

Connecticut Association for Community Action 2007-2010 Strategic Plan

Mission Statement:

The Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) is a network of community action agencies that builds communities, promotes public policy and develops leaders to end poverty in Connecticut.

The Case for Change:

The Conditions of Children in Poverty in Connecticut

- 95,789 children live below the federal poverty line in Connecticut.¹ This is 11% of all children in the state and an increase from 9.8 percent rate in 2002.
- 34,366 children aged 0 to 5 (14%) live below the federal poverty line in Connecticut.²
- 24% of Connecticut's children live in households with income at or below 200% of federal poverty level, a level below which families are unable to meet their basic needs on a consistent basis.
- Latino children are seven times more likely to live in poverty than white, non-Hispanic children. African American children are six times more likely to live in poverty.

While the overall child poverty rate is lower in Connecticut than most states, Connecticut also has some of the highest concentrations of poverty in the nation. Across the state, Connecticut's urban cities have the largest percentage of poor and low-income children. Hartford, for instance, has the second largest child poverty rate in the country for a city its size.

The negative impacts on children in poverty are devastating. Poor children are much more likely than other children to:

- Suffer from poor health
- Achieve at low levels in school
- Be involved in drugs and crime
- Qualify for employment that pays below a living wage
- Give birth in their teen years
- Live a life of limited opportunity

Connecticut's Response to This Urgent Situation

Connecticut's public policy response to this urgent reality has been bold and imaginative, but is unlikely to succeed without additional commitments from the state's communities. The Child Policy Council Plan to reduce child poverty by 50% within ten years is a laudable public policy that sets Connecticut in the forefront of the nation. The plan's vision, strategies and initiatives, however, fail to give communities a role in partnering with state government in this critically important transformational change.

All sectors in Connecticut must be engaged if we are to succeed in reducing child poverty by 50% within ten years. Business, the faith community, education, social services, the philanthropic community, civic groups and other stakeholder groups will have to commit to the child poverty agenda in order for it to have the resources,

¹ National Center on Child Poverty, Demographics of Poor Children Report, 2005.

² Ibid.

leadership and innovation required for success. Low income citizens have not yet been invited to participate in the process of reducing child poverty and must be included. The current plan does not yet clearly invite communities and these stakeholder groups to partner with the state in this important social agenda. As a result, the child poverty agenda is not well known by the citizens of the state. Unless we change its current low state profile, the child poverty agenda is unlikely to succeed.

CAFCA's Response to the Child Poverty Agenda

The Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) has been building the capacity of the state's communities to address poverty in several important ways in recent years:

1. Providing training and technical assistance to the 12 Community Action Agencies across the state
2. Developing leadership
3. Educating public policy makers on the conditions of poverty and the policy changes that help low-income citizens to move toward self-sufficiency
4. Initiating and supporting innovative anti-poverty strategies

But, until 2005, CAFCA had not clearly targeted its work on ending poverty or reducing it substantially. As a result, CAFCA—as a network of community-based agencies—has not realized its full potential as a leader and innovator.

This strategic plan aims to position CAFCA as a key leader of the Connecticut child poverty reduction agenda.

Our Vision

We are powerful conveners of communities who have committed to reduce child poverty by 50 percent by 2014. We have engaged all sectors of our communities, including low income citizens, to play a role in addressing child poverty. CAFCA's Leadership Development Institute has graduated hundreds of leaders who are successfully working to reduce child poverty. CAFCA's annual conference attracts more than 1,000 leaders, child advocates and other stakeholders from all sectors of the state who are developing high impact strategies to end poverty. CAFCA effectively uses data to document what is working to reduce child poverty and inform innovative public policy. CAFCA's public information and education initiatives have made the child poverty agenda widely-known and supported throughout the state. CAFCA is a recognized leader for providing communities, families and individuals with the skills and opportunities required for economic success and child well-being. Connecticut has become a national model for successfully reducing child poverty, and CAFCA is an important national resource in helping to disseminate distinctive new knowledge.

Our Strategies

1. Create and influence public policy to support and execute the child poverty prevention and reduction agenda to reduce child poverty in CT by 50% by 2014.
2. Develop a cadre of leaders from all sectors of CT to address the child poverty prevention and reduction agenda.
3. Strengthen CT community action agencies' capacity to reduce child poverty in their communities.