





## **The Promise of Community Action**

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

In each of us, there's a desire to do good for ourselves and support the families and communities that make us who we are. But, as our economy and our society have changed, millions of Americans living in poverty, and millions more living at the edge, have been denied the opportunity to make this narrative their own.

It isn't just about getting or keeping a job, because not all jobs are created equal. Millions of Americans work every day, year after year, without a raise or as a "part-time" employee, unable to work their way out of poverty. For many of our family members, friends, and neighbors, any one of a hundred misfortunes can spell disaster. That includes unemployment or disability, and it includes the devastating consequences of opioid addiction. But it also includes car breakdowns, child care cost increases, parents' sudden illnesses, and so many other everyday misfortunes that can be enough to push struggling families over the brink.

**Community Action provides life-changing services that build pathways to opportunity in 99 percent of United States counties.** America's 1,000-plus Community Action Agencies work in every corner of our nation, serving small towns and big cities. They serve families, seniors, adults, and youth all over the country, and they know from experience that every community faces obstacles but no two communities face the same barriers to progress.

Community Action rejects the idea of one-size-fits-all solutions to poverty. Community Action Agencies rely on the diverse perspectives of both community members and state and local officials to guide community change. And we pride ourselves on a truly evidence-based approach. Each agency completes a community-specific assessment to drive solutions that respond to local needs, because we know that effectively addressing poverty across different states or even in neighboring counties requires a tailored approach. And Community Action Agencies tap the power of local volunteers to help their neighbors improve their lives and build more resilient communities.

**This report illustrates how Community Action Agencies respond to local needs. For instance, you'll see that:**

- Agencies helped tens of thousands of pre-school children build the skills they needed to succeed in school, and helped more than two million people, including seniors, make their homes more energy efficient and lower their utility bills
- An Ohio agency partnered with its county to make sure community members struggling with addiction received fast, quality support
- Volunteers for a Kansas agency spent 7,000 hours improving the community for their neighbors

The need has never been greater. Neither has our resolve. We're challenged to create solutions that don't just help people stay afloat but build lives of stability, dignity, and, whenever possible, prosperity. And we will rise to that challenge.

We're inspired by the researchers, advocates, and policymakers who keep working and innovating. We're inspired by the boards, staff, and volunteers of Community Action Agencies across the country, who believe in their neighbors and their communities and fight every day to make them stronger. And we're inspired by the Americans who will not let poverty break them – who keep learning, keep working, and keep fighting to build better lives.

The National Community Action Partnership serves as a hub, linking these local leaders to each other and helping to connect them to allies in the fight against today's poverty. We invite you to read and learn about the work of Community Action. More importantly, we invite you to join us on the journey to create a thriving nation.



**Bryan Duncan**  
Chair, Board of Directors



**Denise Harlow**  
Chief Executive Officer



Photo: Shutterstock

**T**he Community Action Partnership is a national hub that links the nation's 1,000+ Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to each other - and to leaders looking for solutions that connect Americans to greater opportunity. Throughout this report, you'll see how Community Action works, from financial coaching services that help Michigan families become stable to whole family approaches that help kids and parents in Maryland thrive. You'll read about employment and enrichment programs that support Georgia families and support services that give Californians a safe place to live. Across the country, Community Action Agencies embody our nation's spirit of hope, change people's lives, and improve communities.

# Community Action Agencies create solutions that improve people's lives, homes, communities, and the nation.

## The National Need

Nearly  
**40**  
million people in America live poverty. **People of color are disproportionately impacted**



**1 in 6** children go hungry at some point during the year

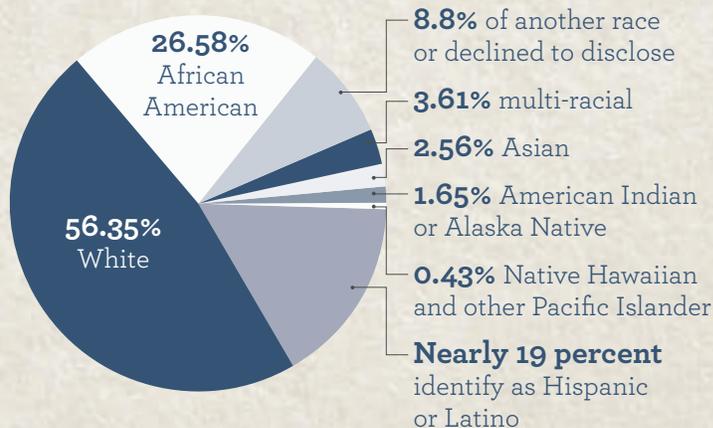
**7.6**  
million people who spent at least half the year working or looking for work still **fell below the poverty line**

## Community Action's Reach

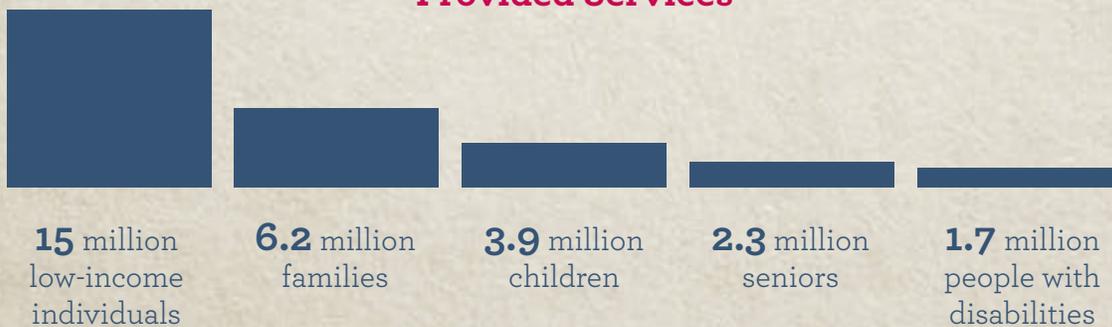


Cover **99%** of America's counties, serving all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico

## Individuals who benefited from Community Action



## Community Action Agencies Provided Services



# \$ Asset Building

**F**or families working low-wage jobs, financial assets like a small savings account provide a critical buffer during tough times. Disruptions like an unexpected medical expense or a temporary cutback at work do less damage if the family has assets. With nearly four-fifths of families in America living paycheck-to-paycheck, building assets is critical for our economy. Creating asset building opportunities is especially important for families of color, as approximately two in three households of color don't have a sufficient amount of money set aside for a financial emergency. That results in overall financial instability for communities of color and a lack of social mobility for their children. But when families have built up savings and assets, it not only gives them a financial cushion in times of need, it helps them get ahead, as savings allow them to invest in skill building or meet educational goals. Community Action Agencies help hundreds of thousands of individuals and families improve their economic stability. Agencies help families open and maintain savings accounts and adopt good budgeting practices. And, year after year, Community Action Agency staff make sure the hardworking community members they serve are well informed on the tax filing process and claim the tax credits they've earned. When individuals and families have the knowledge and means to support themselves, the whole community benefits.

## The National Need

**44%** of Americans cannot cover a **\$400 unexpected expense**

**26%** of American households **don't have a bank account** or access to banking services



On average, **36%** of American households **are unable to pay for basic needs for three months**



after the loss of a job or regular income

## Our Reach

More than **900 CAAs** help people build assets and financial skills

More than **400,000 people** were enrolled in CAA budgeting and savings programs



More than **400 CAAs** provide tax assistance services with volunteers

## Our Annual Impact

**800,000**

low-income households increased financial assets or skills

CAAs helped low-income families increase their savings by **\$11.5 million**



**\$459 million**

in tax credits, like the earned income tax credit and child tax credit, were returned to low-income families through CAA volunteer income tax assistance services.



Photo: Mr. Kennedy

## Building assets to build better lives and stronger communities

With tailored asset building services, Wayne Metro Community Action Agency is helping build up Detroit, Michigan one family at a time.

Five years ago, Detroit's poverty rate stood well above the national average at 41 percent. Today, the community is improving, yet many area neighborhoods still face deep poverty and are stifled by high rates of unemployment, housing insecurity, and personal debt.

Wayne Metro Community Action Agency saw these challenges as opportunities to help local families build the financial assets that provide a foundation for economic stability. Working with frontline staff trained on coaching skills, families establish goals like creating an emergency savings account, paying their debts, or buying a home. A Wayne Metro Community Action Agency coach helps them assess their current financial picture, then the person or family sets goals that are supported by monthly coaching and progress checks.

When Mr. Kennedy, a resident of Detroit, met with a financial coach at Wayne Metro Community Action

Agency, he was burdened by a \$17,000 property tax debt. His coach walked through each of Mr. Kennedy's bills with him and helped develop a plan to save money and his home.

During their monthly meetings, Mr. Kennedy and his coach spoke about his progress toward his savings goal. Beyond coaching, Wayne Metro Community Action Agency provided Mr. Kennedy with more support to help save his home. The agency offered access to utility payment assistance and income tax services that helped Mr. Kennedy get the tax refund he earned. While the journey will be long, Mr. Kennedy is set on a path toward stability with the agency's assistance.

Wayne Metro Community Action Agency, and hundreds of other agencies across the country, continue to grow their asset building services because they know helping people manage their money and build wealth stabilizes the entire community. In Wayne County and thousands of counties served by Community Action, assets like emergency savings, improved credit, or homeownership give families independence. As Wayne Metro Community Action Agency has seen again and again, that strong foundation helps families build better lives for themselves and the community.



# Children and Families

**C**hildren are more likely than adults to live in poverty in America. Child care costs, lack of living wages, costly housing, and other factors drive many families with children into crushing debt and put economic opportunity out of reach for many more. Children of color in particular fare worse than their peers as a result of generational inequalities and systemic barriers. By 2020, it's predicted that children of color will be the majority of all U.S. kids, which means the future success of our nation is dependent on the ability of all of America's children to access opportunity. Community Action Agencies provide that path to opportunity by strengthening families with children. Agencies help parents overcome barriers to employment, build financial assets, and improve the economic stability of their families. Community Action Agencies also offer high-quality early learning that cultivates the skills and abilities children need to enter school ready to learn. By addressing the needs of the whole family, Community Action is opening doors for parents and their children.

## The National Need

19% of America's children live in poverty - however, **34%** of African American children, **34%** of Native American children, and **28%** of Latino children live in poverty



In rural counties **approximately 1/4 of children live in poverty**

**48% of 5-year-olds in low-income families are school ready** compared to 75% of 5-year-olds in high income families

## Our Reach

**3.9 million children** were served

Agencies served **6.2 million families**

**4.2 million families** participated in summer camps, sporting events, literacy programs, and other enrichment services

**1.7 million children** received healthy food to assist with healthy development

**More than 500 agencies** provide Head Start and/or Early Head Start



## Our Annual Impact

**4 million families** reduced or eliminated barriers to stability through access to childcare, food assistance, after school programs, and more

**241,000 youth** experienced improved health and physical development

**246,000 parents** improved family functioning skills

**153,000 youth** improved social and emotional skills

**365,000 children** became school ready





Photo: Shutterstock

## A brighter future for Maryland children and their families

April, a resident of Garrett County, Maryland, knew a positive change had come when she heard her non-verbal daughter ask, “how was your day, mom?” for the first time. She credits that milestone to Garrett County Community Action Committee’s Head Start program. But that milestone was just one of many encouraging signs for April’s whole family.

April first reached out to Garrett County Community Action to inquire about energy assistance for her home. She quickly discovered that Community Action has so much more to offer thanks to the agency’s wrap-around services and holistic approach to helping the community. Now, April’s family is one of 250 Head Start and Early Head Start families who benefit from the agency’s Two-Generation approach.

Garrett County’s child poverty rate is one of Maryland’s highest, and Garrett County Community Action is making a positive impact on local families every day to help change that. The agency had long been serving kids through Head Start, but it recognized that lifting children out of poverty would also require putting their parents on a path to success. With that, the agency established a results-oriented, Two-Generation model to break the cycle of multi-generational poverty.

To begin, a full assessment is completed using the crisis-to-thriving scale. The scale considers various factors like food or money for bills, and gauges the family’s access to supports like childcare and reliable transportation. A coach then works with the family to build a Pathway Plan based on their unique situation. Parents set goals, like furthering their education, after which a Garrett County Community Action coach would connect them to resources like GED prep courses, scholarships for postsecondary education, or skill building programs. The coach stays connected to the family throughout the process to encourage the family to continue on the plan and get the help they need. Along the way, the agency uses measurable outcomes to track the family’s progress.

Through the program, April set financial goals, and she was able to improve her budget management. April has also realized her goal of homeownership, and she will continue to reach new milestones with the help of Garrett County Community Action.

Community Action’s work with children is based on a simple reality: children live in families and a child’s future outcomes are directly linked to their parent’s economic stability. The Two-Generation approach has been adopted by several Community Action Agencies to build a better future for children across the country.

## Community Building

**C**ommunity Action Agencies are a powerful force that build economic opportunities throughout their communities making them stronger and better places to live. From affordable housing opportunities and community conversations about racial equity in Alabama, to community centers offering safe after-school activities in Michigan, and pulling community leaders together to improve the odds for children in California, Community Action Agencies bring neighbors together to overcome the barriers facing their communities. Central to the Promise of Community Action is “helping people help themselves and each other.” That’s why Community Action Agencies work with local organizations to launch small business loan programs for entrepreneurs, build commercial properties, and create other economic development opportunities that help the community prosper. Agencies also engage local residents as volunteers who donate their time to support community growth. Across the country, business owners, volunteers, aspiring entrepreneurs, and local leaders work alongside agencies to amplify the impact of Community Action.

### The National Need

More than **50 million Americans** live in economically distressed areas



More than 400 U.S. counties have been persistently poor since 1990, meaning at least **20% of residents continue to live in poverty**

**In the average distressed zip code,**



of adults have no high school diploma and



of adults are not working

### Our Reach

CAAs collaborated with more than **200,000** community organizations to amplify their impact



Through various community initiatives, Community Action works to develop healthy communities **that offer economic opportunity and actively engage people with low incomes**

### Our Annual Impact

Agencies created or expanded **3.1 million community resources** including public facilities, local businesses, and other entities

**1.2 million people** engaged in activities to support themselves and the community

Total volunteer hours donated were valued at just over

**\$1 billion**

More than **\$650,000 worth of community assets or services** were created or improved to enhance the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods



Photo: Community Action Inc. volunteers

## Strengthening the reach of Community Action with volunteers

Community Action, Inc. in Topeka, Kansas offers life-changing services in nearly one-fourth of the state's counties—and they don't do it alone. In 2018, the agency mobilized more than 200 volunteers who donated nearly 7,000 hours of their time to support their neighbors in North Central Kansas.

Community Action, Inc.'s volunteers provide a helping hand to kids, low-income families, rural-area residents, and more in some of Kansas's most distressed communities.

Volunteers make a difference year-round. They wrapped and delivered donated diapers to 200 low-income families, and they packed and distributed fresh food to 300 rural households. Some volunteers spent a day in summer filling backpacks with school supplies

for 800 families. Others used their expertise to prepare tax returns for more than 600 of their neighbors, helping to build assets in local communities.

In fact, Community Action, Inc. is governed by volunteers. As with all Community Action Agencies, the Community Action, Inc. board of directors is made up of local elected officials, private and public sector representatives, and low-income residents who donate their time to ensure the agency is effectively meeting local needs. The 33 volunteers on Community Action Inc.'s tripartite governing board each donate 50 hours per year to shape the organization's strategy. Their commitment helps local residents move toward economic stability and creates building blocks of prosperity in the community.

Across the nation, 1.2 million volunteers donate their time every year, expanding the reach of Community Action. That's how Community Action works - side-by-side with neighbors collaborating to make their hometowns better places to live.



## Preserving the past and investing in the future of Clare, Michigan

For more than 50 years, the Clare Union Railroad Depot in Clare, Michigan served as a trusted transportation hub in the community. But after shutting down in the 1950s, the depot began to deteriorate and it took decades of history and community service with it. In response, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency partnered with the City of Clare on the Clare Depot Restoration Project to create jobs, strengthen the local economy, and breathe new life into a historic community asset.

A donation from a generous local resident made it possible for the City of Clare to buy the old depot building. What happened next was an outpouring of support that made the restoration project a true community partnership.

In 2010, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency donated land in downtown Clare that would become

the depot's new home, and the Community Action Agency's board helped the city purchase additional land to provide the needed space for the depot. When additional funding was needed to move the project forward, the community banded together. Donations from residents and businesses, and revenue from selling depot-related items and work by local artists brought in resources. Support for the project even made it outside the confines of Clare. As part of a statewide community building effort, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and Michigan State Housing Development Authority pledged to double funds raised in a crowdfunding campaign for the depot if they reached \$25,000. The community met—and exceeded—that goal in a month's time. All of these efforts raised more than \$450,000 in support for the restoration project.

Breaking ground for the depot created new jobs for local residents and sparked new partnerships for Mid Michigan Community Action Agency. The agency collaborated with more than 40 groups on the project. Reconnecting with old partners, and getting acquainted with new ones, helped Mid Michigan Community Action Agency build a network of



Photo: Clare Depot

community members, businesses, and nonprofits that can help the agency continue to fulfill its mission of fighting poverty and creating a path to economic security for Michigan families.

The depot opened in 2018 as home to the Clare Area Chamber of Commerce, the Clare County Arts Council, and the Clare Visitor's Bureau. It will also feature exhibits on Clare's railroad history and serve as the trail-head for the Pere Marquette Rail Trail. Once completed, the trail will run through Clare, providing opportunity for tourism, more businesses, new jobs, and, ultimately, economic growth in the city.

Through its Clare Depot Restoration Project, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency demonstrated how Community Action goes beyond serving individuals and offers a vision for improving community life as a whole. In Clare, and in hundreds of cities across the country, Community Action Agencies use their expertise, partnerships, and passion for people to advance economic development projects that help their communities thrive.

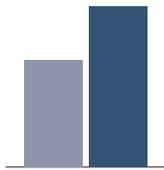


## Health and Well-Being

**H**ealth and well-being are essential for economic success. When addiction treatment removes a barrier to getting a good job, a person has a greater chance to get ahead. When children have access to high-quality early care and education and nutritious food, they are better able to learn, laying a solid foundation for future economic success. The Affordable Care Act has significantly reduced the uninsured rate, but millions of Americans still lack coverage and access to health and well-being services. Many uninsured people are just one serious illness or accident away from financial insecurity, and people of color are far more likely to be at risk due to a lack of health insurance. From substance abuse treatment in Alaska to community gardening in Iowa, Community Action Agencies help families all over the country improve their health and well-being. Because healthy families build stronger communities, Community Action's health and well-being initiatives promote economic opportunity nationwide.

### The National Need

Overall, 10% of people in the U.S. remain uninsured. **This increases to 14.8% for people of color**



More than **41 million**

Americans cannot consistently afford adequate food for their household



**2.1 million people** have an opioid use disorder

### Our Reach

**More than 300** CAAs provide health services

**More than 500** CAAs provide food assistance



**CAAs distributed** more than 24 million food boxes

**More than 500** CAAs offer programs that help families with their energy bills

### Our Annual Impact

**629,000** individuals obtained healthcare services for themselves or a family member

More than **8 million** people received food 



**487,000 children** obtained age-appropriate immunizations, medical and dental care

The health-related benefits for each weatherized unit is valued at more than

**\$14,000** per home



Photo: Shutterstock

## Interventions that improve community health

Prior to 2017, residents of Summit County, Ohio struggling with addiction had to wait more than 40 days for an appointment to even discuss treatment. For this reason, Community Action Akron Summit—headquartered in Akron, Ohio—partnered with the County of Summit Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board to make a change.

In Summit County, as in communities all over America, addiction is both a cause and a consequence of broader health and well-being problems. Opiate overdose deaths in Summit County more than doubled between 2011 and 2015. In situations without that unfortunate outcome, opiate overdoses contributed to spikes in emergency room visits, children placed in foster care, and kids at risk of abuse and neglect.

To tackle these community challenges, Community Action Akron Summit collaborated with the County Board to create the Addiction Help Line. The new call center puts residents battling addiction on a fast track to the help they need. When a local resident calls the help line, a Community Action Akron Summit case manager is on the other end to assess the situation, connect the person with a treatment provider, and schedule an appointment. The case manager then follows up to make sure the caller received the help they needed in the appointment. Since the Addiction

Help Line's launch in January 2017, the wait time for people in need of help dropped from more than 40 days to less than 10 days.

These opioid addiction services are a part of Community Action Akron Summit's Pathways Community HUB, a model used to help community members improve their health and well-being. In 2016, the agency launched the Pathways Community HUB to address Akron's high infant mortality rate that disproportionality affected black mothers. The approach had such a positive impact on the mothers and families in the community that Community Action Akron Summit concluded that the Pathways HUB model was a perfect fit for addressing substance abuse challenges in the area. Through the model, the agency gathers support from service providers throughout the city to identify vulnerable community members, offers support based on their risk factors like homelessness or financial strain, and measures the person's progress as he or she improves.

As individuals enter the Pathway program to help them live a healthier life, Community Action Akron Summit takes note, tracking the interventions, treatment options, and resources that made a positive impact. The same is true for the 300 plus Community Action Agencies that offer health services. By serving individuals and families, they create better health outcomes for the whole community.

## Housing

**S**tagnant wages and rising rents mean that housing consumes an ever-increasing share of household budgets. Coupled with medical bills, transportation expenses, and food, housing-related costs like utilities add to the financial strain that puts many families at risk of missing mortgage or rent payments. These challenges for families become even more prevalent in communities that simply don't have enough safe, affordable housing options to meet the need. Community Action Agencies help families rent or buy and maintain safe homes they can afford, and may also provide weatherization services that lower monthly utility bills and put millions of dollars back into family budgets. Agencies also address the housing needs of the whole community. Building affordable housing developments in rural Colorado, providing emergency repairs for seniors' homes in New York, and managing apartment complexes for low-income residents of Texas are just a few of the ways Community Action Agencies help people find and keep their homes, strengthening the entire community.

### The National Need

Nationally, **only 21 of every 100 rental units** are available for extremely low-income renter households

Low-income households typically spend **16% of their annual income on energy costs**



On average, minimum wage workers would **need to work 99 hours every week** of the year to afford rent for a modest one-bedroom apartment

### Our Reach

**More than 300 CAAs** operate a housing program

**More than 500 CAAs** operate a weatherization assistance program

CAAs helped more than **2 million**

**people** obtain non-emergency energy assistance such as home heating or insulation



In partnership with governments, faith communities, and other nonprofits, **CAAs help families find and keep their homes**

### Our Annual Impact

**116,000** housing units **were weatherized, preserved, or otherwise improved**



**25,000** new housing units **were built**

**339,000** people obtained **safe, affordable housing**

CAA weatherization and energy services are valued at

**\$123 million** in anticipated utility savings



Photo: The Sober Family

## From housing stability to opportunity for our veterans

A stable, affordable home can be hard to come by in San Luis Obispo County, California. When average rent rises by hundreds of dollars each year, some families spend more than half of their income on housing, leaving little for other basics, like paying utility bills, finding transportation to work, or securing childcare.

The Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO) provides multiple homeless services, energy assistance services, home repair programs, and more to help San Luis Obispo County families address obstacles to stable housing. One such program is Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF).

Through SSVF, CAPSLO helps veterans overcome barriers to housing stability. The CAPSLO team, like Community Action Agencies across the country, assesses each family's unique situation, builds a plan of action, and taps a wide variety of community resources to get families out of crisis and on a path to stability.

One of those families is the Sobers. Tyshawn Sober is a United States Air Force veteran. He, his wife Cheyenne, and their two-year-old son lived in a trailer with spotty electricity and water when they met with an SSVF housing specialist at CAPSLO. Through the help of the specialist, the next day they moved to a safe and affordable two-bedroom rental unit that even had room for Ty Jr. to play.

That was just the beginning of their work with CAPSLO. Both Tyshawn and his wife still needed access to mental health services and Ty Jr. had developmental delays that needed to be addressed. The family's home also needed air conditioner repairs to maintain Ty Jr.'s health. All of these factors were not only a source of stress but a threat to the safety of their home.

A case manager at CAPSLO connected the family to the agency's Home Energy Assistance Program, a referral for mental health services, and a link to CAPSLO's Early Head Start Program for Ty Jr. When they need help, families all across the country can count on Community Action Agencies like CAPSLO to connect them to resources not only at the agency itself but throughout the community. The CAPSLO team will continue to work with the Sobers to ensure long-term success.

Community Action Agencies know that each family faces unique barriers and needs its own pathway to stability and prosperity. While one family might need job training to increase their wages and help them keep their home, another may need education on rental agreements, another may need financial coaching, and another all of the above. Community Action Agencies across the country consider the unique needs and barriers of each household, just as CAPSLO tailors their approach for those who have served our country.

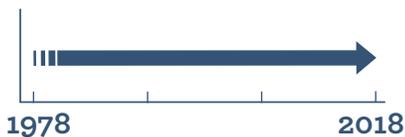
## Jobs

**G**etting a job is one thing, and getting and keeping a full-time job that can support a family is another. Many families have been left behind as America has recovered from the Great Recession. Since 2007, wages have grown fastest for families already in the top 10 percent of income. And the number of Americans who want full-time jobs but cannot find them has increased nearly 45 percent since then. The barriers are even higher for Latino and Black families, single mothers, returning citizens, and other disproportionately affected groups that don't often have access to stable work and living wages. When educational gaps, transportation reliability, child care shortages, and other obstacles converge, many families can't overcome them on their own. Community Action Agencies work to understand the barriers families face in the communities they serve, and they develop support systems - from job creation to skills training to child care - to meet local needs and help families all over the country climb the economic ladder.

### The National Need

**6.1** million Americans are unemployed

After adjusting for inflation, today's average hourly wage **has the same purchasing power as in 1978**



Families in poverty spend **30% of income on childcare**

**Nearly 50%** of Americans across **22 states** live in an area with a shortage of child care options

### Our Reach

**More than 700 CAAs** provide employment support services

**5.8 million people** received employment support from CAAs

To help people with low incomes access and maintain employment, CAAs helped **more than 423,000 people** secure reliable transportation.



### Our Annual Impact

**225,000 people** obtained job skills



**167,000 people** obtained a job

**24,000 jobs** were created or saved



**461,000 children** were enrolled in before and after school programs or pre-school care



Photo: Shutterstock

## It takes more than jobs

When Mosi reached out to the Enrichment Services Program (ESP), a Community Action Agency in Columbus, Georgia, she didn't have a job. And because she didn't have access to childcare to support her job search, she and her children were at risk of becoming homeless while she was out of work. Today, Mosi works for Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services, helping to ensure the stability of Georgia families and protect Georgia's children.

ESP serves nine Georgia and Alabama counties facing a range of barriers to economic opportunity. Lack of education makes it difficult for people to find work that fits their skills, and the jobs they can get don't pay a living wage. The area is also largely rural, adding access to reliable transportation and affordable childcare to the list of obstacles.

ESP was able to help address the childcare challenge—families could come to the agency for quality early childhood education through Head Start. But the agency realized that a more comprehensive approach would make a real difference for parents who needed a stable job and help meeting basic needs. ESP developed an integrated services approach believing it would make a stronger impact for families throughout the area. Now, every family that walks through ESP's

door is introduced to a bundle of services. Instead of looking at just one symptom of poverty, ESP considers all of them. The agency's services include employment training, energy assistance, food assistance, Early Head Start and Head Start, financial capability services, and more approaches that serve the whole family.

Like many Community Action Agencies across the country, ESP measures a family's progression to stability using a crisis-to-thriving scale, which looks at factors like permanent employment, completed education, or saved money. The agency works with families like Mosi's to provide services and resources that help them take incremental steps toward economic security.

Mosi reached her goals of gaining employment and care for her children with the help of ESP. Access to Head Start for her children gave Mosi the stability she needed to find a job. The agency also connected her with a partner organization in Columbus so Mosi could secure housing for her family. When a family faces obstacles at every turn, a job often isn't enough to turn it around. But Community Action Agencies are there to answer the call, offering the individualized, comprehensive supports families need to find stability and, over time, to thrive.



## About the Community Action Partnership

The Community Action Partnership is a national nonprofit membership organization that links the nation's 1,000+ Community Action Agencies to each another and to leaders looking for solutions that connect millions of individuals and families to greater opportunity.

Community Action Agencies are locally run but receive a range of public and private resources for their work. This includes funding from the federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) which provides the Community Action Agency designation. For every \$1 of CSBG funds, the Network annually leverages \$7.70 from state, local, and private sources.

The Community Action Network reaches children and families in 99% of America's counties with life-changing services, from early childhood education to job training to services for seniors. To support these efforts, the Partnership works hand in hand with the Network to pursue community-wide solutions to barriers holding families back from success, shape smarter federal and state proposals to help families succeed, and highlight innovative and impactful solutions that work.

The nation's Community Action Agencies embody our nation's spirit of hope, change people's lives, and improve communities. When national, state and local leaders tap into these agencies' experience, they can promote workable solutions that connect more families to opportunity - and make America a better place to live for everyone.



## Acknowledgments

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A printable version of this report is available for download at [communityactionpartnership.com/impactreport](https://communityactionpartnership.com/impactreport). That page also offers detailed information about the sources of data included in this report.

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## **The Vision of Community Action Partnership**

A nation that creates opportunities for all people to thrive, builds strong, resilient communities, and ensures a more equitable society.

## **The Mission of Community Action Partnership**

To ensure the causes and conditions of poverty are effectively addressed and to strengthen, promote, represent, and serve the Community Action Network.

## **The Values of Community Action Partnership**

We believe all people should be treated with dignity and respect and recognize that structural race, gender, and other inequities remain barriers that must be addressed.

We believe that this nation has the capacity and moral obligation to ensure that no one is forced to endure the hardships of poverty.

We believe that with hope, adequate resources, and opportunities, everyone can reach their fullest potential, and we are committed to achieving that vision.

We pledge ourselves to creating an environment that pursues innovation and excellence through multi-sector partnership and collaboration.



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