



**September 27, 2011 Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT ALLOCATION PLAN FFY 2012**

Distinguished Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons, Ranking Members, and Members of the Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees:

Thank you for holding this hearing on the proposed Community Services Block Grant Allocation Plan for FFY 2012. My name is Joe Mann. I am the President/CEO of Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now or NEON and Board Vice-Chair of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's twelve (12) Community Action Agencies (CAAs)—our state's federally-designated anti-poverty agencies, which serve every one of Connecticut's 169 towns and cities.

We are pleased to be here to support Commissioner Bremby and the Department of Social Services' allocation plan for the CSBG. And we are pleased that the state has based its allocation plan on level funding, especially since last week the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee passed their FY 2012 appropriations bill which includes level funding for the CSBG. As you know, this block grant provides critical operational support for programs that have inadequate administration funds, especially programs such as energy assistance and child care. These funds help our CAAs to provide a comprehensive, integrated customer-focused approach, which is greatly needed as our residents struggle to make ends meet in the ongoing recession.

CAAs accept customers at any contact point and guide them through a complex service system, ensuring the most efficient and cost-effective delivery of services, and the best use of taxpayer dollars. The result is improved client outcomes across all state- and federally-funded programs, underscoring the value of integrating diverse funding streams at the local level. As shown by the accomplishments noted in the enclosed packet, investment in Connecticut's CAAs is not just a short-term fix—it is an investment in Connecticut's future.

Certainly, to those families directly affected by the troubled economy, the State's investment in CAAs has never been more important. But the investment is in fact a critical step toward stabilizing the economy for *all* of Connecticut's residents. Since the recession began nearly four years ago, CAAs have witnessed an unparalleled surge in the number of customers seeking assistance and a great increase in the level of need among

our customers. In energy assistance alone, we have seen a more-than-40% increase not only in applications, but in eligible customers.

And, in light of growing research showing that effective assistance programs work best in conjunction with each other, last year CAFCA launched our innovative Automated Benefits Calculator, or "ABC." ABC is a user-friendly, web-based feature that allows users to anonymously enter information and find out whether they might qualify for state or federal assistance programs. Available in English and Spanish, ABC presents a short, self-guided series of questions, then provides an array of valuable information, including likely eligibility and guidance to the appropriate CAA and other resources. Also, when a customer visits a CAA for energy assistance (the most common gateway for families in need), integrated ABC software provides a real-time, "one-stop shopping" eligibility report for other programs. With expansion likely in the future, ABC's list of programs already includes the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), health care, Head Start, and many more. CAFCA is committed to empowering families to get back on their feet.

Especially at this time of economic uncertainty, we are grateful to policy makers at the federal and state levels for the trust they have given us, but understanding our efficacy doesn't require a leap of faith. CAAs employ a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework called Results-Oriented Management and Accountability, or ROMA. By using ROMA, we are able to measure customer, agency, and community outcomes for the purposes of reporting to stakeholders and pursuing continuous improvement in our administration, coordination, and service delivery. Please see the attached handout for an RBA report on a number of our programs.

Additionally, Connecticut's CAAs undertake the Quality Community Action Assessment developed and administered by the Northeast Institute for Quality Community Action (NIQCA) to ensure high standards in governance and management. Every three years, each agency undergoes a self-assessment process that encompasses the entirety of their infrastructure—finance, human resources, management information systems, board governance and accountability, planning and development, and facilities. A peer review group analyzes each agency and develops an action plan for continuous improvement based on relevant best practices.

Beyond being accountable to our customers, partners, and local communities for delivering effective, efficient anti-poverty assistance, our network has offered its partnership on other initiatives that might be helpful as the State seeks to cut costs while protecting struggling families. We continue to extend our sincere interest in discussing ways the CAA network might partner with the state to better serve customers and save state funds: Some examples of such partnerships include:

- Pre-application/application assistance for major DSS cash assistance programs and re-determination;
- Outreach, education, and application assistance for federally-funded programs such as health care and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program (SNAP);

- Pre-employment services to provide individuals with the skills and paperwork necessary to complete job applications;
- Fiduciary agency for small community-based organizations (CBOs), using a master contracting concept to lessen unnecessary and duplicative paperwork, increase timely payments, and support pilot programs;
- Supportive services that maintain independence for elders; and
- Energy assistance eligibility data to be used as a basis for categorical eligibility for DSS programs (similar to Head Start eligibility being presumptive eligibility for HUSKY).

I thank Commissioner Bremby, Tony Judkins, our State CSBG Administrator, and the General Assembly—especially the committees represented here today—for understanding the importance of supporting the good work and continuous improvement of Connecticut's Community Action Agencies. As a network we are deeply committed to empowering people and building communities, and these efforts have never been more necessary than they are now.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to take your questions.

(Enclosure: RBA report)

## Community Action Community Services Block Grant

*Results That Matter*



## Community Services Block Grant

- In 1981 the creation of the Community Services Block Grant changed the regulatory and funding basis of Community Action Agencies.
- Community action became a funding stream administered by states.
- CSBG serves as core funding for Community Action Agencies and provides underlying support for all CAA functions.



## CT COMMUNITY ACTION: AGGREGATE RESULTS THAT MATTER

### How much did we do?

- At least 373,886 people statewide benefited from CAA services last year.
- Over 20,400 barriers to employment were reduced or eliminated.

### How well did we do it?

- CAAs recruited volunteers to help reduce poverty: over 830,000 hours donated = 399 FTEs=\$22.4 million
- Over \$11.5 million was returned to our state's economy with volunteer tax preparation assistance in 2009.
- CAAs engaged over 2,100 low-income people to participate in formal community organizations, government, boards or councils that provide input to decision making and policy setting.

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 370,000 people are on the path to self-sufficiency. Examples:
  - More than 6,300 people went to work.
  - Over 6,700 pre-school aged children are better prepared to start school.
  - Kids did better in school – socially, emotionally, athletically and academically.
  - Over 4,400 people live in more safe, stable housing.
  - Over 16,000 people received needed food from our food pantries.
  - Over 31,500 senior citizens maintain an active, independent life style.



## EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

### How much did we do?

- 20,412 barriers to employment were reduced or eliminated.
- 6,340 people obtained employment or self-employment.
- 3,277 adults obtained or improved job skills.
- 1,787 people learned skills and competencies required for employment.
- 1,312 youth obtained job skills.

### How well did we do it?

- At least 2,349 people increased their earned income from the previous year.

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 6,300 adults moved closer to self-sufficiency by going to work.
- Children emerging from poverty will likely earn, on average, 39% more than the median income.

© The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Economic Impact of Homelessness and Child Poverty. First Period. December 2008.



## FINANCIAL LITERACY & ASSET DEVELOPMENT

### How much did we do?

- 526 people opened savings accounts and accumulated \$139,495 in savings.
- 18 people purchased homes, 25 people funded education and 14 capitalized small businesses through IDA Programs.
- Over 6,450 tax returns were filed free of charge.
- Over 2,427 people learned how to better manage their income and increase savings.
- 3,576 people decreased debt.
- 2837 operated within an established budget for at least 90 days.

### How well did we do it?

- For every dollar of funding invested in 2009 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Programs, \$92 was returned to the community.
- Volunteers donated 6,500+ hours, saving over \$1.1 million in tax preparation fees.

### Is anyone better off?

- Families with assets are better able to weather economic storms.
- In 2009 over \$11.3 million was returned to our state's economy with volunteer tax preparation assistance.
- Nationwide, nearly 85% of IDA savers, purchasing homes with conventional fixed rate mortgages, fared well during the subprime mortgage crisis due to financial education & homeownership counseling.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Connecticut Int. Economic Development (CFED) 2004, Benjamin Smiley on Home Ownership and Entrepreneurship 2008



## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

### How much did we do?

- Over 6,700 children participated in preschool activities that develop school readiness skills.
- 6,640 children obtained immunizations and medical care.
- Over 5,160 children received dental care.

### How well did we do it?

- 6,766 children participated in preschool activities and demonstrated improvement in school readiness skills.
- For every dollar invested, \$18.89 was saved in lifelong gains.<sup>2</sup>
- Programs costing \$61.5 million helped 7,427 children improve school readiness skills while saving \$1.1 billion in lifelong gains.

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 6,700 children are better prepared to start and succeed in school.
- Over 6,640 are healthier because they received medical and/or dental care.
- Children in well-functioning homes are less likely to get into trouble in school, get involved with crime, have difficulty learning, or need other supportive services, all of which cost taxpayers.
- These programs lead to:
  - increased worker productivity
  - increased wages for parents
  - long term costs for law enforcement, welfare, health care and special education, etc

<sup>2</sup> CT Office of State Programs, CT Commission on Children, April 2007



## HOUSING & SHELTER

### How much did we do?

- Over 2,450 households/individuals moved from temporary to safe, stable housing.
- More than 2,500 people received emergency shelter.
- Emergency rental/mortgage payments prevented 1,506 households from becoming homeless.
- 6,293 households improved home safety through lead removal and other services.

### How well did we do it?

- More than 3,512 people maintained safe/stable housing for over 90 days.
- Over 1,977 people obtained permanent housing through home purchase or rental housing.
- 1,142 households avoided eviction for at least 120 days through mediation.
- The assessed value of at least 345 homes increased as a result of rehabilitation.

### Is anyone better off?

- Families who live in safer, more stable housing can better manage their daily lives and their children's nutrition, health, developmental and academic performance.



## ENERGY ASSISTANCE & WEATHERIZATION

### How much did we do?

- Over 104,161 households avoided crises with energy assistance.
- Over 7,386 homes were weatherized, decreasing energy cost and use.
- Over 9,717 households participated in the utility matching payment program (UMPP).
- Over 19,757 people resolved problems with fuel vendors with agency assistance.
- Nearly 494 households improved environmental safety with a new heating or a/c system.
- Over 43,667 people demonstrated increased knowledge of energy conservation.

### How well did we do it?

- For every dollar invested, \$2.97 was saved over the lifetime of the measure.<sup>1</sup>
- Programs costing \$8.5 million in 2006 produced saved about \$25.3 million in energy costs over the lifetime of the conservation measures.

### Is anyone better off?

- Low-income people avoided utility crises, resolved vendor disputes, improved environmental safety and learned how to save money through energy conservation measures.

1. Energy Efficiency: Heating in CT's Homes. CT Energy Conservation Management Board Report to the Legislature, March 2007



## SENIOR SUPPORT SERVICES

### How much did we do?

- Over 16,320 seniors remained active in their communities by participating in community programs.
- 8,490 seniors maintained independent living through support services including home meal delivery, home health or homemaker services.
- 6,435 seniors citizens avoided institutionalization through support services.

### How well did we do it?

- o 6,435 senior citizens avoided institutionalization, saving about \$481 million in nursing home costs in 2010.<sup>5</sup>

### Is anyone better off?

- o Over 31,000 senior citizens maintain an active, independent life-style.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the National average per diem nursing home rate of \$205, per The MetLife Market Survey of Nursing Home, Assisted Living, Adult Day Services and Home Care Costs, October 2010. [www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com)



## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

### How much did we do?

- o 1,312 youth obtained job skills.
- o 692 youth improved social/emotional development.
- o Over 600 youth improved their academic performance.
- o 413 youth avoided at-risk behavior for at least 3 months.
- o 129 youth reduced involvement with the criminal justice system.
- o Over 1605 youth increased their academic, athletic or social skills through participating in after-school programs.
- o 404 non-custodial fathers spent more time with their children.

### How well did we do it?

- o Potential ROI of \$10.51 for every dollar spent on a sustained investment to develop youth into economically and socially viable adults.<sup>c</sup>
- o 439 children at-risk of DCF placement remained with family because of improved family functioning.

### Is anyone better off?

- o Kids gained a stronger foundation for an economic self-sufficient life.
- o Kids did better in school – socially, emotionally, athletically and academically.
- o Families stayed together and functioned better.

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## NUTRITION SERVICES

### How much did we do?

- Over 16,233 people received emergency or supplemental food from our food pantries.
- Over 12,847 seniors participated in congregate meal programs.
- Over 5,671 people received home-delivered meals.
- 11,128 children benefited from congregate meals.
- 11,658 people received emergency vouchers for food, formula and/or diapers.

### How well did we do it?

- An investment of \$10 per person per year in proven community-based programs to increase physical activity, improved nutrition and prevent smoking and other tobacco use could save the country more than \$16 billion annually within 5 years. CT's ROI is 6.6 to every dollar spent.<sup>1</sup>

### Is anyone better off?

- People of all ages stayed healthier by eating more nutritious meals.
- Pregnant women had healthier pregnancies and healthier babies.

<sup>1</sup> Fynish Ventures, LLC. Trust for America's Health. "Investment in Disease Prevention Could Save America More Than \$16 Billion in Five Years" July 11, 2005



## HEALTH & COUNSELING SERVICES

### How much did we do?

- Over 8,271 people obtained access to needed health care.
- Over 2,230 youth improved physical health and development.
- 2,266 learned how to avoid at-risk behavior.
- Nearly 1,953 maintained health and independence by utilizing shared-ride transportation.

### How well did we do it?

- 86% (2,266 of 2,626) remained drug and alcohol free for 6 months.
- 2,910 participants improved their family functioning and/or behavior because of counseling.
- 3,240 parents/caregivers improved family functioning as a result of classes or supportive services.

### Is anyone better off?

- Thousands of low-income people state-wide lived healthier lives because of the access to health care that they received.
- Children in well-functioning homes are less likely to get into trouble in school, get involved in crime, have difficulty or need other supportive services. Our programs help strengthen families, keep communities safe and save tax payers money.



## CT CAAs LEVERAGE RESULTS THAT MATTER

### How much did we do?

- CT CAAs brought over \$264 million of federal funding into CT to fight the causes and effects of poverty in 2010.
- In 2010, our network reported 2,738 partnerships, including 478 new partnerships that were formed in the past year alone:
  - 1251 partnerships to improve and coordinate service.
  - 384 partnerships to improve community planning
  - 417 partnerships to achieve improved outcomes.

### How well did we do it?

- CT CAAs leverage funding sources & community volunteers to fight poverty efficiently.
- Using HSI funds, CAA's form a statewide network to provide a one-stop center of service delivery. Low income residents connect to the network efficiently and easily.
- CAA organizations are lean and efficient because of leveraged funding, partnerships that share resources dedicated staff, and community volunteers.

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 370,000 low-income CT residents from 162,000 families are working towards improved self-sufficiency.
- All CT residents benefit from taxpayer dollars that are efficiently and well spent.

# Connecticut Human Services Infrastructure

## Low-Income Individuals and Families

Walk-Ins and Referrals from DSS, InfoLine 211, and others

