



CT Association for Community Action
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COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT:

Providing a Cost-Efficient and Cost-Effective Human Service Delivery System

The elimination of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the “core” funding for Community Action Agencies (CAAs), will seriously limit our ability to help Connecticut’s low-income families make progress toward self-sufficiency. CAAs are effective and accountable agencies because of the support of CSBG.

Connecticut’s twelve Community Action Agencies provide a wide variety of services in all of our 169 cities and towns. CAAs provide cost-efficient and cost-effective services to Connecticut’s poor and low-income working individuals and families. With limited resources available, it is more important than ever that government support cost-effective service delivery that helps people move toward self-sufficiency, stay out of poverty and prevent more costly expenditures in the future.

CAAs provide coordinated services using funding from federal and state agencies. These services include employment and training, early childhood services such as child care, school readiness and Head Start, energy assistance and weatherization, Individual Development Accounts and financial counseling, eviction prevention, transitional housing and shelters, food pantries and other emergency services, alternative to incarceration, AIDS and substance abuse prevention, and many others.

Using Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds, CAAs integrate the funding from these different areas (federal, state, local and private funding) into comprehensive programs for our clients. CAAs respond effectively to diverse local and regional needs by planning and delivering services with the direct involvement of our communities’ leaders and residents through municipal, private sector and low-income representation on each agency’s Board of Directors.

The Impact of CSBG Funds in the 1st Congressional District

- **In 2003, BCO, CRT, and New Opportunities leveraged an additional \$85.3 million for needed anti-poverty programs in the cities and towns of the 1st Congressional District.** These agencies received \$3 million in CSBG funds (**leveraging \$28.43 for every \$1 of CSBG**), which enabled them to bring additional federal, state and private dollars for anti-poverty programs. Statewide, CT CAAs brought in over \$186 million in additional dollars in 2003. **CSBG funds are a solid investment of federal resources in our human service delivery system.**
- **Connecticut Community Action Network is the linchpin of the CT Human Service Infrastructure.** Working in partnership with the **Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS)** and Connecticut’s statewide information and referral system, **211 Infoline**, **CT CAAs** are using information technology to create an automated, statewide, “one-stop” approach to human services delivery, called the Human Services Infrastructure (HSI). This system is a more efficient way of doing business and is more accountable.

- **CSBG funds are critical for us to continue to provide this comprehensive human service delivery system in our local communities.** In 2003, CT CAAs served over 220,000 clients in a variety of services. Through referrals, direct services, and comprehensive case-management, families gain access to services that help them move towards self-sufficiency. **BCO, CRT, and New Opportunities served over 124,115 low-income individuals in their communities.**
- **CSBG supports implementation of Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA),** which is used to measure the impact of services to clients and communities, break down “program silos,” and improve management and accountability.
- **BCO, CRT, and New Opportunities mobilized 544,755 volunteer hours in their communities, the equivalent of 299 full-time employees.** Volunteers donated their time and energy to help their communities. Examples of volunteer in our agencies includes the Boards of Directors, Head Start Policy Councils, Head Start and Child Day Care classrooms, senior services, neighborhood services, and advocacy services. In 2003, **over 853,000 volunteer hours** were donated to programs operated by Connecticut CAAs, equivalent of 468 FTEs.
- **Using CSBG funds, CAAs integrate funding at the local level in innovative ways that meets local needs.** We create partnerships with other community-based providers, the faith community, businesses, and state and local government that leverage in-kind resources, improve program efficiency, coordinate service delivery, and improve community planning.
- **Below is a sample of innovative programs in the 1st Congressional District that would potentially close if CSBG funds were eliminated:**
 - Individual Development Accounts: BCO, CRT, and New Opportunities operate IDA programs . IDAs are matched savings programs that help low-income people save money to purchase their first home, attend college or capitalize a small business. The federal IDA program provides no funds for program operations, yet because of CSBG, our agencies can integrate IDA services into our existing programs . Currently, CT CAAs are working with 507 IDA participants. Without CSBG funding, we would not be able to bring this innovative program to Connecticut or operate it at such a large scale.
 - Bristol Continuum of Care: BCO, utilizing CSBG funds, is a partner in the Bristol Continuum of Care, which seeks to eliminate and/or alleviate the problem of homelessness in the Greater Bristol area. Over 250 homeless live in the Greater Bristol Area. BCO staff are directly involved with the Continuum of Care, including the Executive Director, Planner, the IDA Program Director, and the Social Services Program Director. In the greater Bristol area, there were 57 clients who moved from being homeless into a status of permanent housing.
 - CRT - Volunteer Income Tax Assistance: VITA provides free tax preparation and e-file services to the low to moderate-income people. CSBG funds support the program with staffing, planning, office materials, coordination of community outreach, volunteer training sessions, and hosting six sites in Hartford. In 2003 CRT filed 619 returns that brought over \$814,000 back into the community. In 2004, 1,297 returns were filed with over \$2 million in refunds and tax credits. This program would not be possible without CSBG.
 - CRT’s East Hartford Juvenile Justice Center secured United Way funding to provide drug and alcohol counseling to youth (ages 10 to 16) by leveraging CSBG funds. The EHJJC is currently the only JJC in the state that provides this valuable service. A state-sponsored study had recently found the lack of drug and alcohol counseling to youth to constitute a major gap in services.
 - New Opportunities - HUD811 Project: As a result of CSBG funded planning and development, New Opportunities, Inc. successfully closed on a HUD811 project. The project involved the acquisition of 4 pieces of property. When completed, the program will provide an independent living facility for persons who have a physical, mental or emotional disability that is classified as severe according to the U.S. Department of

Housing and Urban Development definition. All persons who reside in the facility will have case management services already provided for them either through a state agency or a private organization.

- New Opportunities Family Preservation/Reunification Program: The Family Preservation/Reunification Program's purpose is to prevent the continuous abuse of children, who reside with their biological or foster families within the Northwest Region of Connecticut. CSBG funding supports program administration and the coordination of other services for these families, such as financial support for outstanding utilities bills, purchasing emergency fuel, eviction prevention, and for educational support services. The ultimate goal of the project is to avert placement among case families and 90% of families complete the program successfully.

These are just a sampling of the many effective programs that CSBG funds support.

The true value of Community Action and the Community Services Block Grant is that it brings about change at the state level, the local level, as well as with the individuals and families served. With CSBG as our foundation, CAAs are able to build strong communities, healthy families and maintain flexible agencies with the capacity to respond to local needs. The CT CAAs look forward to working with Congress in continuing to address the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

A Sampling of Reported Outcomes by Connecticut CAAs in 2003

- Over **357 partnerships** to coordinate service delivery, streamline administration, improve community planning or to achieve specific family outcomes.
- **98,808** families/households had their emergency needs, such as food, shelter, or home heating utility payments, reduced or eliminated.
- **25,686** families/households obtained access to additional needed services.
- **7,503 people** eliminated or reduced barriers to employment and self-sufficiency by receiving job training, childcare and other employment support services.
- **5,665 people** obtained employment or self-employment.
- **1,122 people** demonstrated increased ability to manage income to achieve self-sufficiency, including increased financial literacy, opening IDA and savings accounts, and purchasing assets, such as a home, attending college, or starting a business.
- **1,615 individuals** received free tax preparation services and increased their total household resources.
- Over **\$2.6 million** in federal income tax refunds (including Earned Income and Child Tax Credits) came into low-income communities, through free tax preparation services at CAAs.
- **6,191 children** ages 0-5 attended quality pre-school programs improving school readiness skills.
- **5,402 adults** demonstrated increased skills and were strengthened through counseling, classes and other support services.
- **9,546 people** obtained, maintained or improved their housing arrangements.
- **31,071 people** improved or maintained their nutrition through congregate meals, meals-on-wheels, child care food programs, food pantries, and other nutrition programs.
- **10,103 seniors** maintained active, independent living through volunteering, senior employment, meals, homemaker and other services.