

# Polish American Social Services "PASS"

PolishAmericanSocialServices.com

From the Desk of  
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Program Supervisor

## Polish American Social Services "PASS"



Spring is upon us and we are coming out of one of the harshest winters we have had in a long time. Since most folks saw increased heating bills, PASS reminds seniors and all utility consumers to consider weatherizing your home. Also, consider a budget plan from your utility company. With dollars tight today, it is a good idea to keep a consistent budget, especially for energy costs. Some lower income persons can benefit from programs such as the CRP Program from the Philadelphia Gas Works which sets your gas payment based on your income with some forgiveness for past bills. Speaking of PGW, PGW customers should be aware of the new "late payer deposit" that PGW is implementing that will adversely affect many consumers who have been struggling with this past winter's bills. See the separate article in this newsletter that discusses this issue.

Also in this newsletter, there are many new items to review, such as changes in the Food Stamp program, and an introductory article on Census 2010.

The economy continues to be on everyone's mind, especially those who may have lost their jobs. Remember to let PASS know if your place of employment is hiring. And if you know someone who needs help with resume preparation, call PASS at (215) 923-1900. Also for those folks who may have lost their jobs, 65% of the costs of medical benefits under COBRA provisions are to be covered under the new stimulus package being released from the federal government. Make sure you ask your previous employer how to go about getting this important assistance.

Spring is always a time for renewal; a time for a fresh start. Let's use this opportunity to shift our focus from the many negative things around us and focus on being positive helping each other through these difficult times.

### COBRA Subsidy in the Economic Stimulus Package

The economic stimulus package signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009 includes a subsidy of COBRA premiums for up to nine months for certain employees involuntarily terminated between September 1, 2008 and December 31, 2009 and their spouses and dependents. The subsidy is 65% of the COBRA premium. Even if you chose not to participate in the COBRA plan when you were first laid off because of the high cost, you may still be able to participate in this plan. Former employers may be contacting employees that were laid off concerning this development. However, if you are not sure if you qualify for this assistance, contact your former employer as soon as possible.

### Job Training Program Information

If you are considering a job training program that can help you attain or retain long-term employment, contact PASS for more information. The outreach program is especially important to individuals who are unemployed due to company closings or relocations. PASS will share information about Pennsylvania area Job Training Programs to help you become more employable in a changing job market. Call PASS's Employment Outreach Representative for more information at (215) 923-1900.

### Do You Have A Resume?

PASS encourages job-seeking clients to prepare an outline of their work experience, or a resume, before they apply for any type of employment. A written resume helps job seekers present their job qualifications to a prospective employer. A PASS staff associate can review your current resume, update it, or develop a new one with you to prepare you for your job interview.

This service is available at the office of Polish American Social Services, 308 Walnut Street in Center City Philadelphia. Call to make an appointment for this free service at (215) 923-1900. in a changing job market. Call PASS's Employment Outreach Representative for more information at (215) 923-1900.

### Polish Travel Center

Travel Arrangements • Parcels to Poland  
2718 Orthodox Street • (215) 533-1294  
Internet: PolishTravel.com

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**The Michael J. Kosloski Foundation**  
In loving Memory of Leo Kosloski  
For Polish American Social Services programs

### PGW Institutes Late-Payer Deposit

Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) has begun a "late-payer deposit" which affects any PGW customer who pays a bill late two months in a row or three times over a twelve month period. This deposit is also applied if someone makes partial payments even if those payments are made on time. The deposit is equal to two months of an average bill based on prior consumption. Any payment made to PGW after a customer is levied with this deposit goes toward the deposit and not to the regular bill. If the deposit is not paid, PGW can terminate your service. According to PGW this move is legal because the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has allowed PGW to implement this plan.

Many customers already received a "second notice" that they will be levied with the late-payer deposit because of higher than usual bills this winter and may have been late on payments or did not make payments in full. This was surprising because they did not get a "first notice". PGW placed the "first notice" to their customers in the "message" section of their bills, thus many customers did not know they were going to be levied with the deposit. If someone has received a "second notice" in their bill concerning this deposit, and the deposit has not appeared on their next bill, customers can call PGW and dispute their bills and then contact the PUC.

Many customers are complaining that the deposit is an added hardship because they are already struggling to pay their bills. This is especially difficult for senior citizens who get their social security checks later in the month while their gas bill may be earlier in the month and they may be out of money and not able to pay when the bill is due.

PGW is also requiring that customers who want to avoid the late-payer deposit must file for "auto pay". Auto pay removes money from a customer's account automatically and can cause other checks to bounce because of a tight budget. To complicate matters, some PGW customers do not have a bank account so they cannot participate in auto pay.

At this time, many customers have called PGW and the PUC to file disputes and many more have contacted members of City Council to voice their concerns. The late payer deposit will be a developing issue over the next few months, so customers and utility advocates should pay attention to press releases and notices in PGW bills.

### FOOD STAMP PROGRAM CHANGES RULES MORE WORKING FAMILIES AND SENIORS TO BENEFIT

At the end of 2008, the Food Stamp program changed its rules that allows for many more working families and seniors to qualify for the program. The biggest change is the program no longer counts assets to determine eligibility. This means if you have money in the bank or another property, it will not be held against you.

The food stamp application still asks about your assets, because if someone has no assets, they can qualify for expedited or emergency food stamps. The asset questions should not stop someone who qualifies to file for this program.

Income limits are:

Household Size	Monthly income limit (gross)	Maximum food stamp grant
1	\$1,127	\$176 / per month
2	\$1,517	\$323
3	\$1,907	\$463
4	\$2,297	\$588
5	\$2,687	\$698

Expenses are also examined and can mean more food stamps for a household. For example, high housing costs, medical expenses and child care costs all have an affect on the amount of food stamps you can receive.

For more information about the food stamp program, you can call the Food Stamp Hotline at 215-430-0556 or apply directly on line at [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us). or call PASS at 215-923-1900.

### Attention Employers!

People seeking employment often contact PASS. The staff will be pleased to alert job seekers of **Job Openings** that have been reported.

If your place of employment is about to or has posted an employment opportunity, kindly let PASS know. Call Monday through Friday, between 9 A.M. and 4 P.M. (215) 923-1900, or send the job information to:

**Attn: Employment Information**  
**Polish American Social Services**  
308 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Kindly include qualifications needed, starting salary and where to go for an application and interview.

Spread the word about PASS and its outreach services.  
Be sure to visit PASS on the Internet at:  
**PolishAmericanSocialServices.com**