



**September 25, 2013 Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT ALLOCATION PLAN FFY 2014**

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 (CSBG) Allocation Plan for FFY 2014. My name is Deborah Monahan. I am the Executive Director of the Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. or TVCCA, and Board Vice Chair of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's eleven (11) 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 CSBG. We are especially pleased that the state has based its allocation plan on level funding. As you know, this block grant provides vital operational support for programs that have inadequate administrative funds, especially programs such as energy assistance, safe and stable housing, and child care. These funds help our CAAs provide a comprehensive, customer-focused, integrated services delivery approach for customers; which are needed now more than ever given Connecticut's ongoing struggle to rebuild its economy since the economic recession hit nearly six years ago.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Connecticut ranked 50th—the worst in the nation—in annual economic growth for 2012.<sup>1</sup> In addition to being the only state across the country with negative economic growth last year, this is the second year in a row Connecticut's economy contracted—despite previous estimates that the state would experience an increase in that year.<sup>2</sup> Connecticut's personal income total among all residents hasn't fared any better, growing just 2% in 2012 and placing us 49<sup>th</sup> nationally<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, Connecticut's unemployment rate has remained virtually unchanged over this past year. With one of the highest unemployment rates in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis. *Widespread Economic Growth in 2012*, (June 2013). Available at: [http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp\\_state/gsp\\_newsrelease.htm](http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/regional/gdp_state/gsp_newsrelease.htm)

<sup>2</sup> "Connecticut's Economic Trend Worst in Nation," *Hartford Courant*, 7, June, 2013. Available at: [http://articles.courant.com/2013-06-07/business/hc-connecticut-economy-worst-in-nation-20130606\\_1\\_gdp-growth-economic-growth-connecticut](http://articles.courant.com/2013-06-07/business/hc-connecticut-economy-worst-in-nation-20130606_1_gdp-growth-economic-growth-connecticut)

<sup>3</sup> "CT's Income Growth Second Worst in the Nation," *Hartford Business Journal*, 8 April 2013. Available at: <http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/20130408/PRINTEDITION/304049948/ct-income-growth-second-worst-in-nation>

country at 8.1%<sup>4</sup>, Connecticut ranks 37<sup>th</sup> when compared to the national unemployment rate of 7.3%<sup>5</sup>. And, although Connecticut's job growth is increasing, it is doing so at an alarmingly slow pace. According to the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA), the state still has to recover 51.9%, or 110,400 jobs lost during the recession<sup>6</sup>.

With such glaring, negative economic statistics and essentially no job growth, it comes as no surprise that the Connecticut Community Action Agencies continue to see an increase in request for assistance. As you know, many of your constituents struggle with sustained poverty across the state on a daily basis. During these challenging times and sluggish economic recovery progress that affect our state's most vulnerable residents, CAAs have remained steadfast in providing the necessary programs and services that help Connecticut families get back on their feet.

For the past several years CAFCA has provided testimony on CSBG that discussed assisting our clients using our Automated Benefits Calculator, or "ABC," that was implemented at all agencies nearly three years ago. Available in English and Spanish, ABC is a user-friendly, web-based feature that allows clients to anonymously enter information and find out what state or federal assistance programs they may be eligible for. We talked about our Human Services Infrastructure, or HSI, our customer-focused, integrated service delivery system, as well as our Results Based Accountability (RBA) service tracking and outcome framework called Results-Oriented Management and Accountability, or ROMA, that we crosswalk with the legislature's RBA system (please see attached handout for an RBA report on a number of our programs). We have also demonstrated our strength as a network by discussing our CAAs' rigorous self-assessment process, 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. These points have been made to demonstrate the strength of our network.

Today, we would like to take a different direction to highlight just how critical our services are to communities across Connecticut. Given the current state of our economy, CAAs have witnessed a significant increase in the number of customers seeking assistance and in the level of need among our customers. Overall, more than 400,000 people statewide benefited from CAA services in 2012. 132,575 households avoided crisis with energy assistance, and 2,394 households/individuals moved from temporary to safe, stable housing. Emergency rental/mortgage payments were made to prevent homelessness for 1,917 households, and over 21,800 seniors maintained an independent living situation as a result of support services. These are just a few examples of the type of information you will see throughout our RBA report, and demonstrates the deep impact CAAs have on residents throughout Connecticut.

---

<sup>4</sup> "Unemployment Rate, State by State," *CNN Money*, 19, August, 2013. Available at: <http://money.cnn.com/interactive/economy/state-unemployment-rates/>

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (September 2013). Available at: <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000>

<sup>6</sup> Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA). *State's Job Growth: S-l-o-w-l-y Does it* (July 2013). Available at: [http://gov.cbiam.com/inside\\_the\\_capitol/article/slowly-does-it](http://gov.cbiam.com/inside_the_capitol/article/slowly-does-it)

In addition, CSBG not only gives CAAs the tools to provide high quality services to those facing poverty or needing temporary assistance but also allows agencies to launch innovative programs that benefit their communities in other ways. These include the ACCESS agency's Windham Area Hour Exchange, or "Time Bank," program. This program allows individuals, businesses, and organizations to exchange services using a time-based currency. Exchange members are able to "bank" an hour for every hour of service they provide to someone who needs it, which they are then able to exchange for services they need. Another example is New Opportunities, Inc.'s current project to extract lead, asbestos, petroleum, and radium from the soil and buildings on three of the agencies' properties. The buildings are in final development and planning stages of being repurposed to house hydroponic growing operations fertilized by farmed fish. Additionally, CSBG is helping all CAAs operate as assisters to provide health care enrollment assistance to uninsured Connecticut residents

As you can see, it is clear that the State's investment in CAAs has never been more important to those families directly affected by Connecticut's still-troubled economy. However, it is equally as important to note that this investment is in fact an essential step toward stabilizing the economy for *all* of Connecticut's residents.

I would like to thank Commissioner Bremby and our State CSBG Administrators, as well as the General Assembly—especially the committees represented here today—for understanding the importance of supporting the important work our state's Community Action Agencies do on a daily basis for Connecticut's families. 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 am happy to take any questions you may have.

(Enclosure: RBA report)

# Community Action Community Services Block Grant

*Results That Matter*





## Community Services Block Grant

- 1981: Creation of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) 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 363,395 people statewide benefited from CAA services last year.
- Over 101,000 barriers to initial or continuous employment were reduced or eliminated.

### How well did we do it?

- CAAs recruited volunteers to help reduce poverty over 533,028 **hours donated = 399 FTEs=\$22.4 million**
- Over **\$11.3 million was returned** to our state's economy with volunteer tax preparation assistance in 2011.
- CAAs engaged over 1,200 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?

- More than 3,900 people went to work.
- Over 6,300 pre-school aged children are better prepared to start school.
- Over 2,100 youth did better in school – socially, emotionally, athletically and academically.
- Over 7,000 people live in safe and affordable housing.
- Over 27,600 people received needed food from our food pantries.
- Over 21,400 senior citizens maintain an active, independent life style.



## EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

### How much did we do?

- Over **101,000 barriers to employment** were reduced or eliminated.
- 3,921 people obtained employment or self-employment.
- **Over 40,000 people learned skills and competencies** required for employment.
- 652 youth obtained job skills.

### How well did we do it?

- Over 3,000 people increased their earned income and/or benefits from the previous year.

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 3,900 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.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Economic Impact of Recession-Induced Child Poverty" First Focus. December, 2008



## FINANCIAL LITERACY & ASSET DEVELOPMENT

### How much did we do?

- 268 people opened savings accounts and **accumulated \$139,495 in savings.**
- 27 people purchased homes, 3 people funded education and 2 capitalized small businesses and 6 purchased other assets such as vehicles through IDA Programs.
- Over 4,350 tax returns were filed free of charge.
- Over 3,600 people learned how to better manage their income.
- 3,628 operated within an established budget for at least 90 days.

### How well did we do it?

- For every dollar of funding invested in 2012 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Programs, **\$92 was returned to the community.**
- Volunteers donated over 6,400 saving over \$1.1 million in tax preparation fees.

### Is anyone better off?

- Families with assets are better able to weather economic storms.
- ***In 2012 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>



## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

### How much did we do?

- Over 6,900 children participated in preschool activities that develop school readiness skills.
- 6,183 children obtained immunizations, medical and dental care.

### How well did we do it?

- 6,956 children participated in preschool activities and demonstrated improvement in school readiness skills.
- ***For every dollar invested, \$18.89 was saved in lifelong gains.<sup>3</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 6,900 children are better prepared to start and succeed in school.
- Almost 6,200 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.



## HOUSING & SHELTER

### How much did we do?

- Over **4,700 people obtained/or maintained safe and affordable housing.**
- More than 2,400 people received emergency shelter.
- Emergency rental/mortgage payments prevented 2,177 individuals from becoming homeless.
- **Nearly 4,000 households improved home safety through lead removal and other services.**

### How well did we do it?

- Over 2,600 households avoided eviction through mediation.
- Over 5,700 housing units in the community were preserved or improved through weatherization or rehabilitation achieved by Community Action activity or advocacy.

### 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 100,400 households avoided crises with energy assistance.
- Over 5,700 homes were weatherized, decreasing energy cost and use.
- Over 19,700 people resolved problems with fuel vendors with agency assistance.
- Over 59,400 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>4</sup>
- **Programs costing \$8.5 million in 2009 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.

<sup>4</sup> Energy Efficiency, Investing in CT's Future, CT Energy Conservation Management Board Report to the Legislature, March 2007.



## SENIOR SUPPORT SERVICES

### How much did we do?

- Over **21,400 seniors remained active in their communities by participating in community programs.**
- Over 13,700 seniors maintained independent living through support services including home meal delivery, home health or homemaker services.
- Over 4,900 seniors citizens avoided institutionalization through support services.

### How well did we do it?

- Over **4,900 senior citizens avoided institutionalization, saving about \$427 million in nursing home costs in 2011.**<sup>5</sup>

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 22,500 senior citizens maintain an active, independent life-style.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the National average per diem nursing home rate of \$239, per The Metlife Market Survey of Nursing Home, Assisted Living, Adult Day Services and Home Care Costs, 2011 survey, [www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com)



# YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

## How much did we do?

- 652 youth obtained job skills.
- 2,457 youth improved social/emotional development.
- 532 youth avoided at-risk behavior for at least 3 months.
- 576 youth reduced involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Over 2,183 youth increased their academic, athletic or social skills through participating in after-school programs.
- 485 fathers participated in classes and activities to strengthen their parenting skills.

## How well did we do it?

- ***Potential ROI of \$10.51 for every dollar spent on a sustained investment to develop youth into economically and socially viable adults.<sup>6</sup>***
- 933 children at-risk of DCF placement remained with family because of improved family functioning.

## Is anyone better off?

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



## NUTRITION SERVICES

### How much did we do?

- Over **80,800 people received emergency or supplemental food from our food pantries.**
- Over 8,800 seniors participated in congregate meal programs or receive home-delivered meals.
- 8,900 children benefited from congregate meals.
- 10,864 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>7</sup>**

### Is anyone better off?

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

7 Phisic Ventures, LLC, Trust for America's Health: "Investment in Disease Prevention Could Save America More Than \$16 Billion in Five Years" July 17, 2008



## HEALTH & COUNSELING SERVICES

### How much did we do?

- Over 9,671 people obtained access to needed health care.
- Over 3,400 youth improved physical health and development.
- 614 youth learned how to avoid at-risk behavior.
- Over 644 youth reduced involvement with the criminal justice system.

### How well did we do it?

- **86% (2,266 of 2,626) remained drug and alcohol free for 6 months.**
- 3,993 participants improved their family functioning and/or behavior because of counseling.
- 5,035 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 \$265 million** of federal funding into CT to fight the causes and effects of poverty in 2012.
- In 2012, our network reported 1,628 partnerships:
  - 1,104 partnerships to improve and coordinate service.
  - 789 partnerships to improve community planning (*a 57% increase from 2011*).
  - 1,039 partnerships to achieve improved outcomes (*a 52% increase from 2011*).
- Over 533,000 volunteer hours were donated to CT CAA's in 2012.

### How well did we do it?

- CT CAAs leverage funding sources & community volunteers to fight poverty efficiently.
- ***For every \$1 of CSBG, the CT CAA Network leveraged \$10.24 from state, local, and private resources, including the value of volunteer hours.***
- 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 350,000 low-income CT residents from 146,377 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

