

## Health Benefits Primer 2: *Your CSA Welfare Fund*

Last month, in the first article in this series, we discussed your City-provided basic health plan. As all are aware, this coverage, while exceptional compared to private-sector employers, is deficient in several important benefits. It is the role of each union's welfare funds to provide this missing benefits.

During each contract negotiation, money is bargained for salary increases, and additional funds are negotiated to be paid directly to a covered employee's welfare fund. For the CSA Welfare Funds, these funds are paid directly from the Department of Education and NYC Controllers office on a per member per month basis. Your union dues, deducted from active paychecks or retiree pension checks, are used to operate the union and provide services, such as legal and grievance support, to members. Welfare fund monies are completely separate, and are paid directly to the welfare fund.

Each union and welfare fund is free, within guidelines established by the Controller, to use these funds as it best sees fit to meet the needs of the union members and retirees. Some unions commingle active and retiree funds. The CSA, in its wisdom, did not do this,

For CSA members, the Executive Board of the union long ago elected to create separate funds for active and retiree members. As a result, the money contributed through negotiation for active members is used by the Board of Trustees (elected by the Executive Board ) with the guidance of the administrator, to provide benefits to meet the needs of the active CSA membership. As a result, the Fund provides prescription drug, dental, optical, hearing aid, supplemental, and catastrophic medical benefits. The CSA Retiree Welfare Fund, directed by a separately-elected Board of Trustees, provides a different set of benefits judged to be more appropriate for retired members. These include Dental, optical, hearing aid, home health aid, partial reimbursement of the GHI optional benefits rider for those who are Medicare eligible, catastrophic medical, and a greatly enhanced supplemental medical program which covers, among other things, unreimbursed amounts for surgery, anesthesia, chemotherapy ( exclusive of the medications) and invasive and diagnostic examinations.

The Trustees of each fund employ professionals with experience in investments, accounting and auditing, and actuarial studies to assist them in managing the fund. Their goal is to provide the greatest level of benefits that can be provided while maintaining the long-term financial viability of the fund. As additional resources are made available, the Trustees and Administrative staff make decisions how to best use these resources, be it enhancement of reimbursement levels of current benefits or addition of new benefits.

***Next Month: We begin a detailed look of each welfare fund benefit, including what is covered and how to submit the required documentation to obtain reimbursement.***