce preparation workshops, access to job training, supportive services, and much more. All programs and services are at no cost to the customer. For information call 203-610-8511 or go to <https://www.workplace.org/>

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Child Guidance Center - Child Guidance Center provides children and families with culturally informed mental health care and complementary supports. Its team of mental health experts help children and teens address a range of emotional and behavioral issues. Whether it is anxiety, trauma, depression, stress, ADHD or something else effecting your child’s emotional well-being, Child Guidance offers answers and support. Child Guidance provides individual and family therapy (both in office, or your

home), psychiatric evaluations and medication management. Call 203-394-6529 for more information or to make an appointment.

Fairfield Counseling Services - FCS is located in the white house behind Town Hall and is part of Lifebridge Community Services. It offers a continuum of comprehensive, high quality mental health and substance abuse services to adults, youth, and families in Fairfield County. Fairfield Counseling Services staff are trained as Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (MFT), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and Clinical Mental Health Counselors (LPC), as well as a Licensed Addictions Specialist (LADC). It is a licensed substance abuse facility and offer individual and family therapy as well as recovery, relapse prevention and sober living groups. Call 203-255-5777 for more information or to make an appointment.

The Hub – Fairfield’s Behavioral Health Action Organization - The Hub provides a wealth of information including resource guides, lists of free peer supports, recovery groups, online screenings, awareness videos plus downloadable resources on a wide range of topics. It also publishes a searchable calendar of events and trainings. Visit The Hub’s website at www.TheHubCT

Grief Support Group - While grief is a personal experience, finding people that understand what you are going through can help pierce the isolation that often comes with loss. Our Grief Support Group can help you to connect with others that are also experiencing their own loss. Learning and understanding more about grief alongside others may help you in your individual journey. For more information, please call Kristin Hosp in Social Services at 203-256-3170. Times and dates to be determined.

Alternatives to Suicide – Free Peer Led Support Group, Thursdays at 7pm - Positive Directions in Westport offers this safe, non-clinical space where people ages 18+ come together to talk about their experiences and emotional distress without judgment or fear of unwanted interventions. For more information, call 203-227-7644 or email Ally at akernan@positive directions.org.

988 – Phone, Text or Chat Line Available Any Time of Day or Night - This three digit number provides 24/7 crisis care and support. If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts, or other mental health crises, including substance use, dial or text 988 for help from a trained professional counselor. Crisis counselors who speak Spanish are available at 1-888-628-9454. Chat at 988lifeline.org

Resources for Veterans

Veterans Crisis Line – 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1 (Chat or Text 838255) - This is a lifeline dedicated to Veterans, service members, and their families. You do not have to suffer in silence or struggle alone. **988** (described above) links directly to this line, too.

Iraq, Afghanistan and Vietnam Era Veterans: If you served during these campaigns, you are now eligible for financial assistance for any of your related illnesses. If you made a claim in the past and were denied, you need to try again. The new PACT Act allows coverage for Vietnam era veterans serving in other countries and now includes hypertension (high blood pressure), and post 911 veterans with illnesses such as bronchitis and asthma. The process is much easier as you no longer have to prove your exposure because these illnesses are now “presumptive” which means if you were there and have the illness, it is presumed you got the illness from your exposure. You will need to meet at least once with the VA, depending on your situation. These claims could provide needed financial assistance to veterans up to \$3000 range. And could provide additional assistance to your spouse. Contact the VA for information.

The Women's Business Development Council's Opportunity Fund - The Women's Business Development Council (WBDC) is pleased to announce the opening of a new application period for the Equity Match Grant (EMG) Program. Cash grants between \$2,500 and \$10,000 will be awarded to qualified women-owned small businesses in Connecticut for clearly defined projects that will have a measurable impact on the business, its growth and profitability (WBDC) Opportunity Fund Equity Match Program: Applications are open until February 28, 2023. Click to [Apply and Learn More](#).

2023 BAH Basic Allowance of Housing Rates - The Department of Defense recently released the Basic Allowance of Housing (BAH) rates for calendar year 2023. The 2023 Basic Allowance for Housing, or BAH, rates for military service members will increase by an unusually large average of 12.1% thanks to soaring housing costs nationwide, though some troops have already begun to receive their new amounts thanks to a temporary bump this year. Rates will go up in 291 of the 300 military housing areas in the U.S., stay the same in four, and go down in five with the start of the new calendar year. The Defense Department estimated that it will pay about 1 million service members a total of \$26.8 billion in BAH in 2023. Contact the VA for information.

Women Veterans-Special Resources - Women Veterans belong at VA. That's why every VA has a Women Veteran Program Manager (WVPM) who can help you connect with resources and steer you to the services you need.

What is the role of a WVPM? WVPMs are your advocates within the VA medical system. They help:

- Create a welcoming and respectful environment for all women Veterans.
- Lead programs and services related to women Veterans' health care.
- Answer questions about available women's health services and claims.

They are in charge of ensuring their VA facility has all of the necessary services and resources to care for women Veterans' health. They advocate on behalf of all women Veterans.

What other professionals are dedicated to women Veterans? Nearly one third of VA's women employees are also women Veterans, meaning they can understand your experiences and your needs. VA employees strive to provide the best care anywhere in an environment that encourages a feeling of belonging. VA has designated women's health staff who are specially trained in caring for women Veterans. In addition to WVPMs, these staff are available at every VA and include Women's Health Primary Care Providers, Patient Aligned Care Teams, Maternity Care Coordinators, Women's Mental Health Champions, and LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinators. For information, please go [HERE](#).

MISCELLANEOUS RESOURCES

Free COVID Test Kits - All US households are now eligible to order four free, at-home Covid test kits. Visit www.covid.gov/tests

Black Rock Church Car Care - Free basic car care, including oil changes, for those who cannot afford this necessity. Available the 1st Saturday of each month, 9:00am – 12:00 pm; appointments required the Thursday before. To schedule an appointment, please call 203-255-3401.

Autism Speaks (State of CT) - www.autismspeaks.org - Autism Speaks' mission is to promote solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. It offers advocacy, information, and support as well as personalized help from its **Autism Response Team (ART)**. Call **1-888-288-4762**/email: help@autismspeaks.org. **En Espanol: 1-888-722-9050**/email: ayuda@autismspeaks.org

Autism Project - The Autism Project is another resource for members of the community with ASD as well as their families. Check out its website including “The Kennedy Collective’s Autism Project Winter 2023” in which opportunities for connection and support abound. For more information call 203-332-4535 ext. 2356, or email Amy Dingwall at adingwall@kennedyctr.org
<https://www.thekennedycollective.org/>

Debt Resources - Debt.org is an online resource that provides information about personal finance issues including debt settlement, debt consolidation, and loans for bad credit. Go to www.debt.org or call 866-612-9971.

***For more information about any of these programs, or to schedule an appointment, please call
Fairfield Social Services at (203) 256-3170.***