



**September 28, 2015 Public Hearing Testimony before the  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Appropriations, Human Services, and Public Health Committees**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT ALLOCATION PLAN FFY 2016**

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 2016. My name is Dr. James Gatling. I am the President/CEO of New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI) and Chair of the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). CAFCA is the state association for Connecticut's Community Action Agencies (CAAs), which are the state and federal designated anti-poverty agencies that serve every one of Connecticut's 169 cities and towns.

We are pleased to be here to support Commissioner Bremby and the Department of Social Services' FFY 2016 allocation plan for CSBG, and thank them for basing this amount on level FFY 2015. As you know, this block grant provides our CAA network with essential, operational support for many vital human needs programs and services that have inadequate administrative funds such as energy assistance, safe and stable housing, and child care. These funds help our agencies provide a comprehensive, customer-focused, multigenerational, integrated service delivery system for our customers. This holistic approach of 'no wrong door'—meaning clients are accepted at any contact point within an agency and guided through a complex service system—helps to alleviate the cause and conditions of poverty, and put them on a path to sustained economic self-sufficiency.

As we all know, Connecticut has been slow to recover from the economic recession that hit seven years ago. Our CAAs continue to see persistent demand for their services in communities across the state, and they expect this trend to persist in the upcoming year—especially in light of a major shift in the state's economic outlook. According to a report by the Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA), Connecticut's moderate economic growth over the past four years recently came to an abrupt halt. New Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) revised data for this year reported the state's growth at a mere 0.6% for 2014—one of the worst both regionally and nationally. Prior to this report, CCEA forecasted strong job creation and output growth in 2015 and 2016; however, they now predict job creation to stall, and likely decline, across the

Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Commerce Department also reported that the state's personal income growth failed to increase as much as it did last year, putting Connecticut 39<sup>th</sup> against other states for its meager 3% change from 2013-2014<sup>2</sup>. Connecticut's income inequality is also growing at an alarming rate, and now ranks the 48<sup>th</sup> worst in the nation<sup>3</sup>. A report issued by the Economic Analysis and Research Network (EARN) earlier this year that looked at the change in income inequality by state from 1917 to 2012 found that Connecticut had the largest income gap between the top 1% of taxpayers and the bottom 99%. The top 1 percent saw incomes grow by 35% between 2009 and 2012, and the bottom 99% saw average real income growth decline by 5.4%<sup>4</sup>. This trajectory does not bode well for the state's already shrinking middle class<sup>5</sup>, and for those individuals and families struggling to get by.

Other recent statistics tell us that making sure Connecticut's most at-risk and vulnerable populations have access to the programs and services they need has never been more critical. According to the most recent U.S. Census poverty data estimates, the poverty rate in Connecticut in 2014 was 10.8 percent<sup>6</sup>, up from 9.4 percent in 2009 when the recession ended<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, for those classified as the working poor, a job doesn't even offer complete protection from falling into poverty. The rate of increase among the working poor in Connecticut was faster during the recession than in almost any other state in the country. Between 2007 and 2011, it was one of only ten states—and the only one in the Northeast—where the share of low-income working families increased by five percentage points or more<sup>8</sup>.

For the children of families struggling to get by, the outlook is even worse, especially when it comes to their academic future. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison recently found that the parts of the brain tied to academic performance are 8% to 10% smaller for children who grow up in severe poverty<sup>9</sup>. With one in seven children, or 14.3%, living in poverty in Connecticut 2013—a considerable increase from a decade earlier when it was 10.5%<sup>10</sup>, and unchanged in 2014<sup>11</sup>—our continued investment in our state's next generation is more important now than it has ever been.

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<sup>1</sup> "Flat Lining: Connecticut's Disappearing Economic Growth," Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis, June 2015. Available at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.documentcloud.org/documents/2110770/ccca-outlook-june-2015-draft.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> AP, "Connecticut lags much of the US in personal income growth," March 25, 2015, <http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Connecticut-lags-much-of-the-US-in-personal-6158476.php>

<sup>3</sup> Center for American Progress, *Half in Ten Report: Connecticut*, 2014. Available at: <http://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/connecticut-2014-report/>

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Busmeyer, "Report: Connecticut Has Largest Income Gap Between Top 1 Percent And The Other 99 Percent," Hartford Courant, February 9, 2015, <http://www.courant.com/data-desk/hc-report-connecticut-income-gap-highest-in-the-nation-20150206-htm1story.html>

<sup>5</sup> PEW Charitable Trust, "The Shrinking Middle Class, Mapped State by State," March 2015. Available at: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2015/3/19/the-shrinking-middle-class-mapped-state-by-state>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census, 2014 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Available at: [http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_14\\_1YR\\_CPO3&prodType=table](http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_14_1YR_CPO3&prodType=table)

<sup>7</sup> Coalition on Human Needs and CT Association for Human Services, "New Census Data Confirm too Many Connecticut's Are Being Left Behind," September 2014, Available at: <http://cahs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/New-Census-Data-Too-Many-Connecticuters-Left-Behind.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, Hugh, "Working Poor Numbers Hardly Down Since Recession," August 2015. Available at: <http://www.ctpost.com/business/article/Working-poor-numbers-hardly-down-since-recession-6435116.php>

<sup>9</sup> Diana Kwon, "Poverty Disturbs Brain Development and Academic Performance," Scientific American, July 2015. Available at: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/poverty-disturbs-children-s-brain-development-and-academic-performance/>

<sup>10</sup> Commission on Children, *Child Poverty in Connecticut: 2005*, 2005. Available at: [https://www.cga.ct.gov/coc/PDFs/poverty/2005\\_poverty\\_report.pdf](https://www.cga.ct.gov/coc/PDFs/poverty/2005_poverty_report.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Cara Rosner, "Insurance coverage increases, but poverty persists," September 2015. Available at: [http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/insurance\\_coverage\\_increases\\_but\\_child\\_poverty\\_persists/](http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/archives/entry/insurance_coverage_increases_but_child_poverty_persists/)

Despite the state of economy, CAAs remain committed to providing the essential basic human needs programs and services that continue to help Connecticut individuals and families get back on their feet year after year. As most of you know, many of your constituents in need rely on the services they receive from our agencies each and every day. You saw them come out in droves this past legislative session—young adults, families, single parents, and seniors—to advocate for and support our network’s critical human service programs that help them build better lives and a stable financial future. Last year, more than 347,000 people benefited from CAA services statewide. Over 99,000 households avoided crisis with energy assistance, and more than 8,200 people obtained and/or maintained safe and affordable housing. Emergency rental/mortgage payments were made to prevent homelessness for more than 1,700 individuals, and over 7,600 seniors maintained independent living through support services including home meal delivery, home health or homemaker services. These are just a few examples of the type of information you will see throughout our Results Based Accountability (RBA) report (attached). These startling figures truly demonstrate the deep impact CAAs have on low-income individuals and families trying to make ends meet throughout the state.

It is also important to note that our network’s record of proven empowerment and revitalization comes from its reporting transparency and accountability. Community Action Agencies in all states are required to employ a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework called Results-Oriented Management and Accountability, or ROMA. This data reporting method allows agencies to efficiently and effectively measure meaningful client, agency, and community outcomes and results for the purposes of reporting to stakeholders and pursuing continuous improvement in our administration and coordination of service delivery. Guided by ROMA, all CAA programs seek to achieve measurable outcomes that alleviate poverty. As you can see from the attached RBA report, our network has cross-walked ROMA performance metrics with the legislature’s preferred RBA reporting framework so that it is more readily accessible for you to understand in your format.

Additionally, our strength as a network comes from 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. And, starting in FY 2016, all CAAs will also have to adhere to and report on new federal organizational standards in the areas of: consumer input and involvement, community engagement and assessment, organizational leadership, board governance, strategic planning, operations and accountability, human resource management, financial operations and oversight, and data and analysis. These standards will further enhance our agencies’ ability to serve Connecticut’s most vulnerable population in the best way possible.

For over 50 years, community action has been a proven, driving force in Connecticut’s economy. Our programs and services keep food on the table for children and families, provide unemployed persons with an opportunity to participate in job training, give parents the ability to work and provide for their family by providing child care, and allow seniors to remain independent. All of these efforts take the burden off of Connecticut, saving the state and taxpayers more money in the long run.

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 truly understanding the importance of supporting the vital work our state’s Community Action Agencies do on a daily basis for Connecticut’s most vulnerable residents. As a network we remain deeply committed to empowering low-income people and improving the communities in which they live, and we know that our help is needed now more than it has ever have been.

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?

- More than 347,400 people statewide benefited from CAA services last year.
- 50,098 barriers to initial or continuous employment were reduced or eliminated.

### How well did we do it?

- Volunteers donated **over 571,300 hours** to the state's CAAs to help reduce poverty.
- Over **\$11.7 million was returned** to our state's economy with volunteer tax preparation assistance in 2013.
- CAAs engaged over 1,290 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 5,700 people went to work.
- Over 5,600 pre-school aged children are better prepared to start school.
- Over 1,500 youth did better in school – socially, emotionally, athletically, and academically.
- Over 5,900 people live in safe and affordable housing.
- Nearly 38,000 people received needed food from our food pantries.
- Over 43,500 senior citizens maintain an active, independent lifestyle.



## EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

### How much did we do?

- **50,098 barriers to employment** were reduced or eliminated.
- 5,719 people obtained employment or self-employment.
- **12,728 people learned skills and competencies** required for employment.
- 812 youth obtained job skills.

### How well did we do it?

- Over 5,200 people increased their earned income and/or benefits from the previous year.

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 5,700 adults moved closer to self-sufficiency by going to work.
- Almost 1,500 people completed their GED or post-secondary education in order to maintain their employment or increase their earnings from income.
- 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?

- 102 people opened savings accounts or an Individual Development Account (IDA) and **accumulated \$34,379 in savings.**
- 11 people purchased homes, 29 people funded education, and 16 purchased other assets such as vehicles through the IDA Program.
- Over 6,400 tax returns were filed free of charge.
- 2,267 people operated within an established budget for at least 90 days.
- 985 individuals enrolled in telephone lifeline and/or received energy discounts and saved \$48,960.

### How well did we do it?

- For every dollar of funding invested in 2014 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Programs, **\$92 was returned to the community.**
- Volunteers donated over 10,300 hours, saving over \$1.5 million in tax preparation fees.

### Is anyone better off?

- Families with assets are better able to weather economic storms.
- **In 2014 over \$7.1 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 5,400 children participated in preschool activities that develop school readiness skills.
- 5,496 children obtained immunizations, medical and dental care.

### How well did we do it?

- 5,491 children participated in preschool activities and demonstrated improvement in school readiness skills.
- *In 2013, research noted that every dollar invested in early childhood programs returns 7%-10%, per child, per year, for the life of the child through productivity and costs.<sup>3</sup>*

### Is anyone better off?

- Nearly 4,000 children are better prepared to start and succeed in school.
- Over 5,400 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
  - lower long term costs for law enforcement, welfare, health care and special education, etc.

<sup>3</sup> <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/education/279397-to-grow-the-economy-invest-in-early-childhood-education>.



## HOUSING & SHELTER

### How much did we do?

- **Over 8,200 people obtained/or maintained safe and affordable housing.**
- More than 2,300 people received emergency shelter.
- Emergency rental/mortgage payments prevented 1,758 individuals from becoming homeless.
- **Nearly 4,600 households improved home safety through lead removal and other services.**
- **331 safe and affordable housing units were created in the community.**
- **Over 3,400 safe and affordable housing units were preserved or improved through construction, weatherization, or rehabilitation.**

### How well did we do it?

- Over 4,400 households avoided eviction through mediation.
- Over 4,700 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, development, and academic performance.



## ENERGY ASSISTANCE & WEATHERIZATION

### How much did we do?

- Over 100,000 households avoided crises with energy assistance.
- Over 5,200 individuals had a more stable home environment, avoided health-related issues, and decreased energy cost and use through weatherization assistance.
- Over 39,000 people were provided with energy conservation information.

### How well did we do it?

- For every dollar invested, \$2.97 was saved over the lifetime of the measure.<sup>4</sup>

### 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. Over \$70M was distributed to our vendors and utilities in communities throughout the state.

<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 **43,500 seniors** remained active in their communities by participating in community programs.
- Over 7,080 seniors maintained independent living through support services including home meal delivery, home health or homemaker services.

### How well did we do it?

- Over **7,000 senior citizens** avoided institutionalization, saving about \$1 billion in nursing home costs in 2014.<sup>5</sup>
- Over 8,100 senior citizens remained healthy and active by attending congregate meal sites.

### Is anyone better off?

- Over 43,500 senior citizens maintain an active, independent lifestyle.

<sup>5</sup> Based on the Connecticut average per diem nursing home rate of \$400, per Seniorhomes.com/s/Connecticut/nursing-homes/#costs



## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

### How much did we do?

- 812 youth obtained job skills.
- 2,040 youth improved social/emotional development.
- 436 youth avoided at-risk behavior for at least 3 months.
- 561 youth reduced involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Over 1,500 youth increased their academic, athletic or social skills through participating in after-school programs.
- 360 fathers participated in classes and activities to strengthen their parenting skills.

### How well did we do it?

- ***For every dollar invested in early childhood and youth development, an average of \$16 in benefits is returned to the economy.***<sup>6</sup>
- 299 at-risk children and youth of DCF placement remained with family because of improved family functioning.
- 504 youth received supportive services to build self-sufficiency and independent living skills.

### 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.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Investing\\_in\\_Children\\_19June2012\\_e-version\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Investing_in_Children_19June2012_e-version_FINAL.pdf) "A Brief Review of the Social and Economic Returns to Investing in Children." UNICEF, Policy Advisory Unit, June 2012.



## NUTRITION SERVICES

### How much did we do?

- Over **85,000 people** received emergency or supplemental food from our food pantries.
- Over 12,500 seniors participated in congregate meal programs or receive home-delivered meals.
- Over 14,000 children and youth benefited from congregate meals.
- Over 7,200 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, improve 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.

<sup>7</sup> Physic 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 8,700 people obtained access to needed health care.
- Over 2,600 youth improved physical health and development.
- 436 youth learned how to avoid at-risk behavior.
- Over 560 youth reduced involvement with the criminal justice system.

### How well did we do it?

- 4,515 participants improved their family functioning and/or behavior because of counseling.
- 7,485 parents/caregivers improved family functioning as a result of classes or supportive services.

### Is anyone better off?

- Thousands of low-income people statewide lived healthier lives because of the access to health care 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 \$154 million** of federal funding into CT to fight the causes and effects of poverty in 2014.
- In 2014, our network reported 2,057 partnerships:
  - 1,334 partnerships to improve and coordinate service.
  - 964 partnerships to improve community planning.
  - 1,397 partnerships to achieve improved outcomes.
- Over 571,300 volunteer hours were donated to CT CAA's in 2014.

### How well did we do it?

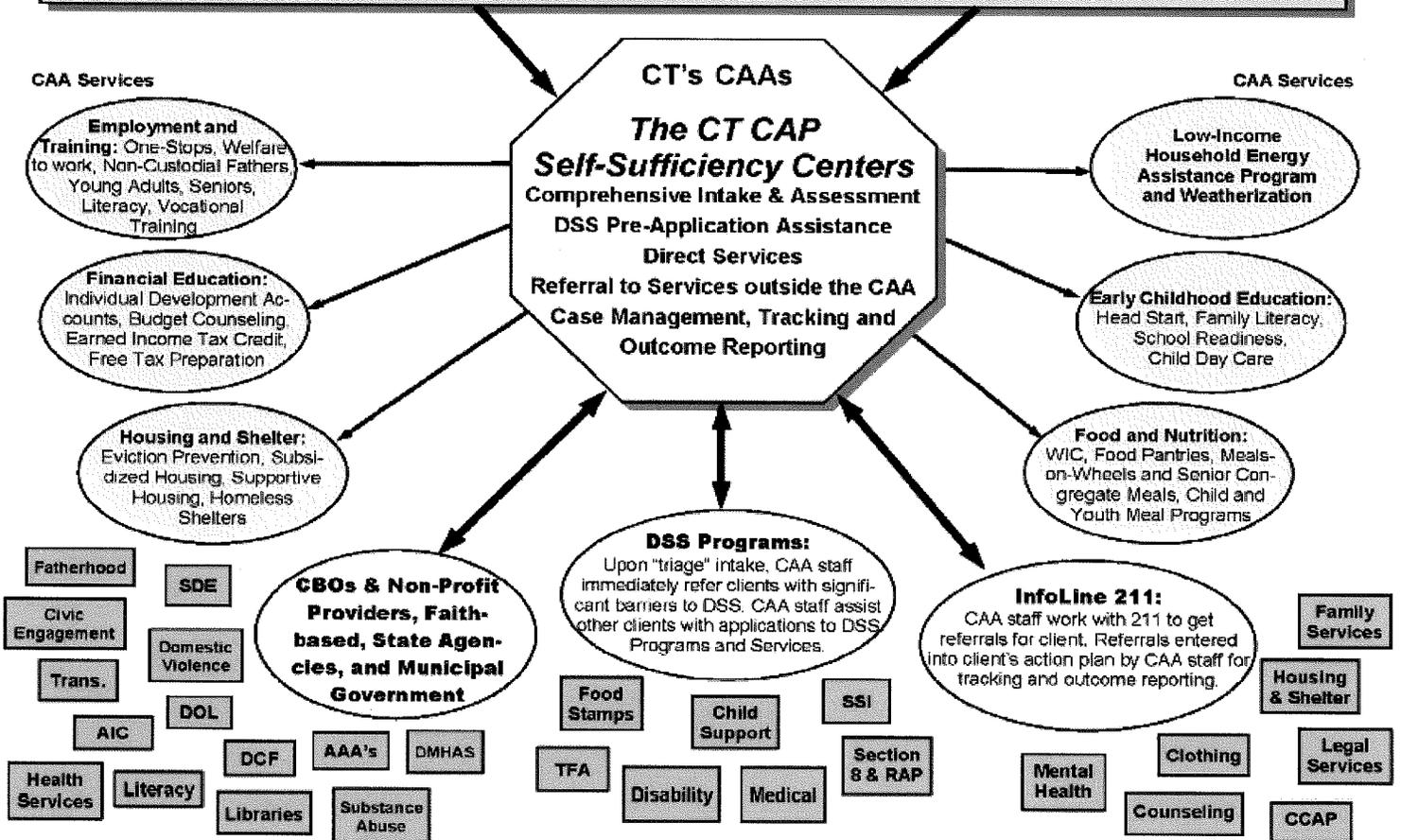
- CT CAAs leverage funding sources & community volunteers to fight poverty efficiently.
- **For every \$1 of CSBG, the CT CAA Network leveraged \$47.84 from federal, state, local, and private resources, including the value of volunteer hours.**
- Using CSBG/HSI funds, CAA's form a statewide network to 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 347,400 low-income CT residents from 138,363 families are working towards improved self-sufficiency.
- All CT residents benefit from taxpayer dollars that are efficiently and well spent.

# Connecticut Community Action Agencies

## Low-Income Individuals and Families Walk-ins and Referrals from DSS, InfoLine 211, and others



# Connecticut's Community Action Agencies

- Action for Bridgeport Community Development, Inc. (ABCD) [www.abcd.org](http://www.abcd.org)
- Access Community Action Agency (Access) [www.accessagency.org](http://www.accessagency.org)
- Bristol Community Organization, Inc. (BCO) [www.bcoct.org](http://www.bcoct.org)
- Community Action Agency of New Haven, Inc. (CAANH) [www.caanh.net](http://www.caanh.net)
- Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut, Inc. (CAAWC) [www.caawc.org](http://www.caawc.org)
- Community Renewal Team, Inc. (CRT) [www.crtct.org](http://www.crtct.org)
- Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc. (HRA) [www.hranbct.org](http://www.hranbct.org)
- New Opportunities, Inc. (NOI) [www.newoppinc.org](http://www.newoppinc.org)
- TEAM, Inc. (TEAM) [www.teaminc.org](http://www.teaminc.org)
- Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA) [www.tvcca.org](http://www.tvcca.org)