

# **Report on Wisconsin's Community Services Block Grant Program For Calendar Year 2015**

*Submitted by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families  
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## **I. Program Purpose:**

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) provides federal funding to states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories for anti-poverty programs operated by a nationwide network of over 1,000 Community Action Agencies. Community Action Agencies are locally controlled private or public non-profit organizations that work to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty through programs tailored to specific local needs. In Wisconsin, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) administers the CSBG program along with a variety of programs that support and protect the safety and well-being of children and families including child welfare, child support, Wisconsin Shares childcare subsidy program, and Wisconsin Works.

## **II. Funded Agencies and the Program Budget:**

In 2015, the department distributed approximately \$8.35 million in federal CSBG funding as program grants to agencies as follows:

- 86.5% allocated to the state's 16 Community Action Agencies for direct services in 69 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. Funding levels for the agencies are based on the number of people living in poverty in their service areas;
- 4% allocated to 11 federally recognized tribal governments through the Family Services Program. This contract combines various funding sources that support programs related to: preventing teen pregnancy; promoting teen parent self-sufficiency; promoting safe and stable families; preventing domestic violence and supporting victims; providing childcare; and promoting economic self-sufficiency for low-income families;
- 4% allocated for services for migrant farmworkers through the statewide organization United Migrant Opportunities Services;
- 1.5% allocated to the Foundation for Rural Housing for its statewide housing assistance program; and
- 4% retained by the department for administration of the program. This includes the completion of an annual federally mandated Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) performance report to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Services, and funding a contract with the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP)

to provide network coordination and training and technical assistance for the contract agencies.

### **III. Services Provided:**

Approximately 323 programs and services for low-income individuals and families throughout Wisconsin are in some way supported by the CSBG grant. These include:

- 69 housing programs serving the homeless, those at-risk of becoming homeless, low-income homeowners, and low-income homebuyers;
- 18 programs in the areas of energy assistance and home weatherization;
- 43 food security programs, which include community gardens, food pantries, food banks that distribute food to pantries, community meal sites (soup kitchens), and holiday baskets;
- 33 programs in the areas of economic and business development, including revolving loan programs, financial literacy education, and small business development programs;
- 33 programs providing employment training, adult literacy skills, and other services that help participants maximize earnings by improving their skills;
- 20 health care programs, including medical clinics, family planning programs, early childhood nutrition, dental clinics, home health care, and substance abuse and mental health treatment;
- 36 programs offering parental and family support, including child care assistance and referral, parenting classes, domestic abuse intervention and victim support, legal services, fatherhood initiatives, and clothing assistance;
- 27 programs for youth and young adults that include education skills enhancement, mentoring, juvenile justice/violence prevention, and Fresh Start programs;
- 20 programs offering transportation services and/or vehicle repair and purchase assistance for low-income workers;
- 6 programs offering Head Start/early childhood education;
- 4 free tax preparation assistance programs for low-income households;
- 8 programs serving the special needs of low-income seniors; and
- 6 programs serving the needs of refugees, immigrants, and migrant workers.

**In 2015, these programs achieved the following results:**

- Provided 12,554 low-income households with safe and affordable housing;
- Gave emergency shelter to 2,929 homeless households;
- Helped 283 low- and moderate-income families purchase homes;
- Distributed over 25.3 million pounds of food to agencies that feed the hungry;
- Helped 68 low-income individuals start their own business;
- Assisted 15,554 low-income individuals in accessing health care;
- Constructed, rehabilitated and/or weatherized 4,951 units of affordable housing;
- Helped 1,082 individuals, who were out of work, obtain employment;
- Assisted 782 low-income workers improve their wages and/or benefits;
- Provided emergency financial assistance for energy bills, rent, and mortgage payments to more than 28,998 individuals experiencing financial distress;
- Helped 1,837 low-income individuals obtain reliable transportation and/or driver's licenses;
- Provided free tax preparation assistance that helped 15,616 low-income individuals obtain more than \$14.8 million in tax credits;
- Provided emergency clothing to over 13,133 individuals; and
- Mobilized over 13,175 volunteers who contributed a total of 760,889 hours to help their neighbors in need.

As shown by the broad range of services it supports, CSBG funding is very flexible. This flexibility makes it an invaluable tool for agencies to fill gaps and provide required matching funds for other grants. In 2015, Wisconsin's Community Action Agencies were able to leverage more than \$159 million in additional federal, state, local, and private resources to create opportunities for low-income individuals and families and to fight poverty.

**IV. Strengthening Wisconsin's Service Infrastructure through Collaboration, Training, and Quality Assurance:**

Community Action Agencies are highly collaborative, both with one another and with other types of organizations, and they endeavor to integrate their services into existing service delivery networks. In 2015, the Community Action Agencies worked with more than 5,104 local agencies, councils, collaborative and advisory groups to ensure successful delivery of services to low-income individuals and families. Of those entities, 557 were faith-based organizations.

The department and all Community Action Agencies have participated in the federally mandated ROMA performance measurement system since 2001. Participation in ROMA ensures that all contract agencies are achieving real, measurable results in terms of improving the conditions of people's lives and helping low-income households to increase their self-sufficiency.

WISCAP also organized three statewide meetings to allow the Community Action Agencies to share knowledge, experience, and best practices. In 2015, WISCAP held training sessions at these meetings on a variety of program topics including housing, weatherization, employment programs, and family development.