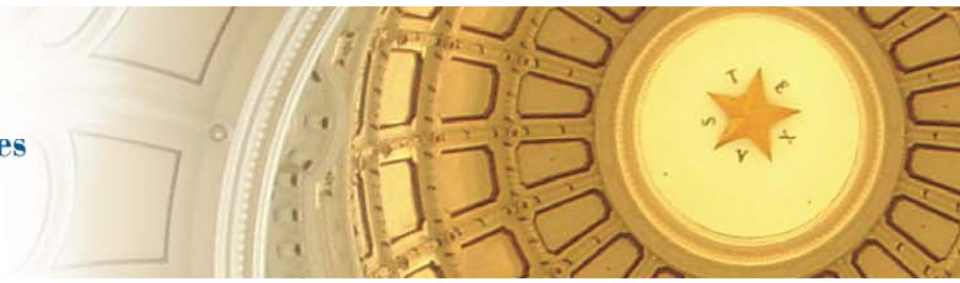




Center *for* Public Policy Priorities



# Opportunities to Support Outreach and Application Assistance for Public Benefits

Community Action Network – Resource Council  
October 6, 2008

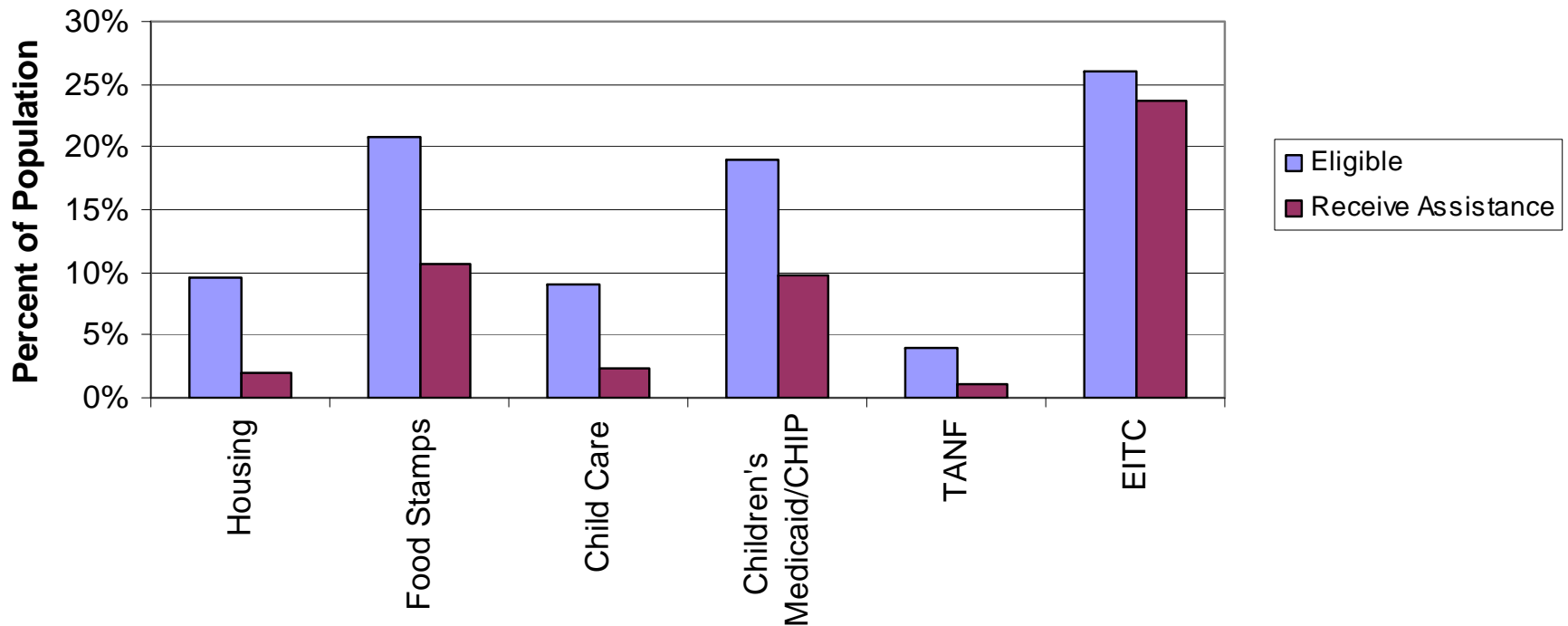
Celia Hagert, Senior Policy Analyst ([hagert@cphp.org](mailto:hagert@cphp.org))

# 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

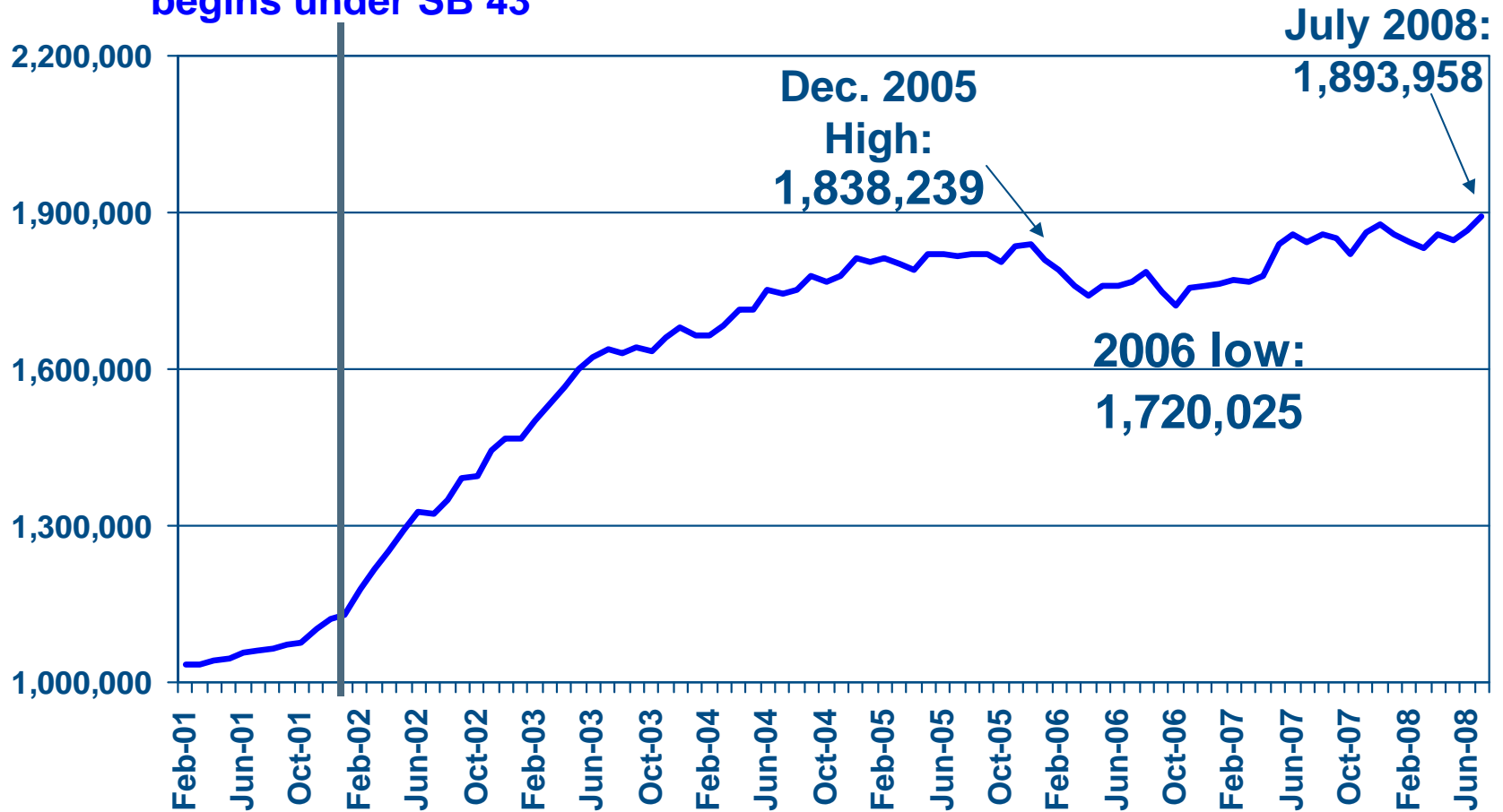


Source: Bridging the Gaps Project, Center for Economic and Policy Research, [www.bridgingthegaps.com](http://www.bridgingthegaps.com)

# Texas Child Medicaid Enrollment

(February 2001 - July 2008)

**Simplified Enrollment  
begins under SB 43**

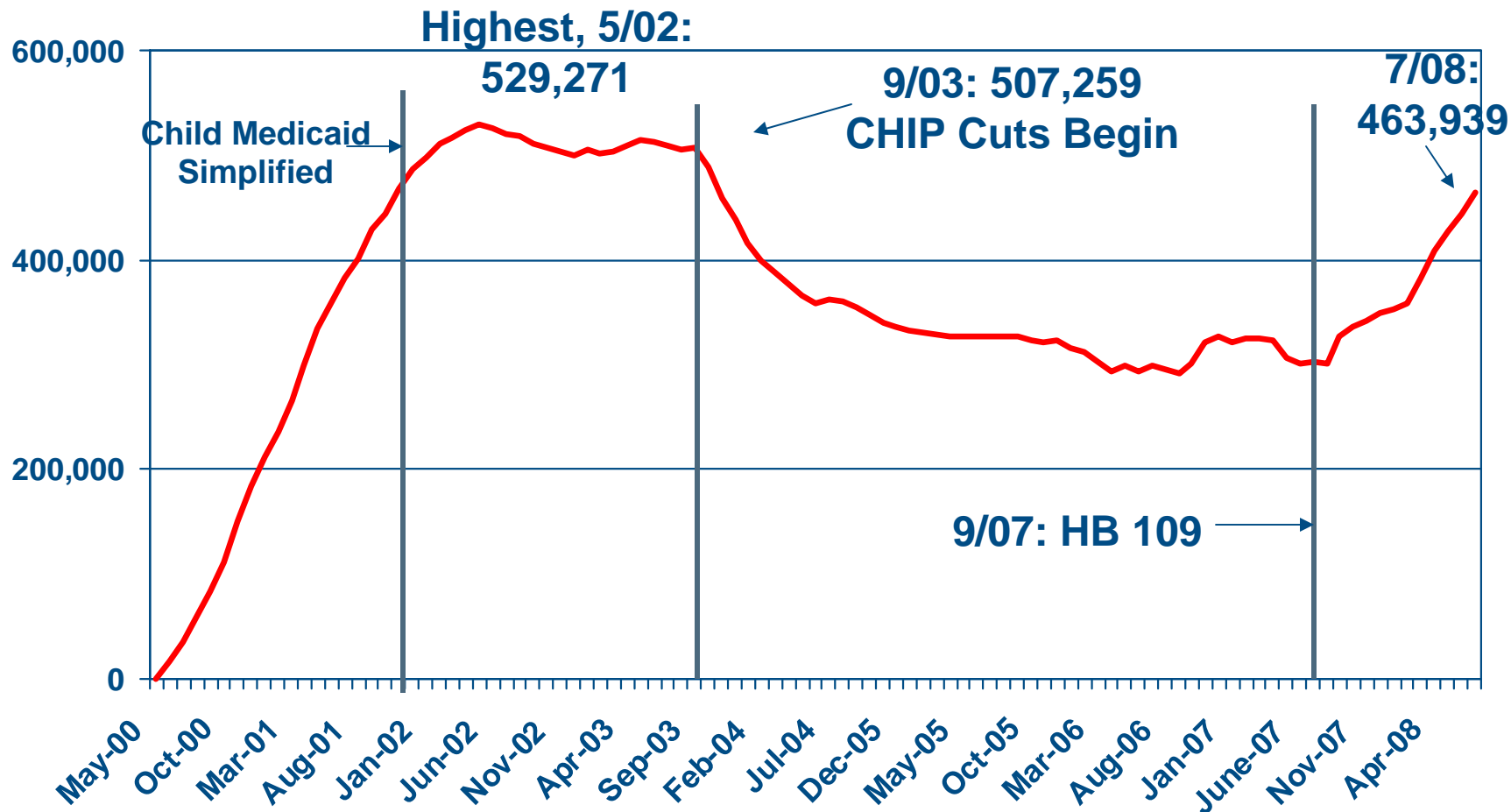


Source: Texas Health and Human Services Commission

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

# Texas CHIP Enrollment

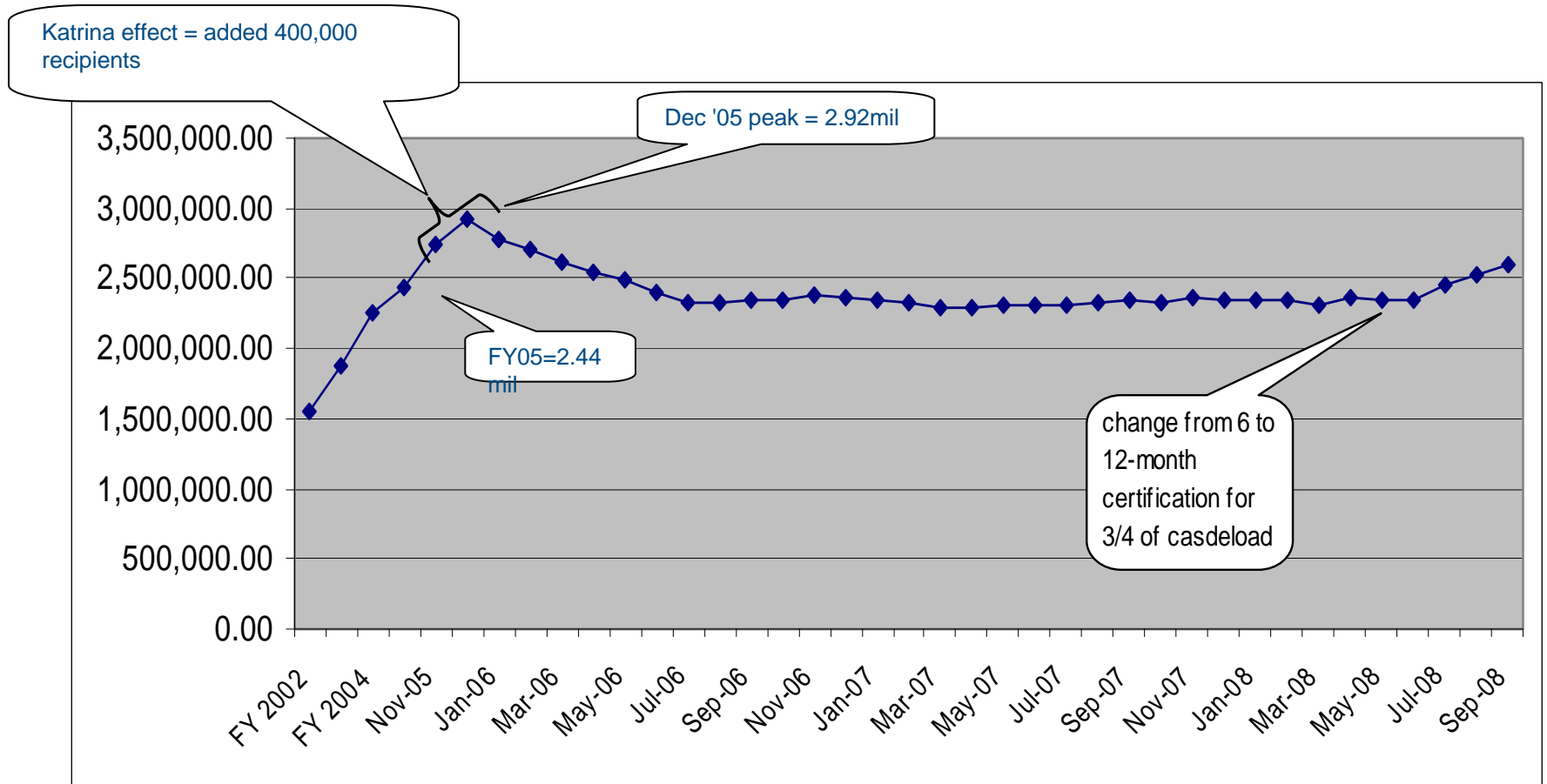
(May 2000- July 2008)



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

# Texas Food Stamp Enrollment

(FY 2002 – September 2008)



# 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](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp).
- Copies can be obtained by calling the toll free number.
- [www.yourtexasbenefits.com](http://www.yourtexasbenefits.com)
- *FRAC's Guide to Food Stamp Outreach Collaborations*  
([www.frac.org/pdf/fspguide06/03PublicOffc.pdf](http://www.frac.org/pdf/fspguide06/03PublicOffc.pdf))

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**Center for Public Policy Priorities  
900 Lydia Street  
Austin, TX 78702  
P 512/320-0222 F 512/320-0227**