

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

# Finding the Way Forward Together





# A Message from MASSCAP

This annual report is dedicated to the people we serve and those who serve them. Every day, across the state, in virtually every city and town, over 5,500 managers and direct service workers help our friends and neighbors become economically stable and mobile. They inspire me every day.

We often talk about how we help our vulnerable friends and neighbors, and certainly, it is very important to highlight programs like fuel assistance and weatherization, early education and care including Head Start, homelessness prevention, housing, job training, free tax preparation and the earned income tax credit, and many others.

It is equally important though to celebrate the success of the people we serve, how hard they work to support themselves and their families, and to thrive. Here are just a few “headlines” that **tell the story** about how together we help each other and strengthen our communities:

- **Early Head Start at LEO Accelerates Development and Instills Hope** **Imagine** how alone and scared Sonia felt when she learned her youngest son, Luis (1 yr), had cerebral palsy. Aspire immediately delivered early intervention services to Luis and pointed Sonia to Early Head Start (EHS) home visits.
- **A HAND UP, NOT A HAND OUT** – LIHEAP there when single mom needed it most “Thank you Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC) for notifying me of your upcoming fuel assistance (LIHEAP) deadline, but I am happy to inform your agency that I will no longer be needing fuel assistance.”
- **Senior Companion Program Increasing Independence** “I just don’t know what I would do without this program.” This is what seniors say about the Senior Companion Program run by the Valley Opportunity Council (VOC) in Holyoke.

In addition to working directly with our clients to address their needs, we also, as described in the language of the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), lead and develop community collaborations that rally allied organizations behind common goals. Initiatives happening around the state include: North Shore Forward. North Shore Forward to address substance abuse on the North Shore;



Financial Capability initiative in Fitchburg and North Central MA; affordable housing preservation in Lowell; a community collaboration to coordinate care in the Pioneer Valley; the Greater Framingham Food Network and South Shore Family Network, focused on increase parenting and early childhood development education opportunities.

The report, **Obstacles on the Road to Opportunity: Finding a Way Forward**, written for MASSCAP by MassBudget, presents the context for our work and the success of the people we serve. The report’s data and conclusions drove revealing and creative conversations at forums we sponsored with six community action agencies. In Boston, Lawrence, Quincy, Worcester, Springfield and Williamstown we discussed how we are addressing poverty in all communities, large and small, and how we will continue to do so in the future.

The story of our work and the role we play in strengthening communities is a hopeful one. Our programs, as well as those offered by other community-based groups, annually help over 900,000 people escape or avoid poverty. Simply put: Our programs work. We also know that we have miles to go: poverty remains at over 10 percent, inequality persists, and the gap between rich and poor is as wide as it has ever been. We will continue to reach out to you – the general public, the people we serve, local state and federal elected and appointed officials, businesses, the press – as we all have a stake in a stronger, healthier and more inclusive Massachusetts.

Please look for our **newsletters**, check out our twitter feed at **@masscap1**, and visit our website at **www.masscap.org** to learn more about Community Action Agencies, their role in the community as trusted local institutions, and the progress the people we serve are making every day. Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph P. Diamond  
Executive Director

  
Clare Higgins  
MASSCAP President and Executive Director,  
Community Action of the Pioneer Valley



# What is MASSCAP?



The Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP) is the statewide association of the 23 Community Action Agencies operating in Massachusetts. Through the combined skills and vision of its members, MASSCAP works to enhance the ability of each agency to better serve its clients. We work with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development as well as other state agencies and other statewide allied organizations to open doors to economic stability and prosperity for Massachusetts residents living with low incomes.

## DID YOU KNOW



that anti-poverty legislation started with President John F Kennedy in the early 1960s?

## 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 we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

## Our Mission

To strengthen and connect the statewide network of Community Action Agencies and collectively advocate for an end to poverty.

## Our Vision

All Massachusetts residents will be able to meet their basic needs, access economic opportunities, build strong communities and move toward prosperity.

The Community Action Network is strong and effective, known for its valuable work and excellent service delivery, and is considered a leading voice and advocate on the subject of poverty and inequality.

MASSCAP provides effective training, advocacy and support to all Community Action Agencies.

## MASSCAP Team

**Joe Diamond**  
*Executive Director*

**Jessica Benedetto**  
*Training and Resource Manager*

**Lisa Clay**  
*Director of Communications  
and Member Services*

**Martha Rogers**  
*Asset Development Grants Coordinator*

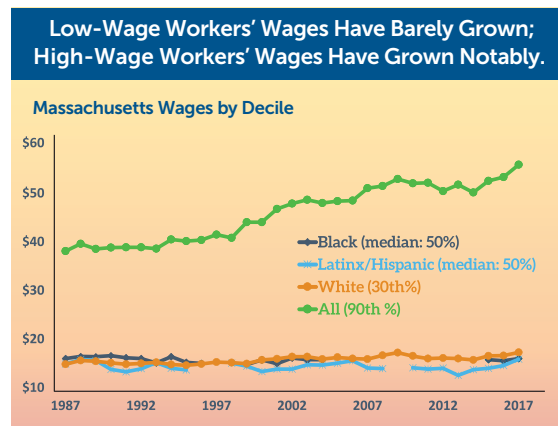
**Kathy McDermott**  
*Consultant, Leadership & Training*

**Patricia Pelletier**  
*Consultant, Planning &  
Workforce Development*

# Poverty In Massachusetts And Finding The Way Forward

Wages, particularly for low-wage workers, have not kept up with productivity.

We know that our programs and policies make a difference. Programs like Fuel Assistance, SNAP, Housing Assistance, tax credits, school meals, WIC are all critical to people's economic stability.



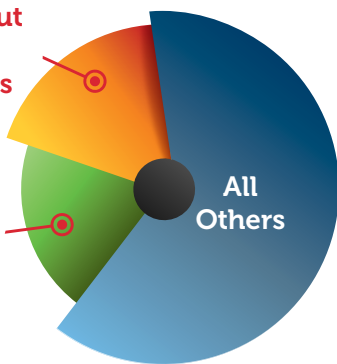
Poverty rate according to Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

The Supplemental Poverty Measure takes into account these public benefit programs that help people makes ends meet. Through this measure, we see that **these resources moved approximately 920,000 people**, including almost **200,000 children**, out of poverty.

Although not visible in official poverty measures, public programs have cut poverty almost by half.

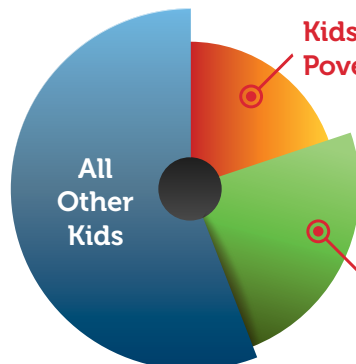
People kept out of poverty by Public Benefits

People in Poverty



Kids in Poverty

Kids kept out of poverty by Public Benefits



10% Poverty Rate in MA

14% Child Poverty Rate in MA

More Than  
1 in 7 Children Live With Income Under the Official Poverty Line

In Many Communities it is Much Higher  
1 in 3 Children – as High as 45% in Holyoke and 44% in Springfield

It is not just people who are living with incomes under the FPL who are struggling. Those who are “near poor” (up to twice the FPL) are also facing economic hardship.

22% Near Poor in MA

27% Children Near Poor in MA

2/3 of Children Near Poor in Many Communities – 68% in Holyoke and 72% in Springfield, 69% in Lawrence

1 in 10 households are “food insecure”  
24% or almost 1 in 4 of households who rent, pay half of their income or more on rent each month

# Poverty Forums: What We Learned



**MASSCAP** co-sponsored six forums across the state, focusing on the findings of the MassBudget report (shown below) from a local perspective, offering local community action agencies and their allied organizations, as well as elected officials, an opportunity to continue the conversation. Together we are developing public policies, supporting programs and refining practices that will help the people we serve, gain economic stability and mobility. Together we are making the economy work for everyone, addressing wage disparity and **eliminating poverty**. The report and the ideas, insights, and initiatives stemming from the forums allow us to **continue the conversation**.

## BOSTON

- › We must encourage our clients' voices and strengthen them to organize, advocate and be part of solutions.
- › The story of the people we serve is our story.
- › Community-level work and collaboration is essential.

## QUINCY

- › We need a multi-sector approach that engages businesses, social service agencies, municipal leadership, policymakers, institutes of higher learning and community members.
- › We must invest in Workforce Training and Development and create pathways that align with employer needs.
- › We must focus on building financial literacy to help people save, reduce debt and improve credit.

## LAWRENCE

- › Public policies such as an increased minimum wage and earned income tax credit make a real difference in people's lives.
- › We must make quality early childhood education and care more accessible and train and pay our educators so that they can stay in the job.
- › We need more high-quality affordable housing units in the right locations, accessible to schools and services.
- › We must build financial literacy locally and work with local financial institutions.
- › We need more ESL programs tied to workforce training.



For more information, read our report **Obstacles on the Road to Opportunity: Finding a Way Forward** written by the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. The report is available on the MASSCAP website at [www.masscap.org](http://www.masscap.org).

## WORCESTER

- › Our policies and programs must address structural issues such as the "cliff effect," which describes how increasing income can cause critical public benefits to cease.
- › We must evaluate at-risk youth through the lens of underlying trauma and deliver sustainable employment opportunities.
- › We need to communicate needs to our state and local policymakers and hold them accountable.

## SPRINGFIELD

- › We must understand the Social Determinants of Health – we must understand/recognize the connection between poverty and health and how the services we provide support health.
- › We need to partner with local anchor health institutions to develop comprehensive plans for strengthening communities.
- › We must form a local workgroup to discuss local solutions for transportation.

## BERKSHIRES

- › We must make higher education more accessible by increasing financial literacy, decreasing the time it takes to graduate, reforming state schools, regulating for-profit schools and instituting loan forgiveness programs.
- › We must address transportation challenges creatively, including by funding nonprofits and having employers provide.
- › We must implement criminal justice reform.
- › We must support programs and policies that will support our seniors and their ability to thrive in Berkshire county.
- › We must support Census 2020 and getting everyone counted as it affects funding for public programs.



# Public Policy Agenda



Supplemental  
Nutrition  
Assistance Program  
(SNAP) alone keeps  
**140,000**  
out of poverty and  
keeps food on  
the table.



Through broad-based education and advocacy efforts, we worked with allied organizations and legislators to effect change. Our four broad public policy goals are:



## Strengthening Families through Affordable and Accessible Early Education & Care

Early Education and Care programs prepare children for success in school and life. We supported and advocated for budget initiatives that will improve access to quality affordable early education and care for thousands of families across the state through the retention of good teachers, enhanced referral, improved facilities, and support for Head Start.

- **Increased** the workforce salary line item for early educators by from \$15M to \$20M.
- **Increased** Head Start funding from \$9.1M to \$9.6M to increase access.
- **Increased** funding for Child Care Resource Referral Access Management from \$6.75M to \$8.675M.



## Bridging the Wage Gap

We supported the work of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites run by CAAs and others and continue to fight for more support for these sites. At VITA sites, volunteers not only provide free tax prep and access to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) – considered one of the most effective anti-poverty programs – and other tax credits to low-income tax payers allowing them to pay bills, cover essential needs and save. Low-income tax payers who come to VITA sites are also linked to other critical services that strengthen families and the local economy. While there are 30,000 served at 80 VITA sites in MA, there are still an estimated 75,000 left unserved.

- **Continued to advocate to increase** resources for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program sites.
- **Expanded** State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 23% to 30% of Federal. We continue to advocate for 50% of Federal.
- **Increased** the minimum wage to \$15/hr over the next five years.





## Creating a Foundation for Economic Opportunity

CAAs have many programs that help low-income households meet fundamental needs and enjoy a measure of stability, which is a platform for economic opportunity and mobility. Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is one such example.

- **Continued to advocate** for a state fuel assistance line item to keep vulnerable households warm, safe and healthy during our cold winters.
- **Supported** an increase in funding for the Unaccompanied Youth Housing and Wraparound Services line item, a program that helps youth who are homeless or at risk, escape from it. Early intervention and prevention can change lives. The funding was increased from \$1M to \$3.3M.



## Strengthening Critical Human Services Infrastructure

Effective, trusted, local and longstanding community-based organizations such as Community Action Agencies make up a system of comprehensive services that support economic mobility for hundreds of thousands of low-income individuals and families in the Commonwealth. Together, these networks comprise a human services infrastructure of care that is as essential to the well-being of the state's residents as health care institutions, public safety including police and fire, and public transportation.

- **Continued to advocate** for legislation and a line item to update the state Community Action statute to reflect the depth and breadth of our central role in fighting poverty in virtually every city and town in the state. The legislation also creates an inter-agency council that will foster collaboration and alignment between state agencies in addressing inequality and fighting poverty.

## DID YOU KNOW

that in 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a "war on poverty" he appointed Sargent Shriver to lead a poverty task force that would ultimately shape Community Action?

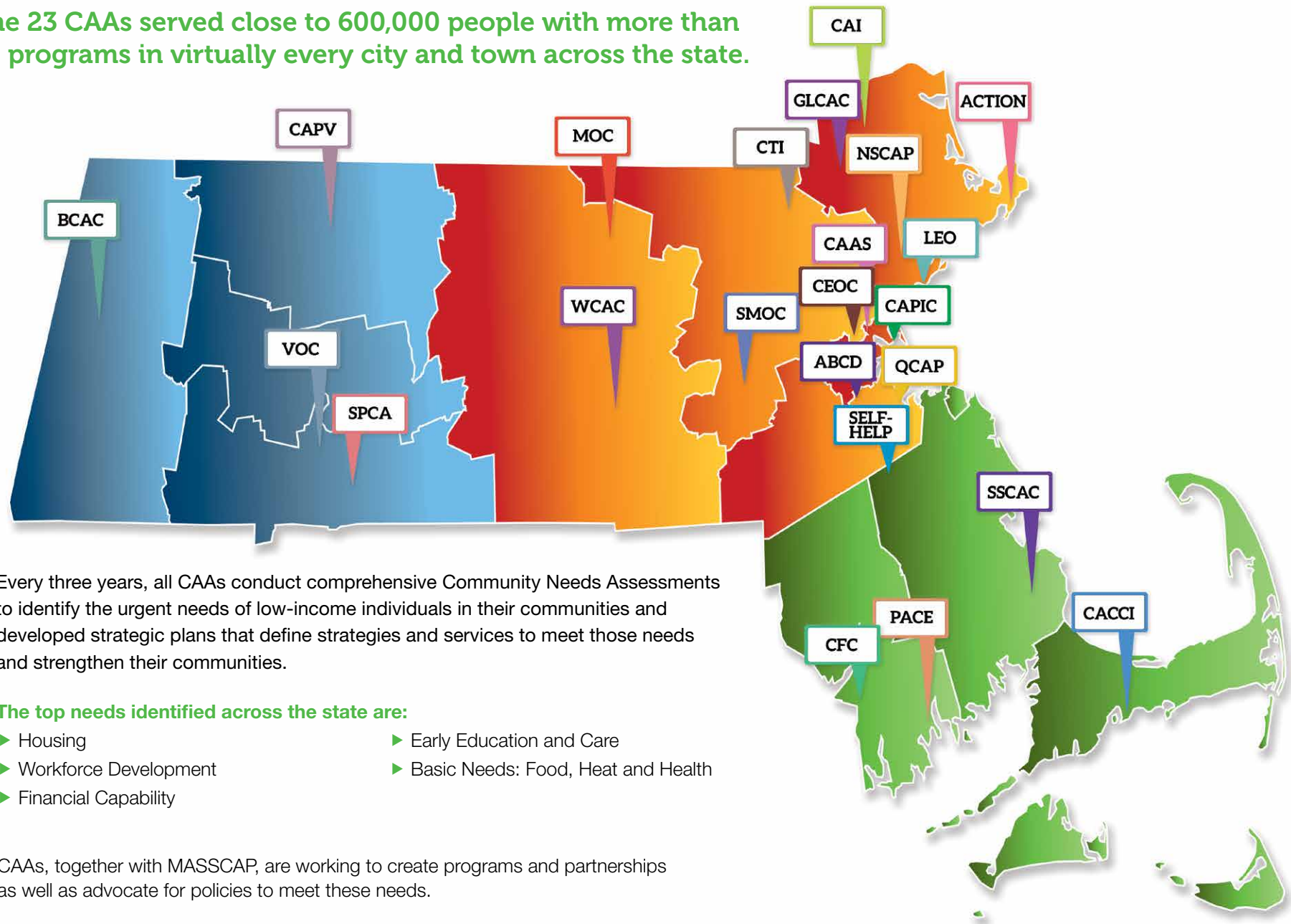


Federal and state  
human service and  
benefit programs  
help keep more than  
**920,000**  
people per year  
in Massachusetts  
from poverty.



# Serving the Entire State

The 23 CAAs served close to 600,000 people with more than 75 programs in virtually every city and town across the state.



Every three years, all CAAs conduct comprehensive Community Needs Assessments to identify the urgent needs of low-income individuals in their communities and developed strategic plans that define strategies and services to meet those needs and strengthen their communities.

## The top needs identified across the state are:

- ▶ Housing
- ▶ Workforce Development
- ▶ Financial Capability
- ▶ Early Education and Care
- ▶ Basic Needs: Food, Heat and Health

CAAs, together with MASSCAP, are working to create programs and partnerships as well as advocate for policies to meet these needs.





**ABCD | Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.**  
178 Tremont Street | Boston | 02111

**ACTION | Action Inc.**  
180 Main Street | Gloucester | 01930

**BCAC | Berkshire Community Action Council, Inc.**  
1531 East Street | Pittsfield | 02101

**CAAS | Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc.**  
66-70 Union Square | Somerville | 02143

**CACCI | Community Action Committee of Cape Cod & Islands, Inc.**  
372 North Street | Hyannis | 02601

**CAI | Community Action Inc.**  
145 Essex Street | Haverhill | 01832

**CAPIC | Community Action Programs Inter-City, Inc.**  
100 Everett Ave., #14 | Chelsea | 02150

**CAPV | Community Action Pioneer Valley**  
393 Main St., 4th Fl. | Greenfield | 01301

**CEOC | Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.**  
11 Inman Street | Cambridge | 02139

**CFC | Citizens for Citizens, Inc.**  
264 Griffin Street | Fall River | 02724

**CTI | Community Teamwork, Inc.**  
55 Merrimack Street | Lowell | 01852

**GLCAC | Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Inc.**  
305 Essex Street, 4th floor | Lawrence | 01840

**LEO | Lynn Economic Opportunity, Inc.**  
156 Broad Street | Lynn | 01901

**MOC | Montachusett Opportunity Council, Inc.**  
133 Prichard Street | Fitchburg | 01420

**NSCAP | North Shore Community Action Programs, Inc.**  
119 Rear Foster St., Bldg 13 | Peabody | 01960

**PACE | People Acting in Community Endeavors, Inc.**  
166 Williams Street | New Bedford | 02742

**QCAP | Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc.**  
1509 Hancock Street | Quincy | 02169

**SELF-HELP | Self-Help Inc.**  
780 West Main Street | Avon | 02322

**SMOC | South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc.**  
7 Bishop Street | Framingham | 01702

**SPCA | Springfield Partners for Community Action, Inc.**  
721 State Street, 2nd floor | Springfield | 01109

**SSCAC | South Shore Community Action Council, Inc.**  
71 Obery Street | Plymouth | 02360

**VOC | Valley Opportunity Council, Inc.**  
300 High Street | Holyoke | 01040

**WCAC | Worcester Community Action Council, Inc.**  
484 Main Street, 2nd floor | Worcester | 01608

## 2018 Statewide Impact

Approximately  
**600,000**  
served



Provided education and cared for  
**+20,000**



Managed childcare subsidies  
**19,175**



**10,154**  
served by  
Head Start and  
Early Head Start



**+12,000**  
received  
employment  
support services



**+18,000**  
accessed free tax  
prep bringing back



bringing back  
**+\$33 M**  
in tax credits

Approximately  
**160,000**  
received Fuel Assistance



**24,160**  
helped with Energy  
Efficiency improvements  
to their homes



**699,259**  
volunteer hours  
donated, **+74%**  
of from those  
we served



Participated in **+50** Community  
Anti-Poverty Initiatives

**+2,000**  
Community Action staff hold  
professional certifications – in Child  
Development, Family Development,  
Home Energy, Planning, Quality  
Control, Housing Quality Standards, etc.



# MASSCAP Training Center (MTC)

This mission of the **MASSCAP Training Center** is to enhance organizational performance of Community Action Agencies and other community-based organizations through a system of training and professional development. The MTC has continued to grow and evolve since its inception in 2015. The number of trainings, the number of people trained and the diversity of content and audience have increased over the past 3 years.

YEAR	2016: FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION	2017: YEAR 2	2018
# OF TRAININGS	31	64	45
HOW MANY PEOPLE TRAINED	580	650	850
WHO	Community Action Agency Management Level Staff	Community Action Agency management level staff and direct service staff, human service professionals outside Community Action	CAA staff, board members, gov't agency staff, colleagues from other CAA state Associations, Human Service professionals outside Community Action
CONTENT FOCUS	Community Action Agency management level staff meeting 58 National Center of Excellence Organizational Standards	Expanding into new topics identified through a comprehensive network- wide needs assessment and across all levels, piloted new Direct Service Staff Training Track and new Leadership Development Institute	Increased focus on expanding into direct service staff and training across all levels and topics that help staff better meet client needs



## DID YOU KNOW

that Sargent Shriver's anti-poverty proposal delivered to LBJ led to the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 which established that it is the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty amidst plenty?

## Focus on Direct Service Staff

### WHY?

Extensive assessment of needs in 2017 within the network and beyond, told us that agencies were seeking additional training opportunities that were both relevant and accessible to deeper levels of staff, particularly direct service employees who interact daily with people facing a spectrum of challenges.

### WHAT?

Relevant topics to their everyday work

- Customer service
- Conversational intake
- Cultural awareness
- Dealing with challenging clients and mental health issues
- Workplace conflict
- Understanding immigrant and refugee rights
- Coaching tools and practices
- Strengthening soft skills

### HOW?

Direct Service staff have a harder time leaving their workplace and their caseloads so . . .

- We brought training on-site to agencies (no travel)
- We offered online sessions (no travel)
- We offered regional sessions (less travel)

From the **eagerness to learn, motivation to put new knowledge into action, and dedication to helping others** that we see in so many of the MTC's participants, it is clear that despite the many challenges we face, the future of Community Action is bright.

## Continued Focus on Leadership Development

**The focus on developing leaders within the Community Action network continued with our second class of the Leadership Development Institute.**

The Leadership Development Institute is a comprehensive, interactive series of professional development sessions for mid and senior-level managers designed to identify, refine, develop and practice leadership abilities both personally and professionally. An important part of the learning is participation in a Capstone Project, a multifaceted team project designed to respond to an identified need or to add value to a program, agency or community.

“I had no idea that by the end of this course we would have acquired so much knowledge. We have gone through very important material with very fine professors and guests from well-recognized universities and organizations as well as elected officials.” — *Leadership Development Institute*

**The second class included 18 participants, 15 from the Community Action Network and 3 external human services professionals.**

They ultimately produced four capstone projects on the following topics: Taking Care of Ourselves and the People We Serve; Recruiting and Retaining Clients; Data: Benefit or Burden; and Leadership Revitalization.

## DID YOU KNOW

that President Johnson also created the Office of Economic Opportunity that led to the formation of Community Action Programs across the country? By 1966, there were more than 1,000 Community Action Agencies.



“This is a wonderful program. I wish I had this information years ago.”  
— *Mental Health First Aid*



“I loved the knowledge and enthusiasm of the presenter. This is great information that I will use personally and professionally.”  
— *Coaching Tools and Practices for Case Managers and Counselors*



“Great interaction. I loved all the activities and role-playing.”  
— *Customer Service with Conversational Intake*



# Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to achieving our mission. There is strength in collaboration.

We thank all with our partners:



## Department of Housing and Community Development

DHCD is the state's CSBG lead agency responsible for distributing CSBG dollars to the 23 Community Action Agencies as well as monitoring and training them. As our partner, they support our capacity to serve the network and to run our training center.



## Community Action Partnership (CAP)

As the national membership organization for Community Action Agencies, it is the mission of the Community Action Partnership to strengthen, promote, represent and serve the network of member agencies to eliminating that the issues of poverty are effectively presented and addressed.



## Community Action Program Legal Services, Inc.

(CAPLAW)

As a national membership organization of the Community Action network, CAPLAW is dedicated to providing the legal, governance and management resources necessary to sustain and strengthen the national Community Action Agency (CAA) network.



Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation supports organizations that provide services to the underserved and neediest members of our community. Eastern Bank works to ensure that all our neighbors have equal access to employment, education, healthcare, housing, childcare, healthy meals and other essential support services.



## The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center

The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MassBudget) produces non-partisan policy research, analysis, and data-driven recommendations focused on improving the lives of low- and middle-income children and adults, strengthening our state's economy, and enhancing the quality of life in Massachusetts.



## National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP)

As the national membership organization for state CSBG lead agencies, the National Association for State Community Services Programs (NASCSP) is charged with advocating and enhancing the leadership role of states in preventing and reducing poverty.



## National Community Action Foundation (NCAF)

The National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) seeks to represent the funding and policy interests of Community Action Agencies and their state and regional associations in Washington, D.C. by ensuring the federal government honors its commitment to fighting poverty through support of the Community Action Program.

## DID YOU KNOW

that in 1981 during President Reagan's push to cut federal funding and give states more control, the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) under the new Office of Community Services within Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within Health and Human Services (HHS) was created to be administered by the states?



# Financial Report



MASSCAP, Inc. Financial Report for Year Ending 9/30/18

## Revenue

Total Support and Revenue  
**1,134,208**

Mass Training  
Center Fees  
**45,797**

Membership Dues  
**138,800**

Contributions  
& Other  
**13,810**

In Kind  
Contributions  
**334,310**

## Support

Gov't. Grants  
& Assistance  
**601,490**

## Expenditures



Program Services  
**316,410**



Management & General  
**792,586**



Fundraising  
**11,850**



Total Expenditures  
**1,120,847**



Change in Net Assets  
**13,361**



Net Assets 10. 1. 2017  
**100,615**



Net Assets 09. 30. 2018  
**113,976**

MASSCAP revenue comes from government and private grants. Additional revenue is received from MASSCAP agencies as well as fees collected for the MASSCAP training center.

# MA CAA Funding Sources

The core operational funding for CAAs is the Federal Community Services Block Grant (CSBG). With that funding (more than \$16M in FY2018), CAAs are able to leverage additional funds, create partnerships, conduct local assessments and planning, and organize volunteers. CAAs directed more than \$824M toward eliminating poverty in 2018.

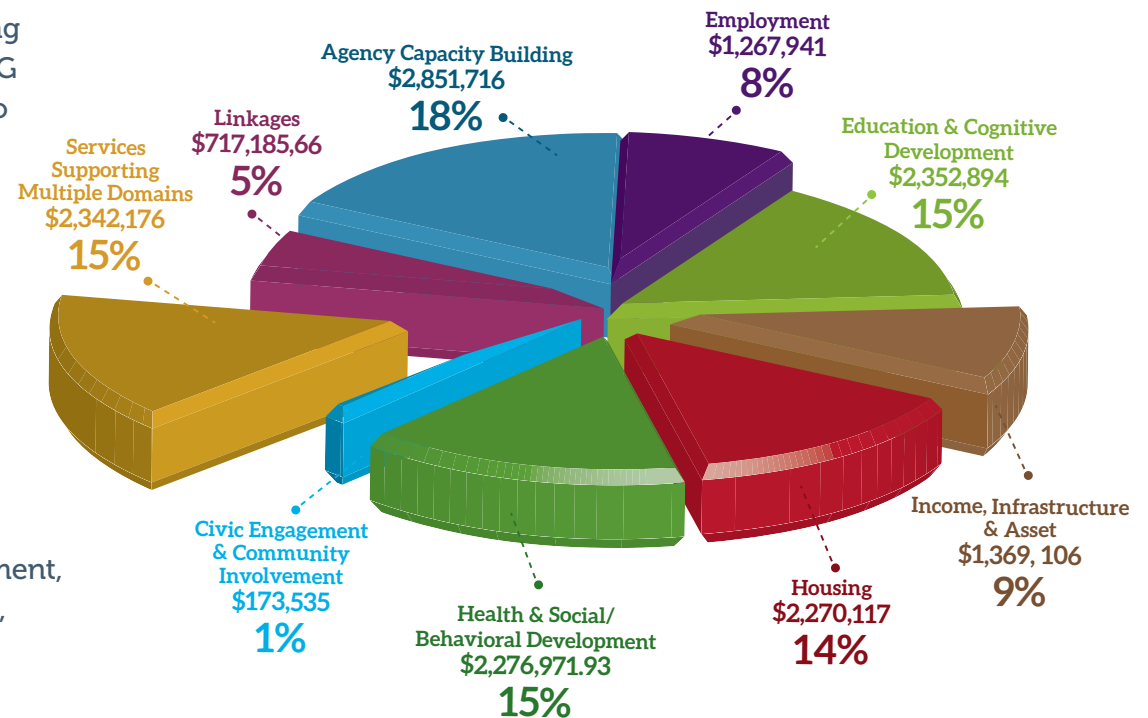
Federal CSBG .....	\$16,086,248
Federal Non-CSBG .....	\$444,796,489
State .....	\$159,035,292
Local .....	\$4,285,0040
Private .....	\$199,824,088
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$824,027,159</b>

**The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)** is the only federal program with the explicit and overarching goal of reducing poverty, regardless of its cause. CSBG pursues this goal by providing critical core funding to the national network of Community Action Agencies (CAAs) – local and trusted institutions – that serve our most needy children, families, and seniors, by providing programs and initiatives with documented success and enormous payback to society.

## CSBG funding supports projects that:

- ▶ Lessen poverty in communities
- ▶ Address the needs of low-income individuals including the homeless, migrants and the elderly
- ▶ Provide services and activities addressing employment, education, better use of available income, housing, nutrition, emergency services and/or health

In MA, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) manages CSBG and distributes funds to our 23 CAAs. This flexible resource provides up to 10% of the CAA's funding.



Results are subject to change Office of Community Services (OCS) approval.  
 \*Summary results are subject to change pending completion of FY18 data cleaning process and feedback from OCS.



# Community Action Programs



This list includes the most common programs that agencies offer; however, please note that all agencies tailor their program mix to their individual community's needs. CAA's offer up to 75 different services.



## Early Education & Care

- Head Start
- Child Care Vouchers
- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Parent Education



## Adult Education & Workforce Development

- Job Readiness/Training
- Job Creation
- Literacy
- Adult Basic Education



## Energy Programs

- Fuel Assistance
- Utility Assistance
- Heating Repair & Assistance
- Weatherization



## Money Management

- Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)
- Financial Education/Counseling
- Incentivized Savings Program



## Housing Programs

- Rent & Mortgage Assistance
- Assistance to Prevent Eviction
- Landlord/Tenant Mediation
- Tenant Organizing



## Food, Nutrition & Health

- Food Banks & Pantries
- Congregate Feeding
- SNAP



In addition to programs and services that help individuals and families, CAAs lead and participate in community-level work collaborating with, local partners to create change. Across the state, CAAs are working to

create and preserve affordable housing, provide financial education and access to banking for long term economic stability, improve food access and security, address substance abuse disorders and much more.

# Community Action in Action!

## Community Action Network comes together to help Merrimack Valley in wake of gas disaster September 2018

The Merrimack Valley's Columbia Gas explosions on September 13, 2018 left more than 60 structures damaged and **more than 13,000 households**, businesses and municipal entities (including schools) without natural gas service and uncertainty about when it might be reinstated. Temporary displacement from homes as well as school and business closures continued to adversely affect thousands months after the initial disaster.

Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (GLCAC) took the operational lead in distributing resources from the Greater Lawrence Disaster Relief Fund. The GLDRF, established through Essex Community Foundation, delivered ongoing case management and supported impacted families with immediate needs. GLCAC set up a system to disperse funds to families and helped them make connections to case managers. **More than 400 volunteers staffed more than 2,500 slots over a five-week period in three drop-in centers: Lawrence, Andover and North Andover.** All 22 of the other Community Action Agencies in MA sent skilled staff from their agencies to staff these centers. The local support work continues.

**It truly takes a village!**



**Processing over 11,000 relief applications in five weeks was a monumental effort and it could not have happened without the support of the network of communication action agencies in Massachusetts.** When we sent out the call to the network, I knew that the CAAs would know how to handle our challenge, but I was overwhelmed with their enormous support. Every CAA sent volunteers, even from as far away as Western Mass and the Cape, who made the two-hour drive to Lawrence . . . some sent volunteers several times. Together we filled 2500 volunteer timeslots and countless hours of time. Whenever I think about it now it still makes me humbled with gratitude."

*~ Evelyn Friedman, Executive Director, Greater Lawrence Community Action Council*

## Heating Help Statewide Campaign



Fuel Assistance, or the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), is a federal program that helps low income households address energy costs. The program is administered in Massachusetts

by a network of 22 community-based organizations, including 20 Community Action Agencies (CAAs), the City of Cambridge, and the New England Farm Workers Council. Together, up to 160,000 households each year are served.

We held our first statewide kickoff to the Fuel Assistance season, which runs November 1- April 30, at South Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC) in Framingham in late October 2017. With support from both U.S. Senator Warren through a video message and U.S. Senator Markey with his regional director in attendance to deliver his message, as well the Administration for Children and Families and Children's Healthwatch at Boston Medical Center, it was a great way to kickoff the program and bring attention to the need across the state.

The statewide kickoff is now an annual event, the official start of the season and the campaign. We held the second annual kickoff at Citizens for Citizens (CFC) in Fall River. We heard from U.S. Congressman Keating, MA Senator Rodrigues, MA Representative Fiola and the Governor's office about the importance of the program. The State Fire Marshall Peter Ostroskey reminded us of the dangers of alternative heat sources that people resort to when they don't have heat. We also heard from a client, Sandra, who couldn't be more grateful for the help when she needed it.

Bottom line is "You Work Hard, Heat is Expensive." Fuel assistance and energy efficiency programs are economic support and health and safety programs. Visit [www.heatinghelpma.org](http://www.heatinghelpma.org) for more information.



## Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Statewide Kickoff



We held our annual statewide Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program kickoff at the end of January 2018 at Greater Lawrence Community Action Council in Lawrence. We were joined by the Commissioner of the MA Department of Revenue and the Office of the State Treasurer, four state representatives and two state senators, MassBudget and Children's Healthwatch. We heard from a VITA volunteer and GLCAC Board President.

The majority of Community Action Agencies run VITA sites (we are responsible for almost half of the 80 VITA sites in the state and more than half of the clients

served). The 80 sites serve more than 30,000 low-income taxpayers bringing back more than \$60M in tax credits. IRS-certified volunteers at the sites not only offer free tax preparation to low-income wage earners, they also ensure access to the Earned Income Tax and other tax credits. In addition, they work with taxpayers to plan for future, save and access other critical services.

The VITA program helps bridge the wage gap. It is one way that we help individuals overcome the structural barriers that exist to move people out of poverty.





# The National Community Action Network



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 we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

Source: Community Action Partnership

## Community Action's Reach

The nation's 1,000+ Community Action Agencies are a robust, national, state, and local force, reaching children and families in **99% of America's counties** with life-changing services that create pathways to opportunity and prosperity. Annually, we reach:

**15 million**  
low-income  
individuals



**3.9 million**  
children



**2.3 million**  
seniors



**6.2 million**  
families



**1.7 million**  
people  
with disabilities



## The National Need

Despite America's economic recovery, millions are still living in poverty and even more are just one missed paycheck away from hardship. Whether our neighbors are experiencing a temporary setback or have been priced out of affordable housing – too many struggle to achieve a good quality of life.

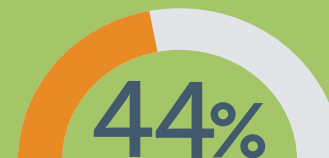
Nearly  
**40 million** people in  
America live poverty.

People of color are  
disproportionately impacted



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

**6.1 million**  
Americans are unemployed



of Americans can't cover a  
**\$400 emergency expense**





Poverty is a national problem, requiring improved national organization and support. But this attack, to be effective, must also be organized at the state and local level. "

~ President Lyndon B. Johnson





105 Chauncy Street  
Suite 301  
Boston, MA 02111  
(617) 357-6086  
MASSCAP.org