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New Hotline from AIDS Legal Council of Chicago Offers Free Benefits Consultations Statewide

Chicago - As questions loom over the ever-changing maze of healthcare, one Chicago organization is stepping up to help individuals with HIV navigate the myriad of public and private health insurance programs in Illinois. The AIDS Legal Council of Chicago (ALCC) has been awarded a grant by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to set up a toll-free number to provide public benefits advice throughout the state. Starting February 1, 2008, anyone with HIV in Illinois can call the ALCC hotline at 1-866-506-3038 and receive a free consultation to determine what public benefits programs they may be eligible for and trouble-shoot when programs are not working as they should.

“Our new toll free number fills a critical gap in our healthcare system,” says ALCC Executive Director, Ann Hilton Fisher. “Illinois has worked hard to create a safety net for people with HIV, but the complexities of qualifying for the various programs can be daunting for many.”

For example, the Illinois Cares Rx program alone requires three separate on-line applications at three different websites. If the process is not completed correctly, applicants may stand to lose life-saving medical care or prescription drug coverage. Furthermore, major changes in the Medicaid program are on the horizon in 2008 that are likely to add to the confusion. “With every new legislative session, changes are made to the public benefits system,” explains Fisher. “These changes are often for the better, but if people with HIV don’t know about them, they can’t take advantage of them.”

The AIDS Legal Council of Chicago has been providing legal services to people with HIV for twenty years and ALCC is proud to begin providing public benefits counseling throughout the state. “Our mission has always been to reach people with HIV wherever they are and meet whatever their HIV-related legal needs may be. Thanks to the support of IDPH, we are helping people with HIV navigate the complex maze of benefits statewide so that they can get the care and stability they need.”

For more information on the AIDS Legal Council of Chicago and the new 1-800 line, or to interview Executive Director Ann Fisher, please visit www.aidslegal.com or contact Pete Subkoviak, Community Outreach Coordinator at (312) 427- 8990.

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