



JOTF Works

MARYLANDERS EXPECTED TO BENEFIT AS NEW LAWS TAKE EFFECT

By Melissa Chalmers Broome

Recent changes in Maryland law have created important opportunities for workers. The following measures provide critical benefits to working families.

Medicaid Expansion

Your family may be able to receive health insurance through the *Medical Assistance for Families Program*. Under this new program, if you have a child – or if you're the relative caregiver for a child living in your home – who is already covered by the Maryland's Children Health Program or Medical Assistance, you may now be eligible to receive full Medical Assistance yourself. While income eligibility varies by family size, a family of four can earn up to \$24,500 a year and qualify for the program.

The *Medical Assistance for Families Program* enables parents and children to be enrolled in the same managed care program making it easier to keep track of network providers and hospitals. It will provide free health care visits including doctor visits, emergency room care, and hospital stays. The plan also offers free or low-cost prescriptions.

Applying is easier than ever thanks to a streamlined process that does not require face-to-face interviews. Your local health department can process your application. For information on eligibility criteria and details on how to apply, call Baltimore Healthcare Access at (410) 649-0500.

Flexible Leave

Maryland parents can now use their sick leave to care for their children. Under the new *Flexible Leave Act*, if you work for a company with 15 or more employees and you earn paid leave such as sick leave, vacation leave, or compensatory time, you can now use your leave to care for your ill child, parent or spouse.

This new law will help hundreds of thousands of Marylanders balance the demands of work and family. From now on, when your child is sick and needs to stay home from school, you have the right to use one of your own paid days to stay home with your child. The same applies if you need to care for an elderly parent or an ill spouse. As long as you have already accrued the paid time off, you can elect whether to use a sick day or a vacation day to care for your loved one.

For more information, contact the Job Opportunities Task Force at 410-234-8046.

Have you been able to take advantage of Flexible Leave? Do you expect to benefit from it? We want to hear your story! Please call Melissa Broome at the Job Opportunities Task Force at 410-234-8046.

Nuisance Crimes Expungement

Up until now, when a person committed a crime – even a relatively minor crime – they would have to carry that conviction on their criminal record forever, making it very difficult to get a job and move on with their life.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES PROGRAM

Household Size	Monthly Income Limit	Annual Income Limit
2	\$1,353	\$16,240
3	\$1,701	\$20,416
4	\$2,049	\$24,592
5	\$2,397	\$28,768
6	\$2,745	\$32,944
7	\$3,093	\$37,120
8	\$3,441	\$41,296

Applying is easy! Call 410-649-0500 to see if you might qualify for this or other health insurance programs.

Starting October 1st, a person with any of the following nuisance crimes convictions can have their record expunged:

- public urination;
- panhandling or soliciting money;
- drinking an alcoholic beverage in a public place;
- obstructing the free passage of another in a public place;
- sleeping on or in park structures, such as benches or doorways;
- loitering; and
- vagrancy.

To clean your record, three years must have passed since the date of the conviction, and no additional convictions can have occurred during the three years.

Having nuisance crime convictions removed from your record should help ease the employment search process. For information on how to proceed, contact the Homeless Person's Representation Project at (410) 685-6589.

Do you have a nuisance crime conviction that you plan to expunge? We want to hear your story! Please call Melissa Broome at the Job Opportunities Task Force at 410-234-8046.

Child Support Payment Incentive Program

If you are a low-income, non-custodial parent who owes child support arrears to the state, a new program may be able to help reduce your arrears. Under the *Child Support Payment Incentive Program*, if you make twelve consecutive child support payments to your child, you can have your state-owed arrears reduced by 50%. If you make 24 consecutive payments to your child, you can have your arrears forgiven entirely.

The application process is easy. For information on how to apply, contact the Child Support Administration at (800) 332-6347.