

# COMMUNITY ACTION IN IOWA



**Iowa Department of Human Rights  
Division of Community Action Agencies  
2021 Annual Report**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Community Action ..... 3
- Division of Community Action Agencies ..... 4
- Community Services Block Grant Program..... 5
- Weatherization Assistance Program ..... 6
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program ..... 7
- Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) ..... 8
- FaDSS Performance Outcomes..... 9
- Community Action Agencies in Iowa..... 10
- Commission on Community Action Agencies..... 11
- Division of Community Action Agencies Staff ..... 11



“Because it is right, because it is wise, and because, for the first time in our history, it is possible to conquer poverty, I submit for the consideration of the Congress and the country, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.”

*-President Lyndon B. Johnson*

## COMMUNITY ACTION



In 1964, Community Action was introduced with the enactment of the Economic Opportunity Act. The Act was the centerpiece of the "War on Poverty", and was a major thrust of the "Great Society" legislative agenda of the Lyndon Johnson administration. The ambitious purpose of the Economic Opportunity Act was to mobilize the human and financial resources of the nation to combat the causes and consequences of poverty in the United States.

The Economic Opportunity Act developed and provided funding for a nationwide network of community action agencies. Community action agencies create, coordinate, and deliver an array of comprehensive programs and services to people living in poverty. These programs and services reduce conditions of poverty, revitalize communities, and enable low-income families and low-income individuals to secure opportunities needed for them to become self-sufficient. Today, there are more than 1,000 community action agencies throughout the United States.

Community action agencies are private nonprofit and public organizations. They are governed by a uniquely structured tripartite volunteer board of directors, comprised equally of elected public officials, private sector representatives, and low-income representatives. This structure is designed to promote the participation of the entire community in assessing local needs and attacking the causes and conditions of poverty.

In PY 2021, Iowa community action agencies assisted over 113,000 households and 265,000 individuals; administered over \$353 million in federal, state, local, and private funding; and received over \$21 million in government and business in-kind services and donated items. These agencies also partnered with over 5,600 public and private organizations that provide programs and services to low-income Iowans; and were assisted by thousands of volunteers – contributing over 307,000 hours of service and support to their local communities.





## **DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES**

The Division of Community Action Agencies (DCAA) is located within the Iowa Department of Human Rights and is the focal point for community action agency activities within Iowa government.

The purpose of the DCAA is to strengthen, supplement, and coordinate efforts to develop the full potential of each citizen by recognizing certain community action agencies and supporting certain community-based programs delivered by community action agencies.

The DCAA administers four anti-poverty programs: Community Services Block Grant Program, Weatherization Assistance Program, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Family Development and Self-Sufficiency program.

### *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.”*

# COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG) is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These federal funds are distributed to Iowa's 16 community action agencies, which create, coordinate, and deliver many programs and services to low-income Iowans. The CSBG funds the central management and core activities of these agencies. The agencies use the funds to mobilize additional public and private resources to combat the central causes of poverty in their communities and to assist low-income families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and ensure their basic needs are met.

In PY 2021, Iowa's CSBG funding was over \$8 million. In addition, in PY 2020 Iowa received \$10.8 million in CSBG supplemental funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Iowa's CSBG CARES Act funds are available through PY 2021.

Iowa's community action agencies use their CSBG funds to support services and activities that are designed to assist low-income families and individuals to:

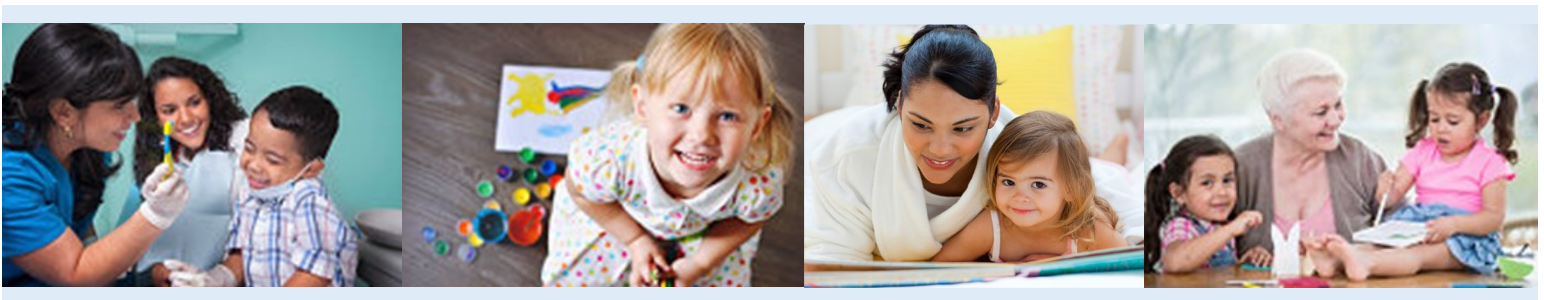
- Remove obstacles and solve problems that block the achievement of self-sufficiency
- Secure and retain meaningful employment
- Attain an adequate education
- Make better use of available income
- Obtain and maintain adequate housing and a suitable living environment
- Obtain emergency assistance to meet the immediate and urgent family and individual needs
- Achieve greater participation in the affairs of communities
- Address the needs of youth in low-income communities
- Make more effective use of, and to coordinate with, other programs with a similar purpose

In PY 2021, Iowa's community action agencies provided services to over 113,000 households and 265,000 individuals. Characteristics of the households and individuals served by Iowa's community action agencies:

- 64.5% were households living at or below 100% of the federal poverty level
- 53.2% received food assistance from Iowa's Food Assistance program
- 52.0% were individuals unemployed (aged 18 and above)
- 39.4% were infants, children, and youth (aged 0 to 18)
- 22.2% were single parent households
- 16.3% were individuals with a disabling condition
- 15.9% were individuals employed full-time (aged 18 and above)
- 15.0% were individuals without a high school education (aged 25 and above)
- 10.9% were individuals employed part-time (aged 18 and above)
- 6.9% were individuals without health insurance

For more information about Iowa's Community Services Block Grant Program, please visit our website:

<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/csbq>



# WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Division of Community Action Agencies (DCAA) administers the federal grant program – Weatherization Assistance Program. This is the nation’s largest residential energy efficiency program. The program reduces the burden of energy costs to low-income and fixed-income persons, particularly the elderly, disabled, and families with children, by improving the energy efficiency of their homes and ensuring their health and safety. In PY 2021, 909 homes were weatherized.

Professionally trained technicians in the program use a computerized energy audit to determine the most appropriate and cost-effective energy-saving measures that should be applied to the house. Typical measures include sealing air leaks, installing insulation in attics, walls, and crawlspaces, tuning and upgrading heating systems, and installing low-cost energy conservation measures.

The program also conducts a health and safety check on every home weatherized. This consists of inspecting all combustion appliances for carbon monoxide and for the proper venting of gases. Unsafe furnaces are repaired or replaced. Homes are also inspected for other possible health and safety problems such as mold and unsafe electrical wiring. Carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors are installed in all homes.

The Weatherization Assistance Program partners with Iowa’s Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). While LIHEAP provides crisis relief by helping clients who have an immediate need for financial assistance with energy costs, the Weatherization Assistance Program provides clients with long-term financial relief by reducing the amount of energy their homes use. It addresses the core problem that low-income clients have with respect to their energy burden.

Besides the benefits of reducing low-income households’ energy use (houses weatherized in PY 2020 saved an average of \$246 in first-year fuel bill costs) and ameliorating many health and safety problems in the homes, the program also provides these additional benefits:

- Provides households with education in energy-saving practices
- Increases the comfort in the homes that are weatherized
- Reduces the nation’s dependence on foreign oil
- Reduces carbon emissions and other air pollutants
- Preserves housing stock for low-income households

In PY 2021, the DCAA received \$5.9 million from U.S. Department of Energy, \$5.0 million from LIHEAP, and \$3.4 million from the investor-owned utility companies.

For more information about Iowa’s Weatherization Assistance Program, please visit our website:

<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/weatherization>





# LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Division of Community Action Agencies administers the federally funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP is designed to assist qualifying low-income households in the payment of a portion of their winter heating costs, and to encourage energy conservation through client education and weatherization. All households applying for LIHEAP are simultaneously making application for weatherization assistance. In PY 2021, over 80,000 Iowa households applied for LIHEAP assistance.

LIHEAP payments are weighted to award higher benefits to targeted households. These households include the elderly, disabled, working poor, and households with children under six years of age. Additionally, benefits are weighted to account for a household's level of poverty. Households certified eligible for LIHEAP (those at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines) are protected from disconnection of gas or electric service from November 1st until April 30th under Iowa's winter moratorium law.

Beyond regular assistance payments, LIHEAP has two additional components: Assessment and Resolution and the Emergency Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP). Activities covered under the Assessment and Resolution component include delivering client energy conservation education, referral to outside services, family needs assessment, budget counseling, vendor negotiation, household energy use assessment, household energy use planning, and low-cost energy efficiency measures. The ECIP component provides immediate assistance to households to alleviate life-threatening situations. ECIP payments are made for repair or replacement of a furnace or heating system, obtaining temporary shelter, purchase of blankets and heaters, emergency fuel deliveries, purchasing or repairing air conditioning equipment when medically necessary, purchasing fans, and transporting clients to cooling centers during times of extreme heat.

For more information about Iowa's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, please visit our website:

<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/liheap>

## PY 2021 LIHEAP FACTS AND FIGURES

- Iowa received \$54.7 million in federal funds (In addition, Iowa received \$78.5 million in supplemental funding under the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. Iowa's ARPA funds are available through PY 2022.)
- The average statewide LIHEAP benefit was \$455
- 98.0% of households assisted by LIHEAP do NOT receive TANF assistance
- 64.7% of households assisted live in single family homes
- 58.7% of households assisted are below 100% of the federal poverty level
- 50.0% of households assisted have a disabled member
- 36.7% of households assisted have an elderly household member
- 17.2% of households assisted have a child under 6 years of age



# FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY (FaDSS)

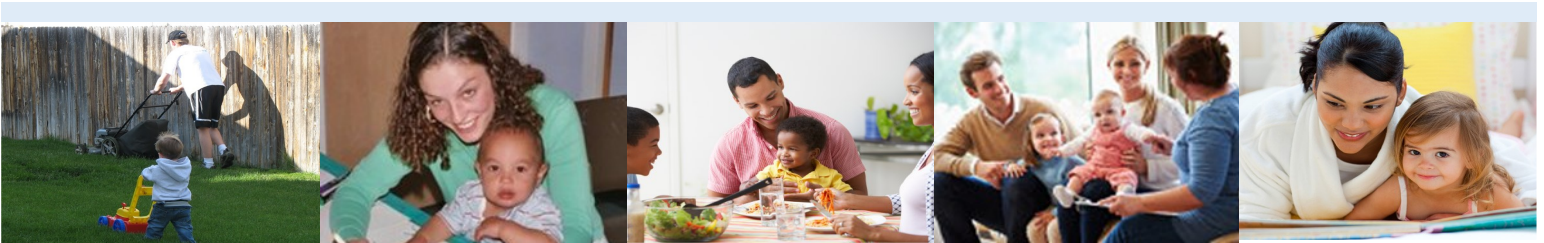
Iowa's Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) grant program was created by the 1988 Iowa General Assembly to assist Family Investment Program (FIP) families with significant or multiple barriers reach self-sufficiency. FaDSS provides services that promote, empower, and nurture families toward economic and emotional self-sufficiency. The foundation of FaDSS is regular home visits with families using a strength-based approach.

The FaDSS program is administered by the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Community Action Agencies. The FaDSS Council serves as an advisory body and awards grants for the FaDSS program. The Council consists of fourteen members and two members from each chamber of the general assembly serving as ex-officio members. The Council meets at least four times per year.

FaDSS is provided in all of Iowa's 99 counties through a network of seventeen agencies (community action agencies and non-profit social service agencies). The program is delivered to families through home visits by certified Family Development Specialists. Specialists are mandatory child abuse reporters and are required to complete criminal and child abuse background checks. Over 90% of specialists and supervisors have at least a Bachelor's degree and are required to complete an 8-day family development certification program.

FaDSS is an evidenced based, holistic, strength based, home visiting program that focuses on preventive services and facilitates long-term family change for families receiving FIP benefits. In PY 2021, FaDSS served 2,198 families. A total of 888 families completed the program during the program year, including 1,758 children. FaDSS families earned total wages of \$6,623,924 resulting in a FIP savings of \$975,610.

During PY 2021, FaDSS was funded through an appropriation of \$6,192,834 in TANF and State of Iowa general funds. In addition, other supports of \$1,466,461 were provided to supplement FaDSS services.



## The FaDSS program provides:

- Activities to increase work preparedness
- Goal setting and goal attainment skills
- Parenting skills development
- Child protection services
- Families with links to informal and formal connections within their community
- Assessment of family strengths
- Budgeting skills development
- Role modeling of healthy behaviors
- Self-advocacy skills development
- Assistance to communities throughout Iowa to respond to low-income families facing multiple issues in a strength based manner

For more information about Iowa's Family Development and Self-Sufficiency program, please visit our website:  
<https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/fadss>



# FaDSS PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES (PY 2021)

## **Increased Employment**

- 13% of FaDSS households had at least one adult employed at program entry. At exit, 45% of households had at least one adult employed.
- 589 families were involved in activities designed to increase work preparedness skills. These activities, provided by FaDSS, included resume writing, mock interviews, and assistance with completing job applications.

## **Increased Income**

- Families that were employed at exit had an average monthly family income of \$1,439, an increase of \$1,206.

## **Decreased Family Investment Program (FIP) Payments**

- At entry, families averaged \$379 in FIP payments. At exit, the average FIP payment for families was \$139, a decrease of \$240.

## **Achievement of Education Goals**

- 121 adults that exited the FaDSS program achieved a change in their education status.

Of the 121 adults that achieved a change in their education status:

- 28 completed a GED/HS Diploma
- 41 completed some college courses
- 31 completed a certification program
- 7 completed an Associate's Degree
- 5 completed a Bachelor's Degree

## **Increased Access to Services and Treatment - Domestic Violence**

- 230 FaDSS families that exited the program had experienced domestic violence as identified through self-disclosure or positive screening.
- 89% of the families who screened positive accessed necessary and appropriate assistance. The FaDSS program assisted 61% of families with accessing domestic violence assistance.

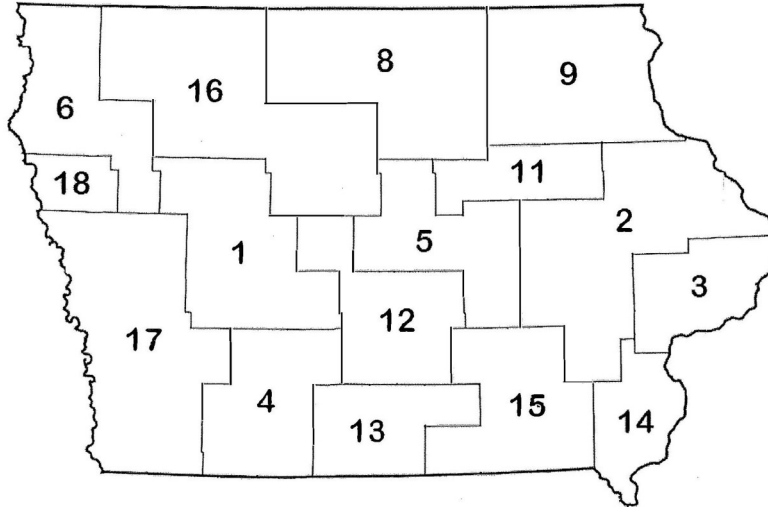
## **Increased Access to Services and Treatment - Mental Health**

- 438 adults that exited the program had a substantiated mental health issue.
- 91% of those adults with a mental health barrier accessed treatment. The FaDSS program assisted 87% of adults with gaining access to treatment.

## **Increased Access to Treatment - Substance Abuse**

- 148 adults that exited the program had a substantiated substance abuse issue.
- 86% of those adults with a substance abuse barrier accessed treatment. The FaDSS program assisted 73% with gaining access to treatment.

# COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES IN IOWA



- 1. New Opportunities, Inc.**  
**(712) 792-9266**  
Counties served: Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Dallas, Greene, Guthrie, and Sac
- 2. Hawkeye Area Community Action Program, Inc.**  
**(319) 393-7811**  
Counties served: Benton, Delaware, Dubuque, Iowa, Jackson, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington
- 3. Community Action of Eastern Iowa**  
**(563) 324-3236**  
Counties served: Cedar, Clinton, Muscatine, and Scott
- 4. MATURA Action Corporation**  
**(641) 782-8431**  
Counties served: Adair, Adams, Madison, Ringgold, Taylor, and Union
- 5. Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc.**  
**(641) 752-7162**  
Counties served: Hardin, Marshall, Poweshiek, Story, and Tama
- 6. Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc.**  
**(712) 786-2001**  
Counties served: Cherokee, Ida, Lyon, Plymouth, and Sioux
- 8. North Iowa Community Action Organization**  
**(641) 423-8993**  
Counties served: Butler, Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth
- 9. Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation**  
**(563) 382-8436**  
Counties served: Allamakee, Bremer, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek
- 11. Operation Threshold**  
**(319) 291-2065**  
Counties served: Black Hawk, Buchanan, and Grundy
- 12. IMPACT Community Action Partnership**  
**(515) 274-1334**  
Counties served: Boone, Jasper, Marion, Polk, and Warren
- 13. South Central Iowa Community Action Program**  
**(641) 774-8133**  
Counties served: Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Monroe, Wayne
- 14. Community Action of Southeast Iowa**  
**(319) 753-0193**  
Counties served: Des Moines, Henry, Lee, and Louisa
- 15. Sieda Community Action**  
**(641) 682-8741**  
Counties served: Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren, and Wapello
- 16. Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc.**  
**(712) 859-3885**  
Counties served: Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Hamilton, Humboldt, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright
- 17. West Central Community Action**  
**(712) 755-5135**  
Counties served: Cass, Crawford, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Monona, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby
- 18. Community Action of Siouxland**  
**(712) 274-1610**  
County served: Woodbury

# COMMISSION ON COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

The Commission on Community Action Agencies was created by legislative action and is composed of nine members who are appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the Iowa Senate.

The purpose of the Commission is to review the progress of programs of the Division of Community Action Agencies.

## COMMISSIONERS (as of June 30, 2022)

<b>Bobbi Baker-Maynes</b>	Corning
<b>Anna Brown</b>	DeWitt
<b>Kevin Brown</b>	Spencer
<b>Ajit Kumar</b>	Clive
<b>John Murphy</b>	Dubuque
<b>Niki Conrad</b>	Fort Dodge
<b>Mary Whisenand</b>	Des Moines

Ex-Officio — **San Wong**, Director (Iowa Department of Human Rights)

## DIVISION OF COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES STAFF

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