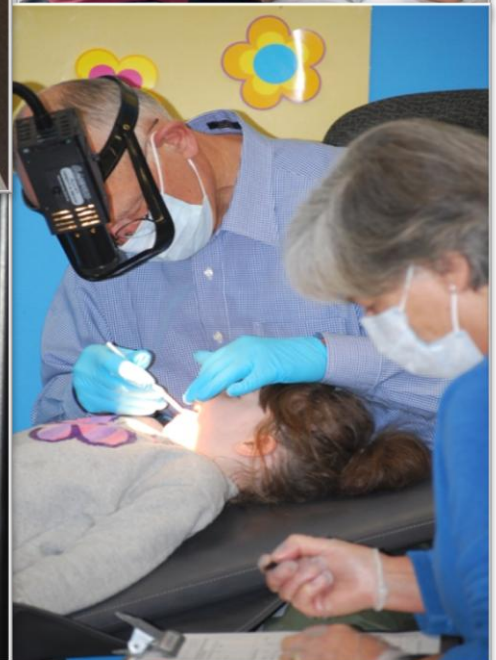


# Community Action in Wisconsin

*Creating Local Opportunities for Economic Self-Sufficiency*



## Poverty in Wisconsin

According to the US Census Bureau, more than 680,000 Wisconsin residents lived in poverty in 2009—a substantial increase from the 570,000 in 2008. The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) believes that all of us are vulnerable to poverty and that the costs and consequences of poverty have significant effects on everybody, whether poor or not. Poverty is the cause of unnecessary and preventable suffering among millions of Americans and thousands of Wisconsinites of all ages. The economic and social costs are enormous. We believe there are cost-effective solutions to poverty. Through efforts that create jobs that pay living wages with benefits, safe and affordable housing, accessible and affordable healthcare, and education we can eliminate poverty.

## How Do Community Action Agencies Help?

Every year, Community Action Agencies analyze community needs and identify strategies that will work best in attacking poverty; with a full scale 'community needs assessment' every three years to identify major poverty problems and needs of local residents and their communities. Each agency is unique because its programs reflect the needs of their local communities which are prioritized by its local Board of Directors. Please refer to the WISCAP website for more information on community action at [www.wiscap.org](http://www.wiscap.org).



### In 2010...

**358,240** very low income and working poor residents of Wisconsin turned to Community Action for help!

#### Of those residents:

- 75% have incomes below the federal poverty level
- 6,894 are homeless
- 40% are children
- 15% are over 55
- 55% are Female
- 66% are Caucasian
- 34% are people of color

To address the problems of poverty and create economic opportunity, Wisconsin's Community Action Agencies & Special Purpose Agencies mobilized 166 million dollars in federal, state, local and private resources.

**\$ 102 million - Federal**  
**\$ 26 million - Private**

**\$ 28 million - State**  
**\$ 10 million - Local**

## 2010 Program Highlights.....

### Community Action Helps Low Wage Workers Get Better Jobs and Benefits

The Community Action Skills Enhancement Program helps low-wage workers get better paying jobs and access to employer health care by getting a degree or certification at technical or community colleges. Participants receive help with tuition, child care and transportation to attend classes, as well as case management, referral and job search assistance. Sixteen CAAs & UMOS provided Skills Enhancement services with short-term federal funding. One hundred seventeen participants completed training and 70 obtained new employment. Graduates reported an average increase in income of nearly \$7,800 a year—a 65% increase! In addition, more than half gained access to employer-sponsored healthcare – a 400% increase. Each graduate is projected to earn over \$250,000 in increased wages during their lifetime. In July the program transitioned to the Wisconsin Dept. of Children & Families with funding from the state legislature of a \$250,000 annual appropriation. Currently 224 workers are enrolled in Skills in 41 counties. Despite the difficult economy, Skills Enhancement continues to prove to be a solid investment that is helping Wisconsin's low-wage workers gain greater economic self-sufficiency.



### Community Action Helps Rural Communities



Since 1992, WISCAP's Rural Community Assistance Program has provided training and on-site technical assistance to small, low or moderate income, rural communities on matters and issues related to water and wastewater systems development. Towns, villages, sanitary districts and tribal communities have received help with over 300 projects completed to date. During 2010, RCAP staff provided assistance to 18 communities implementing 34 water/wastewater system projects. Through this work, RCAP was able to leverage a total of over \$8 million in federal funds in three communities: the Village of Curtiss (Clark Co.), the Village of Gilman (Taylor Co.) and the Country Estates Sanitary District (Walworth Co.). Additionally, WISCAP's Tribal Circuit Rider Program provides assistance to all 11 Wisconsin tribes. In 2010, Energy Audits were conducted at the water and wastewater facilities of the Bad River Chippewa and the Forest County Potawatomi Tribes identifying potential significant energy savings.

## Community Action Leads to Safe and Affordable Housing

A priority for Wisconsin's Community Action network in 2010 remained the provision of safe and affordable housing for low-income households. WISCAP member agencies did this in many ways. Agencies helped 1,661 low-income families obtain and/or maintain safe and affordable housing in 2010. This assistance took the form of direct financial assistance, such as homeownership counseling, down payment assistance and foreclosure mitigation. In addition, over 20,158 low-income households were assisted by Wisconsin's Community Action network with emergency rent or mortgage assistance. Because of help from a WISCAP member agency, 203 families were able to purchase homes in their communities in 2010. As owners/managers of affordable housing properties, CAAs created 85 affordable housing units last year. On a larger scale, Community Action Agencies were also responsible for preserving and improving 6,280 affordable housing units. Finally, through leadership in local 'Continuum of Care' programs created to address the needs of homeless persons, WISCAP member agencies provided temporary shelter to 3,038 households.



## Community Action Leads to Less Energy Consumption and Lower Bills

Wisconsin led the nation in the provision of low-income weatherization in 2010 – and Wisconsin's Community Action Agencies led Wisconsin. Thirteen of WISCAP's CAAs weatherized a total of 8,540 homes last year using a combination of federal funds, stimulus money and state public benefits resources. Weatherization services – such as insulation and furnace repair/replacement – are proven to save, on average, 19% on the average utility bill, a yearly savings of \$336 per household served at current average fuel costs. In addition, five Community Action Agencies contracted with their local county government in 2010 to provide energy bill payment assistance to eligible low-income households. These agencies – serving eight counties – provided over 73,000 households with one-time bill payment assistance during the year.

## Community Action Advances Food Security



Thirteen CAAs and 3 non-CAA partners coordinated the distribution of 13 million pounds of commodities worth \$10.5 million dollars to 329 food pantries, meal sites and shelters in 71 counties during 2010. Food pantries in the network served an average of 185,000 people each month, an increase of 43% over 2007 and continuing to set all-time records. Pantries distributed an additional 38 million pounds of private sector foods. Meal sites & shelters in the network served an average of 151,000 meals each month. The Social Development Commission's Youth Food Program served over 2 million meals and snacks to Milwaukee children through the Summer Food Program and Family Day Care Providers. The Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.'s CAC Gleaners food recovery program distributed nearly 1 million pounds of prepared and perishable food in Dane County.

## Creating Jobs and Businesses

Wisconsin's CAAs have provided business development services to low-income entrepreneurs since 1989 through the Jobs & Business Development Program (JBD). With funding from the WI Department of Workforce Development and the WI Department of Health Services, JBD staff are able to assist aspiring entrepreneurs to develop business, financial & marketing plans and obtain traditional and alternative bank financing. In 2010 eight CAAs & Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council helped launch 60 new small businesses that created 92 new jobs. JBD also helped 24 existing businesses to create 25 new jobs & preserve 41 more. JBD effectively leveraged nearly \$6 dollars for every \$1 in state funds invested in the program. Four CAAs utilized other funds to assist non-low income businesses to expand, creating 71 additional jobs.



## Contributing to Economic Recovery & Serving Families



Wisconsin's Community Action Agencies received funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to help the victims of the economic recession and to create jobs. Over 120,000 Wisconsin residents received ARRA help from their Community Action Agency during the period from July 2009 through December 2010. CAAs used funds to create 574 jobs and retain an additional 426 jobs in their communities. Agencies used funds to address critical community needs helping families stay in their homes; helping struggling homeowners avoid foreclosure; helping renters avoid eviction; preventing utility shut-offs; and providing budgeting and financial literacy services. In addition, Wisconsin CAPs weatherized a total of 11,618 homes utilizing ARRA and other funds and established 170 sub-contracts with local contractors, businesses, vendors and other partners performing weatherization work during the 18 months ending December 2010.

# The Wisconsin Community Action Network

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## Social Development Commission

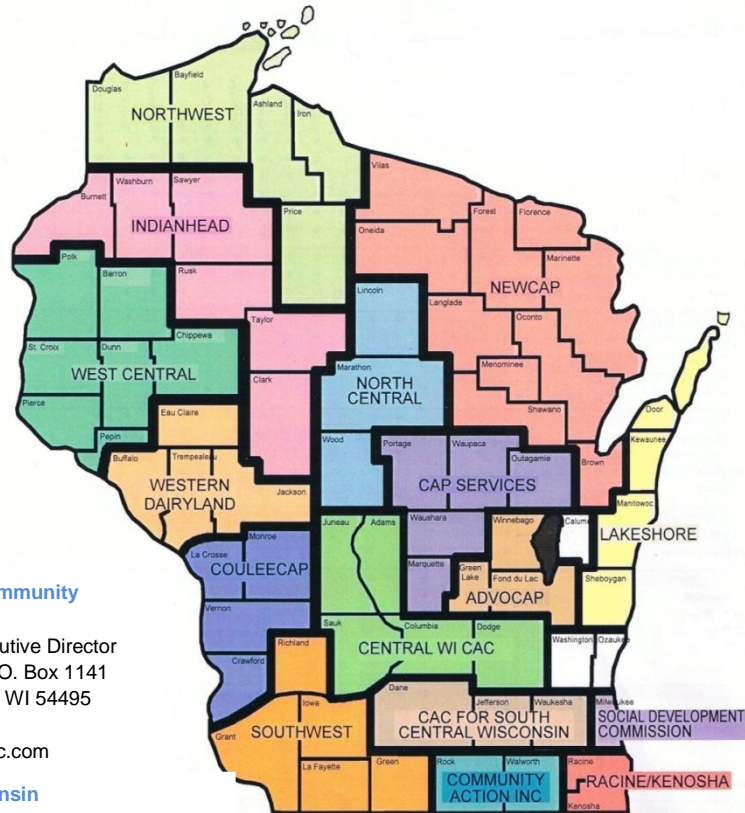
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## WHAT IS WISCAP?

Wisconsin Community Action Program Association is the statewide voluntary association of Wisconsin's 16 Community Action Agencies and 3 special purpose agencies with statewide anti-poverty missions: the Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, the Foundation for Rural Housing, and the United Migrant Opportunity Services.

The Association was incorporated on March 1, 1974 with the intent of its members that the cause of economic self-sufficiency for Wisconsin's low income households would be strengthened by working together on issues of policy, resource mobilization, training & development and advocacy.

For over 35 years, WISCAP has served the needs of its member agencies in various ways: helping to identify and sponsor professional training in anti-poverty areas, facilitating quarterly meetings of Community Action Agency leadership staff and board members, serving as a conduit for resource development needs of its members, advocating for public policy conducive to the locally-developed goals of its member agencies and advocating for laws, rules and regulations which support economic opportunity efforts, community development, and locally-designed strategies and procedures.

WISCAP is organized as a private non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors comprised of the Executive Director from each of its member agencies. Core funding for WISCAP is provided through member agency dues. Program and training funds are provided in part by the State of Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Community Services, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the generous contributions from sponsors of our conferences and training events.

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### 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.