



# 2023 Annual Report

Community Action Agencies Subdivision

Division of Community Access and Eligibility



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## 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 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 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 Program Year (PY) 2023, Iowa community action agencies assisted over 117,000 households and 268,000 individuals; administered over \$297 million in federal, state, local, and private funding; and received over \$25 million in government and business in-kind services and donated items. These agencies also partnered with over 6,300 public and private organizations that provide programs and services to low-income Iowans; and were assisted by thousands of volunteers – contributing over 351,000 hours of service and support to their local communities.



## Community Action Agencies Subdivision

The **Community Action Agencies (CAA)** Subdivision is in the Community Access and Eligibility Division within the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. The CAA Subdivision is the focal point for community action agency activities within Iowa government.

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

The CAA administers five anti-poverty programs: Community Services Block Grant Program, Weatherization Assistance Program, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Low-Income Household Water 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 2023, Iowa’s CSBG funding was over \$8 million. 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 2023, Iowa's community action agencies provided services to over 117,000 households and 268,000 individuals. Characteristics of the households and individuals served by Iowa's communication action agencies:

**56.4%** were households living at or below 100% of the federal poverty.

**57.5%** received food assistance from Iowa's Food Assistance program (SNAP)

**67.2%** were individuals unemployed (aged 18 and above)

**38.9%** were infants, children, and youth (aged 0 to 18)

**21.5%** were single parent households

**16.9%** were individuals with a disabling condition

**18.0%** were individuals employed full-time (aged 18 and above)

**15.6%** were individuals without a high school education (aged 25 and above)



## Weatherization Assistance Program

The federally funded **Weatherization Assistance Program** is the nation's largest residential energy efficiency program. The program reduces the burden of energy costs for households with low incomes, particularly those with elderly or disabled persons, and families with children, by improving the energy efficiency of their homes and ensuring their health and safety. In PY 2023, 1,184 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 home. 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

customers who have an immediate need for financial assistance with energy costs, the Weatherization Assistance Program provides customers with long-term financial relief by reducing the amount of energy their homes use.

Besides the benefits of reducing low-income households' energy use (houses weatherized in PY 2023 saved an average of \$464 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 2023, the Weatherization Assistance Program received:





## Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

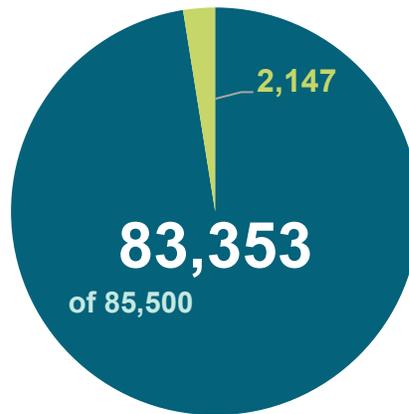
The **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** is a federally funded program designed to assist qualifying low-income households in the payment of a portion of their winter heating costs, and to encourage energy conservation through customer education and weatherization. All households applying for LIHEAP are simultaneously making application for weatherization assistance.

### **PY 2023 LIHEAP FACTS AND FIGURES**

- Iowa received \$59.4 million in federal funds (\$50.2 in Regular Annual Appropriations, and \$9.2 in Emergency Supplemental funding)
- The average statewide one-time LIHEAP benefit was \$468
- 41.2% of households assisted are homeowners
- 54.1% of households assisted are below 100% of the federal poverty level
- 41.5% of households assisted have a member with a disability
- 29.5% of households assisted have an elderly member
- 22.8% of households assisted have a child under 6 years of age

## PY 2023 LIHEAP Assistance

In PY 2023, over 85,500 Iowa households applied for LIHEAP assistance. Of those, 83,353 received some type of assistance.



■ Received ■ Did Not Qualify

LIHEAP payments are weighted to award higher benefits to targeted households. These households include the elderly, disabled, 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 also protected from disconnection of gas or electric service from November 1 until April 1 under Iowa’s winter moratorium law.

**Beyond regular assistance payments, LIHEAP has two additional components:**

1. Assessment and Resolution (also called A16) and
2. the Energy Crisis Intervention Payment (ECIP) assistance.

Activities covered under the A16 component include providing 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 related to access to energy for the purposes of heating/cooling. ECIP assistance may include payments made to vendors to avert disconnection from a fuel source or, if already disconnected, to reconnect to a fuel source, repair or replacement of a furnace or heating system, emergency deliveries of liquid propane or fuel oil, obtaining temporary shelter in severe weather conditions, provision of blankets and heaters, provision or repair of certain air conditioning equipment when medically necessary, provision of fans, and transporting customers to cooling centers during times of extreme heat.



## Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program

The federally funded **Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)** is a pilot crisis program designed to assist qualifying low-income households in the payment of drinking water and wastewater arrearages and associated fees/taxes to avert disconnection from a water source or, if already disconnected, to reconnect to a water source.

### **PY 2023 LIHWAP FACTS AND FIGURES**

- Iowa received \$10.1 million in federal funds for LIHWAP in 2021 with a 2-year obligation period (In PY22, Iowa utilized \$3.5 million in LIHWAP funds)
- The average statewide LIHWAP Crisis benefit was \$270
- 83.9% of households assisted are below 100% of the federal poverty level
- 31.2% of household assisted have a member with a disability
- 12.6% of households assisted have an elderly member
- 19.3% of households assisted have a child under 6 years of age

All households applying for LIHWAP are simultaneously making application for weatherization assistance. Over 12,000 Iowa households applied for LIHWAP assistance. LIHWAP shares eligibility criteria and an application with LIHEAP to help track benefits paid to targeted households. These households include the elderly, disabled, households with children under six years of age, and a household's level of poverty.

LIHWAP payments are crisis-related, so the benefit amount depends on the actual arrearages owed by the household with which the program can assist up to a maximum of \$2,500. LIHWAP payments can only be made to owners/operators of public water suppliers for water-related expenses. LIHWAP funds cannot be used for repair or replacement of a household's water system/equipment, the purchase or improvement of a household's lands or buildings, utility deposits for first-time service, non-water services (e.g. garbage, recycling, energy, etc.).

In October of 2022, Iowa was among the first states in the nation to fully implement LIHWAP. Currently, over 680 public water suppliers are actively participating and approximately 30,000 households have been assisted. This success led to Iowa being nationally recognized as a model program, which was highlighted in a short film commissioned by the White House in 2022 that included interviews with a local program beneficiary, as well as Community Action Agency staff and state program staff as part of a national campaign to help promote awareness of LIHWAP's role in addressing the issue of water affordability.

LIHWAP's pilot period ended March 31, 2024, and the program is closed.



## Family Development and Self-Sufficiency

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 partners with families to identify and achieve goals to move toward economic security and family stability. The foundation of FaDSS is regular home visits with families using a strength-based approach.

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.

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 a 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 2023, FaDSS served 2,143 families. A total of 844 families completed the program during the program year, including 1,680 children. FaDSS families earned total wages of \$9,945,899 resulting in a FIP savings of \$785,047.

During PY 2023, FaDSS was funded through an appropriation of \$7,192,834 in TANF and State of Iowa general funds. In addition, other supports of \$1,771,603 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



## FaDSS Performance Outcomes

### **Increased Employment**

24% of FaDSS households had at least one adult employed at program entry. At exit, 42% of households had at least one adult employed.

Thirty-five percent of 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 \$3,201 an increase of \$1,624.

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

At entry, families averaged \$330 in FIP payments. At exit, the average FIP payment for families was \$134, a decrease of \$196.

### **Achievement of Education Goals**

148 adults that exited the FaDSS program achieved a change in their education status. Of the 148 adults that achieved a change in their education status: 55 completed a GED/HS Diploma; 16 in progress of obtaining a change; 37 completed some college courses; 34 completed a certification program; 5 completed an Associate's Degree; 1 completed a Bachelor's Degree.

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

212 FaDSS families that exited the program had experienced domestic violence as identified through self-disclosure or positive screening.

79% of the families who screened positive accessed necessary and appropriate assistance. The FaDSS program assisted 59% of families with accessing domestic violence assistance.

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

419 adults that exited the program had a substantiated mental health issue.

87% of those adults with a mental health barrier accessed treatment. The FaDSS program assisted 89% of adults with gaining access to treatment.

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

135 adults that exited the program had a substantiated substance abuse issue.

87% of those adults with a substance abuse barrier accessed treatment. The FaDSS program assisted 84% 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) 4223-8993

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, Winneshiek*

**11. Operation Threshold**

(319) 291-2065

Counties served: *Black Hawk, Buchanan, and Grundy*

**12. IMPACT**

(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, and 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 Community Action Agencies Subdivision.

### COMMISSIONERS

- **John Murphy**, Dubuque - *Chair*
- **Bobbi Baker-Maynes**, Corning
- **Kevin Brown**, Spencer
- **Amanda Peterson**, Le Mars
- **Pastor Eugene Kiruhura**, Urbandale
- **Niki Conrad**, Fort Dodge
- 3 vacant positions