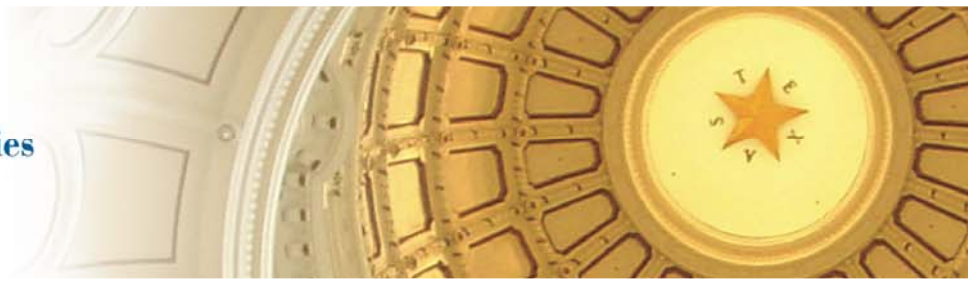




Center *for* Public Policy Priorities



Opportunities to Support Outreach and Application Assistance for Public Benefits

Community Action Network – Administrative Team
October 6, 2008

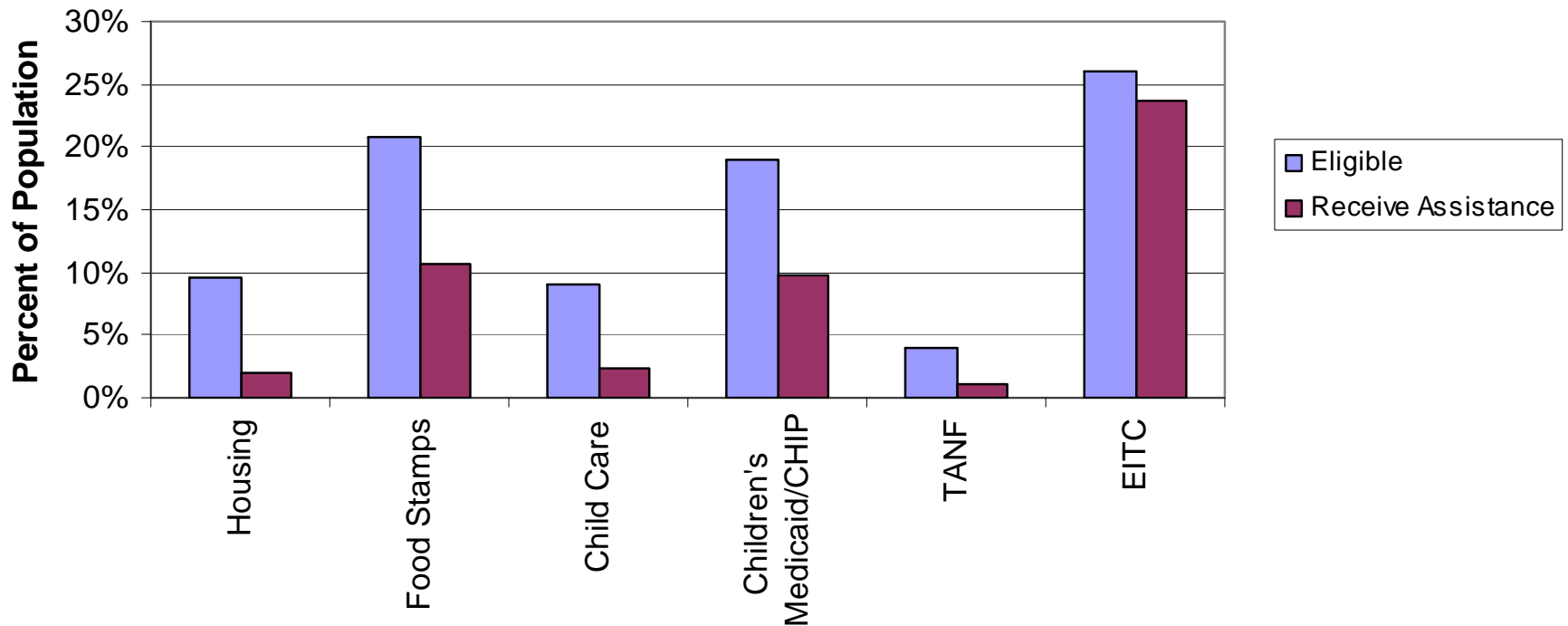
Celia Hagert, Senior Policy Analyst (hagert@cphp.org)

Work Supports in Texas

- Highly limited compared to other states
- Many needy families do not receive assistance
 - Strict eligibility guidelines
 - Become ineligible while their income is still too low to cover their basic needs.
 - Inadequate funding
 - Enrollment barriers
 - Lack of outreach and application assistance

Many Texans qualify for assistance but do not receive it.

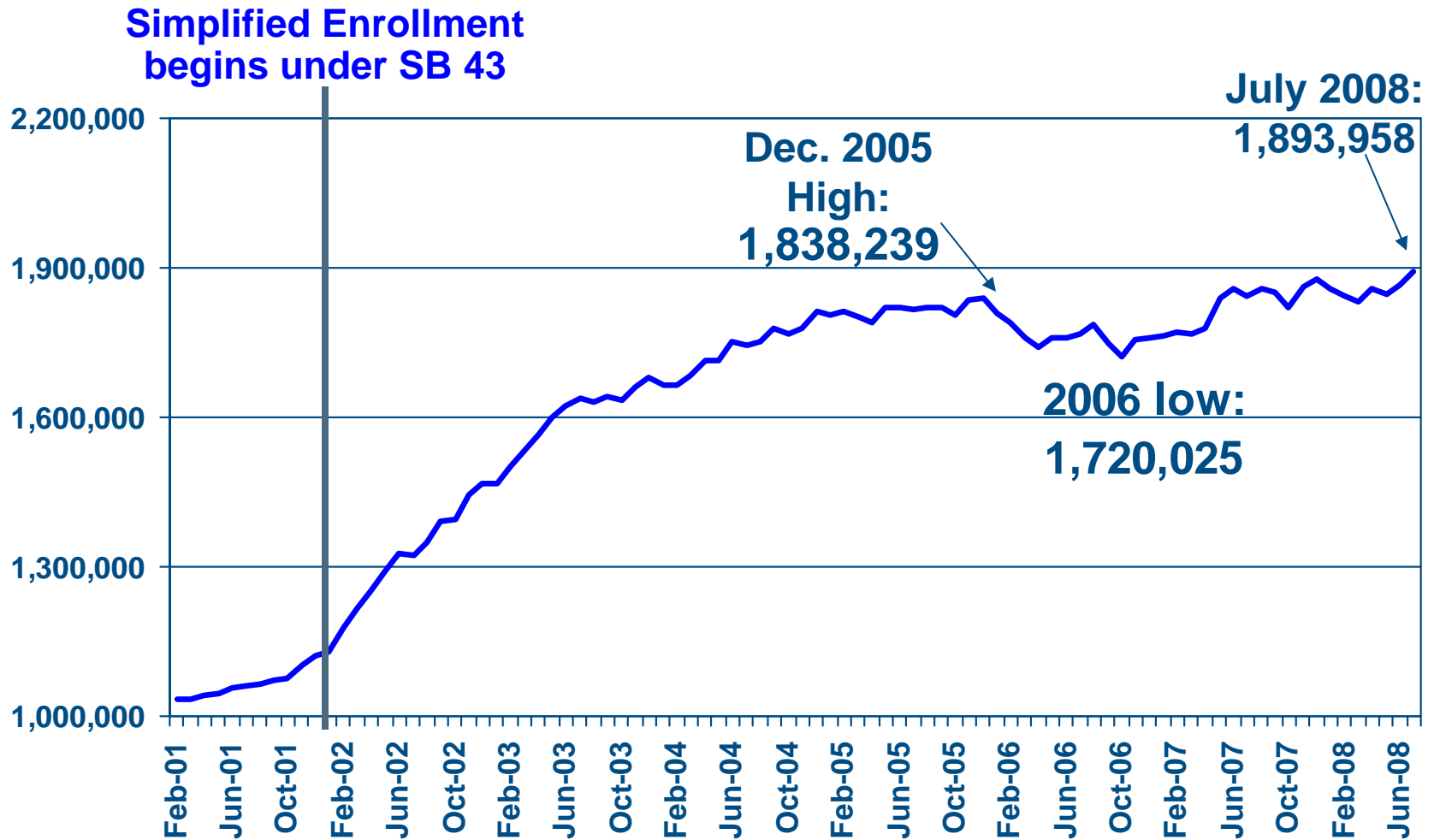
Many More Texans Eligible for Work Supports than Receive Them



Source: Bridging the Gaps Project, Center for Economic and Policy Research, www.bridgingthegaps.com

Texas Child Medicaid Enrollment

(February 2001 - July 2008)

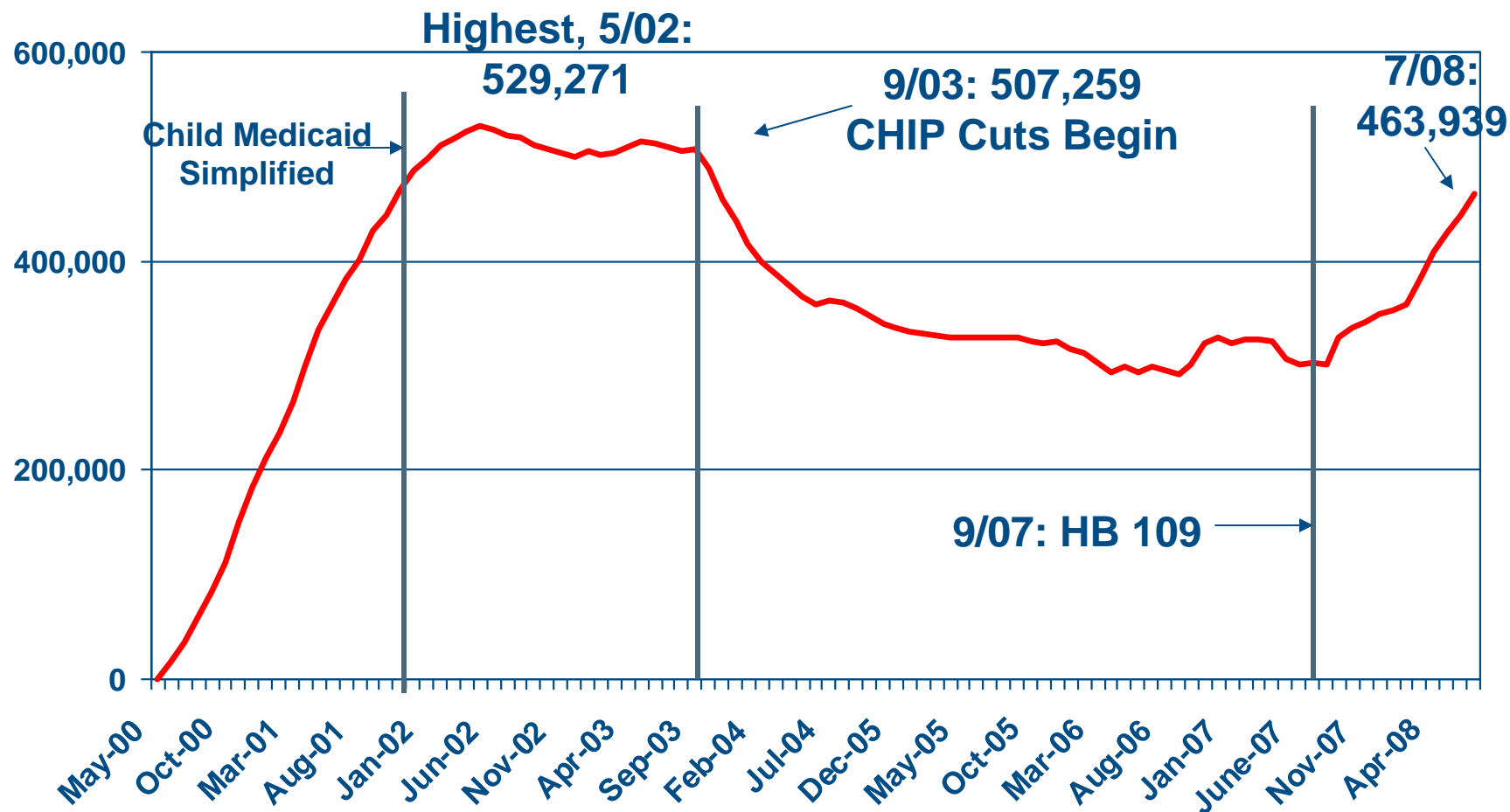


Source: Texas Health and Human Services Commission

1/2007 to present include newborn CHIP "perinates"; last month is preliminary due to lag

Texas CHIP Enrollment

(May 2000- July 2008)



Source: Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Does not include CHIP Perinatal program.

Texas Food Stamp Enrollment

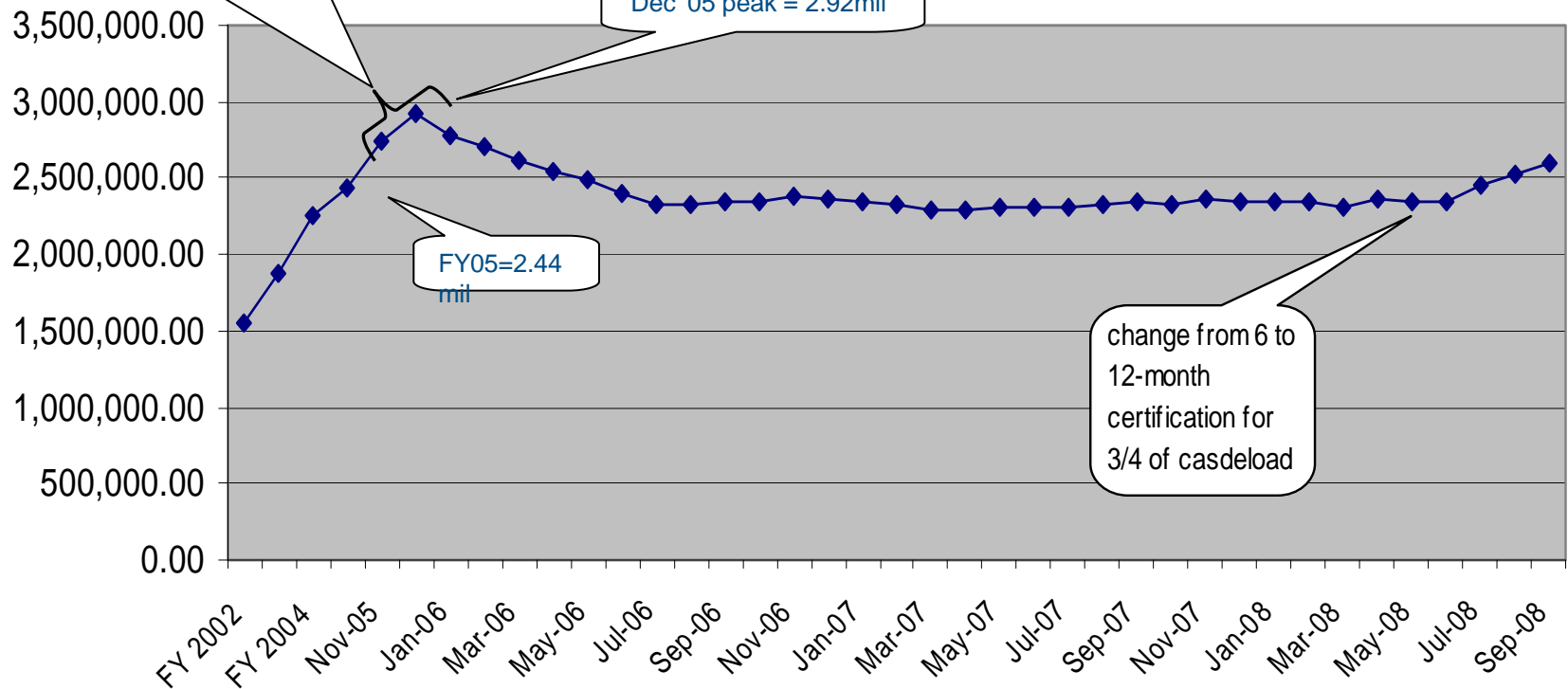
(FY 2002 – September 2008)

Katrina effect = added 400,000 recipients

Dec '05 peak = 2.92mil

FY05=2.44
mil

change from 6 to
12-month
certification for
3/4 of caseload



The Importance of Outreach and Application Assistance

- Ensures accurate flow of information regarding program rules/requirements
- Trains human services providers, such as CBOs, on program regulations
- Provides assistance to thousands of eligible household needing benefits
- Raises the proportion of eligible families getting the benefits they need

Outreach & Application Assistance for Medicaid and CHIP

- Community-based organizations (CBOs) play a *critical* role in helping families submit documents correctly the first time, speeding enrollment and eliminating HHSC time spent requesting more documents.
- CBOs need support: regular training from HHSC, and ongoing communication with health plans, providers, and advocates.

Outreach is short-changed in the state budget today

- Texas CBOs now must serve twice as many Texans and multiple safety net programs (not just children's health insurance), with fewer dollars (\$11.8 million now vs. \$15.3 million in 00-01).
- Actual spending on CBOs and marketing YTD is well below the amounts set aside in the current budget.
- Texas should at least double the amount allocated for outreach—and make sure those funds are spent!

Food Stamp Outreach – How it Works

- 50% federal match for state funds used for activities related to outreach
- States must submit proposal to regional USDA FNS office that includes details on outreach plan
- State outreach funds are usually contracted to state and regional CBOs.
- Funds are then distributed local organizations, including community action agencies, food banks, school, senior services agencies, emergency shelters, etc.

Local/Private Dollars Can Be Matched!!

- Funds must be donated to state without restrictions (i.e., can't specify funds for particular agency)
- Funds may not revert back to donor Private in-kind contributions not reimbursable
- Must be part of state plan
- Must not be federal funds
- State plans due 8/15 but can be amended during year

Examples of Outreach Activities

- Distribute flyers/posters with basic program rules and application information to agencies that serve low-income populations
 - hospitals,
 - shelters,
 - WIC sites,
 - unemployment offices,
 - schools,
 - public housing offices.
- Prescreen clients and assist with application process

Examples of Outreach Activities

- Send outreach workers to speak to potentially eligible groups
- Conduct media campaigns using both free and paid media outlets,
- Take advantage of CBO systems to track referrals and do follow-up to check application status

Mobile Outreach - NJ

- The Essex County mobile Citizen Services Office goes to ShopRite supermarkets to sign up potential applicants and distribute information on food stamps and other government programs.
- Also travels to health fairs, senior citizen events, and disaster areas.
- ShopRite stores advertise the hours and provide customers with information as well

Examples of Outreach Funded By *Alternate Sources*

- **Allegheny County (PA)** - \$20,000 grant covers the cost of one staff person to help with food stamp application process.
- **Rural Opportunities (NY)**- outreach to migrant and seasonal farm workers at camps
- **California Food Policy Advocates (CA)**
 - Developed an outreach kit – “Food Stamps Work”—available for advocates in California and elsewhere.

Food Stamp Outreach Resources

- USDA toll free line (1-800-221-5689)
- USDA informational materials are accessible at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp.
- Copies can be obtained by calling the toll free number.
- www.yourtexasbenefits.com
- *FRAC's Guide to Food Stamp Outreach Collaborations*
(www.frac.org/pdf/fspguide06/03PublicOffc.pdf)

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