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Community Action Agencies Open and Here to Help

*Finding Innovative Ways to Continue to Serve Both New and Existing Families
Visit masscap.org to find your local Community Action Agency*

Boston, MA (April 7, 2020) – The pandemic is affecting our lives in profound and unexpected ways. As completely unexpected as this pandemic and its compounding effects are, we are not surprised at all at how we are all pulling together and adjusting. You may not be able to walk into your local Community Action Agency; however, all agencies are working, operating critical programs and services in creative and safe ways to continue to help, protect, and support the people we serve and our communities. We are finding new ways to collaborate locally to address the pressing needs.

During this time, we all have overriding concerns for our health and the health of our families, friends, and neighbors. At MASSCAP, we also realize that the ongoing effects of the pandemic, and our necessary collective response to it, are compounding the needs of the people we serve and are causing many families to experience hardship and seek our help for the first time.

We recognize that the programs that we run are even more important now to help stabilize lives. Critical program and services include:

1. **Free Tax Preparation:** Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites provide free tax preparation and help people access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other tax credits -- funds that will be even more critical during this time. VITA sites are operating remotely. The federal and tax deadline has been extended to July 15, 2020. Visit masscap.org/freetaxprep for more information and find/call your local site.
2. **Heating Help Programs:** Heating Help programs including Fuel Assistance helps people stay safe in their homes -- staying home is even more critical to stay healthy during this time. Fuel Assistance Agencies are taking applications over the phone for both new and returning applicants. Visit heatinghelpma.org for more information and to find your agency.
3. **Food Access:** Many agencies are operating food pantries in safe ways, orchestrating food pickups and deliveries, and working with the local community partners to ensure that families have nutritious food during this time. Call your [local agency](#) for more detailed information.

4. Education: Agencies are offering remote learning opportunities for Head Start and early education families as well as adult education programs including providing activity calendars and educational information through social media.
5. Housing and Shelter: Many agencies continue to operate shelters and are working with local programs to ensure day and night space.
6. Relief Funds: Many are establishing relief funds to help those affected economically including [Cape Ann Emergency Relief Fund](#) and [Community Action Pioneer Valley COVID-19 Relief Fund](#).
7. General Wellbeing: Agencies are finding ways to meet local needs, including providing diaper and toiletry supplies and helping with access to healthcare and other needed services.

As is always the case, there are infinite ways that Community Action Agencies can and will help you, your neighbors, your constituents, and your communities. We are working every day to help those in need and respond to the changing environment and new needs that arise.

The Massachusetts Association of Community Action's 23 private, non-profit human service and advocacy organizations work to administer key anti-poverty programs in every city and town in the Commonwealth. These organizations serve approximately 600,000 low-income people annually, more than half of them with incomes below 125% of the federal poverty level.

For more than 50 years, Community Action Agencies have been on the front lines of addressing poverty -- administering federal programs, federal community services and community development grants, and state funds. CAAs are economic engines in cities and towns across Massachusetts, providing communities with an annual infusion of over \$500 million in total resources. CAAs generate at least twice that amount helping clients achieve economic stability and mobility. For more information, please visit <https://www.masscap.org/>.

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