



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 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District

- **In 2003, CAANH, CRT, and TEAM leveraged an additional \$65.4 million for needed anti-poverty programs in the cities and towns of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District.** These agencies received \$3 million in CSBG funds (**leveraging \$21.80 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. **CAANH, CRT, and TEAM served over 92,831 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.
- **CAANH, CRT, and TEAM mobilized 507,667 volunteer hours in their communities, the equivalent of 278 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District that would potentially close if CSBG funds were eliminated:**
  - Individual Development Accounts: CAANH, CRT, and TEAM 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.
  - Volunteer Income Tax Assistance: CAANH and CRT operate VITA sites and provide 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 sites in New Haven and Middletown. In 2003 CAANH and CRT filed 819 returns that brought over \$1 million back into the community. In 2004, 1,798 returns were filed with over \$2.4 million in refunds and tax credits. This program would not be possible without CSBG.
  - CAANH - The “Manage your Future” youth program was designed to combine the basics of career development, life skills, and financial literacy. Youth received classroom training and job coaching towards a concrete goal that encouraged a productive work life and a bright future. Each student received a stipend to work 26 hours, attend weekly classroom sessions, and participate in a guided savings program. CSBG funds were important in achieving the outcome because it allowed a permanent staff member to oversee the entire program.
  - TEAM - the Explore Youth Program worked with 25 youth over the past report year. The program targets youth at risk of dropping out of high school and in need of family intervention. As a result of program activities which included on to one case management with the client, collaboration with the school counselors and tutorial sessions, 24 of the 25 or 96% of the youth that participated in the Explore program improved their academic skills, remained in school and graduated to the next grade level. Community businesses partnered with TEAM to provide at-risk youth with mentoring, career exposure and job training through an in-ternship component in the Explore Youth Program. Community business partners provided in-kind contributions of 1,440 hours at approximately \$15.00 per hour totaling \$21,600.00 in-kind to support these youth. 12 of the 25 or 48% of at-risk youth were

successful in obtaining job skills through the completion of the internship component of the program. This program was possible due to the coordination and linkages provided through CSBG funding.

- CRT's Energy Assistance Program helped more than 55,000 persons last year. With more than 30 staff and close to 40 intake sites, including Middletown, Middlefield, Branford, and North Branford. CRT's energy program helped its clients move out of poverty by providing \$10,653,779 in payments toward their energy bills. CSBG funded program coordination to ensure that clients had access to other services that they needed.

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 that developed 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.