

# Facing the challenge posed by COVID-19

By James H. Gatling

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The coronavirus crisis has brought unprecedented medical, economic and personal challenges to millions of Americans. Connecticut's community-action agencies, such as New Opportunities Inc., are on the front lines in the region's social-assistance network.

New Opportunities served more than 62,000 clients last year throughout Greater Waterbury, Northwest Connecticut and Greater Meriden.

Services range from emergency housing to home-delivered meals.

There has been a heavy influx of new applicants displaced by the economic and medical effects of the coronavirus. As a result, community-action agencies are coordinating their services with social-service partners throughout Connecticut to speed relief services to their afflicted customers.

All applicants receive comprehensive assessments that identify needs and provide resources that directly address their personal challenges. Whether it's emergency fuel problems or unmet household expenses, disenfranchised Connecticut residents can address many of their current household challenges through the consolidated efforts community-action agencies provide.

The coronavirus has produced large numbers of new applicants in programs, such as Meals on Wheels, energy assistance, and state and federal benefit-assistance services, among others. Counselors and staffers also work with our community partners to assist a rising tide of senior citizens who face unexpected financial and household burdens imposed by the health crisis.

Despite the restrictions now being implemented on behalf of citizens, businesses, financial institutions and travel, accessing New Opportunities' remains unchanged. Agency staffers work from a variety of "safe locations" to provide uninterrupted services for our customers. To contact us, call 203-575-9799 in Waterbury; 860-482-9749 in Torrington; and 203-639-5060 in Meriden; website [www.newoppinc.org](http://www.newoppinc.org).

Clients, government representatives, social-service providers, medical professionals and agency staffers all have exhibited camaraderie and kinship. They have convinced all of us that the coronavirus pandemic ultimately will be relegated to history.

*James H. Gatling is CEO and president of New Opportunities Inc., a statewide agency headquartered in Waterbury.*

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