

BRIDGING THE GAP

An Initiative to Support Frontline Human Service Workers and Their Families



Some FAQ's about NHTA's *Bridging the Gap* Initiative

What is NHTA's *Bridging the Gap* initiative? The *Bridging the Gap* Initiative is aimed at ensuring that frontline human service employees know about, and have ready access to, earned benefits.

Why are earned benefits important? Earned benefits and other income supports can be a crucial way for lower-income workers and their families – or anyone having trouble covering basic expenses – to achieve financial stability by bridging the gap between their income and budgetary needs.

Why does it matter if we support frontline workers? Earned benefits access not only means helping vulnerable families to make ends meet, but it enables greater personal, family, and community success as well. Earned benefits are also key to workplace success. Ensuring that employees have ready access to benefits demonstrates a commitment to valuing your workforce. And having financially stable employees leads to increased retention, low rates of absenteeism, and overall higher productivity and worker commitment.

Who are the frontline human service workers? Frontline human service workers are the employees who provide direct care services for clients such as home health aides and childcare workers. There are at least 3 million currently employed in this sector, many of whom are low-wage.

What are the earned benefits being promoted? "Earned benefit" is an umbrella term for multiple kinds of income supports such as tax credits, public funds, and assistance programs including: Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC/EIC) • Child Tax Credit (CTC) • State Nutritional Assistance Program • (SNAP – formerly known as Food Stamps) • State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) • Medicaid/Medicare • Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) • Foreclosure Assistance

How will NHTA's initiative help to improve access to these benefits? HR and other key affiliate-level staff can play a key role in benefits access. NHTA will make sure that they have the training and resources necessary to help frontline employees apply for benefits and stay informed on the many income support options available.

What kind of outreach support and benefits resources will NHTA offer to HR? Along with distributing easy-to-use electronic and digital toolkits on earned benefits through our networks, we will also be implementing local-level pilot programs. These pilots will offer a deeper level of support to HR and other key staff involved with employee outreach at a select number of our partners' affiliates by providing customized versions of the resources, on-site and webinar trainings, and a peer network for participants.

How do the pilot programs and initiative fit into the "bigger" picture? The pilot sites will serve as testing grounds for developing replicable models for employee-oriented benefits outreach within the nonprofit human services sector. We are also exploring the feasibility of a nationwide "Business to Business" earned benefits awareness campaign in 2010 with leading sponsors of technology-based resources such as online benefit screening tools.

Who's currently involved with the initiative? NHTA is partnered with Catholic Charities USA, Lutheran Services of America, Volunteers of America, and United Neighborhood Centers of America for the pilot programs. Among others, conversations are also underway with Seedco, AARP, Goodwill, UWA, NCOA, CBPP, and TimeBanks.

**For more information contact: Hillary Lazar, Benefits Outreach Coordinator
202.347.2080 x10 • hlazar@nassembly.org**
