The Causes and Conditions of Poverty

Bruce Wright
First State Community Action Agency, Inc.
“If poverty is a disease that infects the entire community in the form of unemployment and violence, failing schools and broken homes, then we can’t just treat those symptoms in isolation. We have to heal that entire community.”

— President Barack Obama, 44th President of the U.S.
Our Mission

To work towards the elimination of poverty and lessen the effects of poverty on people of low-income
First State provides over 20 programs aimed at building whole, empowered families and inclusive, healthy communities equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to thrive.
Community Action Agencies (CAAs) were created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to combat poverty in geographically designated areas. Status as a CAA is the result of an explicit designation by local or state government. CAAs have a tripartite board structure intended to promote the participation of the entire community in the reduction or elimination of poverty. CAAs seek to involve the entire community in assessing local needs and attacking the causes and conditions of poverty.
What makes us unique?

Community Action Agencies reach low-income people in their own communities. We engage them in a systematic process with the end goal of addressing their needs through a comprehensive range of coordinated services and activities that will have a measurable impact on their lives.
The National Community Action Network Theory of Change

Community Action Goals

**Goal 1:** Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.

**Goal 2:** Communities where people with low incomes live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.

**Goal 3:** People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.

Services and Strategies

- Employment
- Education & Cognitive Development
- Income, Infrastructure & Asset Building
- Health/Social Behavioral Development
- Housing
- Civic Engagement & Community Involvement

Core Principles

- Recognize the complexity of the issues of poverty
- Build local solutions specific to local needs
- Support family stability as a foundation for economic security
- Advocate for systemic change
- Pursue positive individual, family, and community level change
- Maximize involvement of people with low incomes
- Engage local community partners and citizens in solutions
- Leverage state, federal, and community resources

Performance Management

- How well does the network operate?
- What difference does the network make?

- Local Organizational Standards
- State and Federal Accountability Measures
- Results Oriented Management and Accountability System
- Individual and Family National Performance Indicators
- Community National Performance Indicators

A national network of over 1,000 high performing Community Action Agencies, State Associations, State offices, and Federal partners supported by the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) to mobilize communities to fight poverty.

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• Identify needs and resources of the community
• Develop priorities to address needs based on the agency mission and vision
• Identify outcomes and indicators that align with the agency priorities and Community Needs Assessment
• Design & develop services and activities based on the identified outcomes to be achieved, priorities established, and resources available
## Poverty by the numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Poverty Rate</td>
<td>Overall Poverty Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(39.7 million people)</td>
<td>(126,986 people)</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Talk Poverty [https://talkpoverty.org/basics/](https://talkpoverty.org/basics/)
Dover

Overall Poverty Rate
19.4%
Delaware was one of only two states to see a rise in its poverty rate between 2016 and 2017, according to data released in the U.S. Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey.

How Can You Help?

- Strategic, meaningful partnerships
  - Maximizing impact
- Information sharing
  - Knowledge
  - Resources
- Unified messaging
  - Advocacy
“If human beings are perceived as potentials rather than problems, as possessing strengths instead of weaknesses, as unlimited rather than dull and unresponsive, then they thrive and grow to their capabilities.”

— Barbara Bush, former First Lady of the U.S.