

# Connecticut Insurance Department Newsletter:

## Insurance Matters

Volume 2, Issue 3  
Summer 2016  
151 Years of Consumer Protection

### On College, Catastrophes & Consumer Recoveries A Message from Commissioner Katharine L. Wade

If you are the parent of a college student we know you send them back to school each year with caring and concern. In this issue of "Insurance Matters," we offer a few tips to make sure that you and your college-bound student have the appropriate coverage to protect their belongings and keep them healthy.

Consumer protection is at the core of what we do and the examiners in our Consumer Affairs Division are the front line of that defense for you. Each year they field thousands of calls and emails to help you through your insurance issues. We are happy to share the results of their work through the first half of 2016.

Your smart phone is about to get a little smarter if you download the newest APP from the state. The CT Prepares APP will provide real time information and updates during emergencies. The APP has arrived just in time for the latter half of the Atlantic Tropical Storm season, traditionally the time of the most active weather for the Northeast. It's also a great time to review your homeowner's policy to ensure that your property is adequately protected.

We hope this information will be useful to you and encourage you to please share it!

### **\$3.5 Million Recovered for Consumers in 1<sup>st</sup> Half of 2016**

A consumer receives a denial from a health insurance company for an \$87,000 charge for hospice services. That's when the Department was called for help.

It was one of more than 3,300 calls our Consumer Affairs Division has handled in the first six months of 2016 on a wide variety of insurance issues. Our examiners determined that the denial was a mistake due to a systems error and required that the claim be paid *with* interest.

Each year our Consumer Affairs Unit helps recover more than \$4 million on behalf of consumers and at the halfway mark in 2016, we've already recovered nearly \$3.5 million. Health insurance issues made up the bulk of the complaints and resulted in \$2.7 million in recoveries. Of that, about \$17,000 were related to behavioral health complaints.

Your complaints and questions help us spot possible troubling trends with a company or a line of business and we can then refer the issue to our Market Conduct Unit for further follow-up. So far this year, the Market Conduct Unit levied \$682,000 in fines and those examinations and sanctions are all online on our [Enforcement Page](#).

As a consumer, you have rights under state law to prompt and fair payment of claims. It is our job to make sure your rights are upheld. So whether your question or complaint is over health, auto or homeowner's insurance, we want to hear about it and will do our best to help you resolve it.

## **College and Coverage Concerns**

Packing your child off to college can be bittersweet. How fast those years have flown. Wasn't it just yesterday you were filling the lunch box with PB&J sandwiches, fruit, juice and maybe a couple of cookies all in the name of TLC?

Now you can help pack them off on the next phase of life by ensuring they are protected. Review your homeowners, health and auto insurance policies and talk to your agent to see if you need to make any updates as they move into that dorm or off-campus apartment.

College students living in off-campus housing are ideal candidates for needing [renters insurance](#), since many students bring valuable personal items, such as electronics, a computer, textbooks, clothes, furniture, and a bicycle with them to school. It is the renter's responsibility – not the landlord's – to provide coverage for these valuable items. However, if a college student is under 26 years old, enrolled in classes and living in on-campus housing, the student may be covered under his or her parents' homeowners or renter's insurance policy. Renter's insurance is relatively inexpensive, averaging \$15 to \$30 a month.

Make sure they have copies of all necessary health insurance cards and that you understand what it means to your pocketbook if they have to use an out-of-network provider. Under the Affordable Care Act they can still be covered on your health plan until they turn 26 years. The PB&Js and juice boxes may not be needed now but the TLC and packing your child off with peace of mind is a part of parenting that is evergreen.

## **Department Hosting Oct. 14 Opioid Conference**

Connecticut is not immune to the opioid epidemic that is sweeping the country. Our state's response to it has been one of collaboration among the public and private sector that stresses education, access to treatment and prevention strategies.

On October 14, the Insurance Department will convene a forum on the insurance industry's effort to address the opioid epidemic. Insurance companies will discuss programs and coverage for treatment. The Department will announce more details on the venue and time in the coming weeks. The forum is open to the public. We hope to see you there!

## **Catastrophe? There's an APP for that**

The 6-month Atlantic hurricane season is at the halfway point and in New England this is when things can get really interesting. The latter part of the season is the peak for the region and according to weather experts, in the last 100 years about 75 percent of the 40 tropical storm systems have struck New England during the late summer and fall.

The state of Connecticut is offering a new tool to help you stay informed. [CT Prepares](#) is a new mobile APP that incorporates texting, email and social networking to provide real-time information and updates during emergencies.

It is the perfect complement to the free home inventory APP. The [MyHome Scr.APP.book](#) was created by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners and lets users quickly photograph and store images, descriptions and serial numbers and store them electronically. Everything is at your fingertips should you have to make a property damage claim after a storm. It's much easier when you can "List It Before You Lose It."

## **You Asked: The CID's Spring Mailbag**

**I do not have health insurance coverage and my employer does not offer it. When may I apply for individual health coverage?**

Under the Affordable Care Act, enrollment in individual health plans occurs during an open enrollment period each year. For 2017, open enrollment period runs from November 1, 2016 to January 31, 2017.

You may buy coverage through the Connecticut Marketplace, [Access Health CT](#), or buy directly

from any insurance company that sells health insurance in Connecticut.  
If you qualify for subsidies you must buy coverage through Access Health CT.

**If my car insurer raises my rates because they consider me an “older driver” with increased risks, how can I lower my premium?**

There is a state law in Connecticut that insurers must give drivers 60 years and older discounts for successfully completing a safe driver course. Here is more information on [safe driver courses](#).

**My life insurance company says I need to “contribute” more into my adjustable life policy because my premium payments have not been sufficient to maintain my policy and my policy will lapse if I don’t. Can the insurer do this?**

The premium on your policy is flexible and can only be changed by you, not the company. After you and your agent established a monthly premium when you first bought the policy it is up to you to review the Annual Statements to determine if your premium payment and interest earned are covering the increasing cost of your death benefit.

### ***Questions or Concerns?***

Contact CID’s Consumer Affairs at:

[cid.ca@ct.gov](mailto:cid.ca@ct.gov)

(860) 297-3900

(800) 203-3447

Follow the CID at:

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube

*“Insurance Matters” is for informational purposes and is not intended to constitute legal advice.*