

WISCAP

Wisconsin's Poverty Fighting Network

DOWNER

TEMPORARILY CLOSED
DUE TO CORONA
STAY SAFE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

POVERTY IN WISCONSIN

As Wisconsin confronted the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were reminded that while all populations suffer during such a moment, disasters and emergencies almost always disproportionately affect people living in poverty. And, while the immediate public health impacts of COVID-19 became apparent, a slow-moving storm of economic and emotional hardship followed. The pandemic put remarkable stress on all sectors and regions of the state, including poor households, low wage workers, small businesses, and family farms. As the coronavirus spread throughout 2020, we saw these Wisconsinites especially hard hit by the economic shock. We witnessed rising rates of unemployment, increases in food insecurity, record numbers of people unable to pay the rent or mortgage and facing eviction or foreclosure, unparalleled small business layoffs, closures and hardship, and thousands of entrepreneurs asking for business survival planning and emergency grants to sustain operations.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, however, a shameful number of Wisconsin families were already struggling to make ends meet, forcing us to consider the many sides to economic security, as well as the essential role of advocates and front-line



Photo courtesy of Ken Mattinson
Moment captured at Franklin Field,
home of the Milwaukee Milkmen
minor league baseball team.

service providers in realizing that goal. In 2020, our statewide association of sixteen Community Action Agencies and two special purpose agencies remained on the frontlines in towns and cities across the state, helping meet people's basic needs for housing, energy, weatherization, food security, transportation, education, and business development. For the year, the community action network responded by distributing over \$28.4 million in Wisconsin Emergency Rent Assistance (WRAP) funds to more than 14,000 households in every Wisconsin county, served 164,000 people monthly at 266 pantries, provided energy assistance to 18,552 households, and extended technical assistance to 134 existing business, thereby preserving 262 full-time jobs that were in danger. Community action made a difference.

The American broadcaster and historian Studs Terkel once observed that work is "a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread." The same might be said for our collective efforts to fight poverty. Born out of the "War on Poverty," community action agencies across Wisconsin have long assumed a dual role of helping households with their immediate needs while working for a more just society. This was certainly true in 2020, and as we turn toward a new year, that essential mission remains.

Brad Paul, Executive Director

ABOUT WISCAP

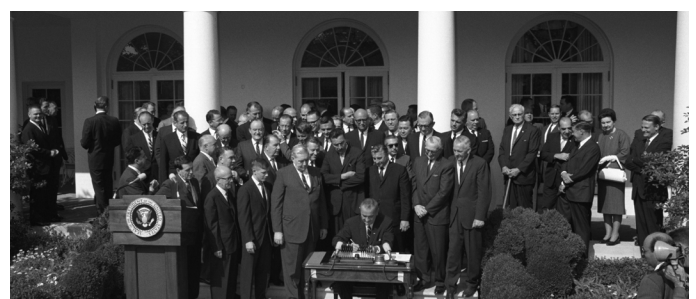
BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) is a statewide network of sixteen Community Action Agencies (CAA) and two special purpose agencies. Incorporated in 1974, WISCAP traces its origins to the historic "War on Poverty" and has throughout its history advocated for community-informed policies and greater resource mobilization for its member agencies and the people they serve.

The national network of community action – which includes over 1,000 community action agencies – reaches 99% of America's counties. WISCAP is one of 49 state associations and a member of the National Community Action Partnership. The work of community action is also served by additional partners including National Community Action Foundation (NCAF), NASCSP and CAPLAW.

WISCAP'S PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

- Introduction & passage of the Wisconsin Opportunity Act
- Create a Wisconsin state supplement CSBG program
- Increase state funding for the Job & Business Development and Skills Enhancement Programs
- Reauthorize the federal Community Services Block Grant Program (CSBG)
- Enact the federal Homeless Children and Youth Act



HOW DO COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES & WISCAP WORK TOGETHER?

*Our **member agencies** exist to help people get out of and stay out of poverty.*

EDUCATION/SKILLS ENHANCEMENT



Education, training, and re-training have become all-important for those entering the job market and those already in the workforce.

JOB & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



The Job and Business Development (JBD) program provides low-income entrepreneurs with a variety of business development services and access to financial capital to start or expand businesses and create jobs.

ENERGY/UTILITIES



The programs operated by agencies conserve energy and conserve a low-income person's modest income. They can help people weatherize their home and pay high utility bills.

FOOD SECURITY



Twelve of our agencies and seven of our partners coordinate the distribution of millions of pounds of Federal commodities every year. They work with hundreds of food pantries, meal sites and shelters to help people access stable food sources.

HOUSING



WISCAP's member agencies produce affordable housing utilizing a number of programs. Many manage rental properties and administer homeownership and rental assistance programs.

FAMILY SUPPORT



Community Action Agencies can help parents obtain child care, parenting classes, legal services, violence prevention services and more.

HEALTH



Our agencies help thousands of people obtain health care services every year. This includes helping infants and children receive their age appropriate immunizations, medical and dental care.



Photo Credit: Couleecap

***WISCAP** is the association of 16 Community Action Agencies and two special purpose agencies.*

PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY



WISCAP works with our member agencies, community partners and legislators to develop innovative, comprehensive and effective solutions that increase household economic security and relieve conditions of poverty. As an agency and a network we advocate with local, state & federal government on public policy affecting low-income individuals in Wisconsin.

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



We promote professional growth and competence of members through training. They identify their needs for training and education and throughout the year we provide opportunities for them to attend those sessions.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT



WISCAP encourages, promotes, and stimulates the development of resources; which demonstrate progress toward the elimination of poverty.

POVERTY AWARENESS



Through conferences, publications, press outreach, research, and social media, we strive to increase public awareness of the struggles of low income people and solutions to poverty.

PROGRAMS



WISCAP managed several programs in 2020, including: Job and Business Development Program, the USDA's Rural Business Development Grant, the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program, and Project Recovery. Additionally, we provide statewide administrative support to The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) network.



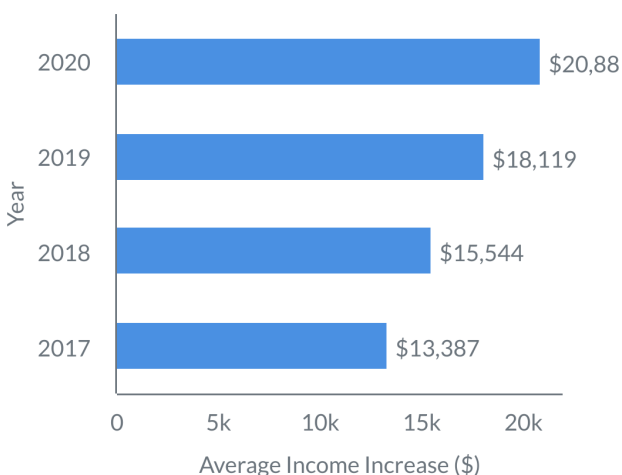
Photo Credit: Social Development Commission

COMMUNITY ACTION'S IMPACT ON WISCONSIN POVERTY IN 2020

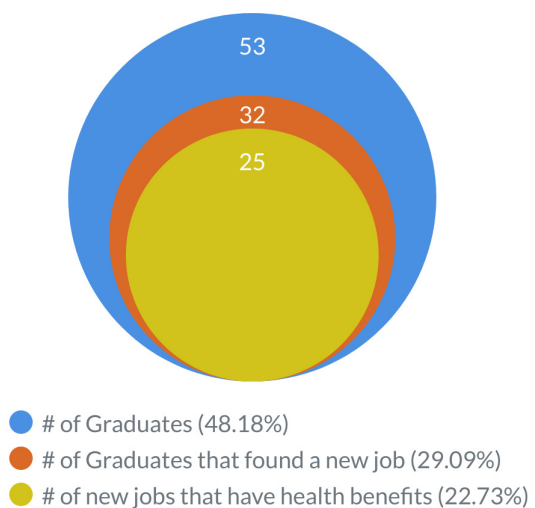
COMMUNITY ACTION HELPED SKILLS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS EARN AN AVERAGE OF \$20,884 MORE PER YEAR

The Community Action Skills Enhancement Program (SEP) helps low-wage workers obtain better paying jobs with benefits by helping them get a degree or certification at a technical or community college. Participants receive assistance paying for tuition, childcare and transportation to attend classes, as well as individualized career planning, case management, referral and job search support. Thirteen agencies served 150 participants in 2020 with funding from Wisconsin's Department of Children & Families. Of the 53 graduates, 83% reported new jobs earning an average of \$20,884 more per year. Of clients who graduated that found a new job, 87% obtained health benefits.

Average Annual Income Increase of SEP Graduates



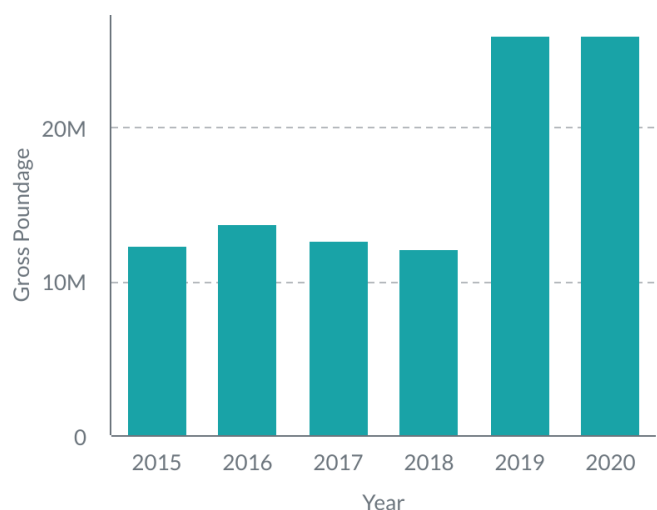
2020 SEP Performance Outcomes



CAAS & PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS SERVED 164,000 PEOPLE MONTHLY AT 266 TEFAP FOOD PANTRIES.

Twelve CAAs and seven partner organizations distributed 35 million pounds of TEFAP commodities worth \$34 million dollars to 342 food pantries, meal sites and shelters statewide in 2020. This unparalleled 300% increase in volume - the most food our network has ever distributed - is due to USDA food purchases intended to offset farm losses from the trade wars and to mitigate household and business hardships from the pandemic. In addition to meats, juice, canned fruits and vegetables, cereals, grains and pasta, families also received fresh produce, eggs, and fresh fluid milk from Wisconsin farmers. Food pantries in the network also distributed an additional 46 million pounds of private sector food to food insecure households, serving on average 164,000 individuals every month. Household visits to network food pantries have declined 25% since 2015 but remain 33% higher than before the 2008 recession. Meal sites and shelters in the network served a monthly average of 113,000 meals. WISCAP directly manages year-round statewide food ordering and data collection for TEFAP, and summer storage and delivery.

TEFAP Poundage by Calendar Year



COMMUNITY ACTION'S IMPACT ON WISCONSIN POVERTY IN 2020

PROJECT RECOVERY

Project Recovery is Wisconsin's crisis counseling program (CCP) in response to a disaster or critical event. The program was made possible through partnership between FEMA, Wisconsin Department of Health Services, WISCAP and local community action agencies. Counselors are based in the local community to teach coping and stress management skills to anyone dealing with the anxiety and uncertainty caused by the event. The CCP helps individuals and communities recover from natural and human-caused disasters through community outreach and access to resources. In 2020, Project Recovery provided services to 4,823 individuals, group counseling and public education to 10,336 people. A few noteworthy accomplishments that were made are: Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin converted their Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program (WRAP) hotline over to Project Recovery at the end of WRAP, Southwest CAP started a hotline for farmers, and 2-1-1 provided 1,512 referrals.



Helping Wisconsin through a Pandemic



Photo Credit: Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin
CACSCW team attending a COVID-19 vaccine clinic in Fort Atkinson, WI

CAAS HELPED PEOPLE OBTAIN OR MAINTAIN AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Housing assistance took the form of emergency rent, mortgage assistance, down payment assistance, homeownership counseling and foreclosure mitigation. WISCAP and its member agencies partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Administration to administer the Wisconsin Rental Assistance Program (WRAP). This eviction prevention program, funded through the U.S. CARES Act, was a direct response to the housing crisis that was only exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. From June through November 2020, the program paid out \$28,407,528 in rental assistance to 14,009 households. The average benefit paid was \$1,986.96.

\$28.4 million
*in rental assistance
provided*

COMMUNITY ACTION PROVIDED WEATHERIZATION & ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Wisconsin's Weatherization Assistance Program, operated by twelve WISCAP members, is a national leader in making homes of low-income families more energy efficient, safer and healthier. In 2020, 2,682 homes were weatherized using a combination of federal funds and state Public Benefits resources. In addition, 18,552 households received energy assistance with a total benefit of \$16,462,546.22. This is an average benefit of \$887.37 per household.



Photo Credit: Couleecap

COMMUNITY ACTION'S IMPACT ON WISCONSIN POVERTY IN 2020

CAAS HELPED LOW-INCOME ENTREPRENEURS START NEW BUSINESSES AND CREATE WISCONSIN JOBS.

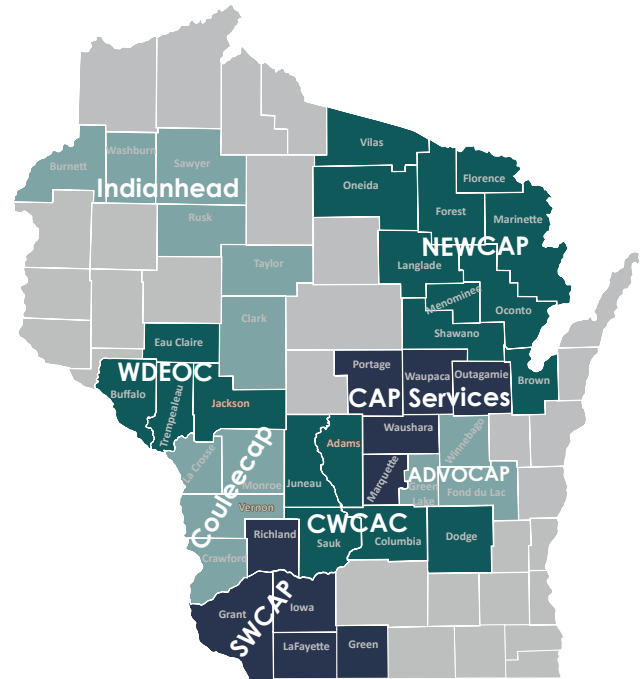
Wisconsin's CAAs have provided business development services to low-income entrepreneurs for over 30 years through the Job and Business Development Program (JBD). Since its inception, JBD has helped start 2,307 businesses and created 6,289 Wisconsin jobs. Funded by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), JBD helps low-income entrepreneurs develop business, financial and marketing plans and to obtain business start-up and expansion financing to create new, full-time, business owner and employee jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Wisconsin small businesses significantly in 2020 as revenues dramatically decreased during prolonged lockdown periods. In response, CAAs provided business survival technical assistance to 134 existing business. As a result of that intensive technical assistance, 262 full-time jobs were preserved at businesses that were in danger of closing. Despite the economic impacts of the pandemic, CAAs also helped entrepreneurs launch 22 new businesses and create 37 new full-time jobs during the year. Businesses were created in the industries such as childcare, restaurant/food service, personal services, and health care (independent respite care and an adult family home). CAAs also helped to start some unique businesses in 2020 such as a fish farm. CAAs also leveraged \$821,010 in business loans and pandemic grant funding for low-income entrepreneurs.

WISCAP also impacts rural job creation through a grant from the USDA's Rural Business Development program which focuses on self-employment activities in rural areas of Wisconsin. Through USDA funding, an additional five new full-time jobs were created by low-income entrepreneurs in 2020.



Young Stars Childcare LLC: Allie Henke pictured with children at Young Stars Childcare in Green Lake, WI.



Job & Business Development in Wisconsin

The map shows all agencies who participated in the Job & Business Development (JBD) program and/or the Rural Business Development Grant in 2020. Six of the eight agencies participated in both, while Newcap and Indianhead CAA only participated in JBD.

JOB & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPOTLIGHT STORY

Allie Henke earned her Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from UW Stevens Point and opened Young Stars Childcare LLC in Green Lake at the end of 2019. Young Stars Childcare operates in two rural locations and is licensed to serve 43 children. Young Stars Childcare also works with children that have disabilities and coordinates with therapists to work in the center with those children. The small business currently employs 18 staff.

In 2020, Young Stars experienced a downturn in their business as many employees were asked to work remotely during pandemic lockdowns. Allie turned to ADVOCAP to help her access resources to get through this time, according to Allie, "ADVOCAP has been very helpful from the beginning providing financing and technical assistance to help get this childcare center started. I have incurred unexpected expenses when I launched this center and ADVOCAP's loan became very helpful. ADVOCAP has been a great resource for everything and anything as they've always been able to point me in the right direction and refer me to the right place."

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Front Cover Photo: Tom Barrett - Milwaukee, WI