



## SFY 2021 CSBG Community Action Plan

## **COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The SFY 2021 Community Action Plan is created to address the needs of low-income individuals identified in the 2018 Community Needs Assessment conducted by Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico (CAASNM). Service areas include but are not limited to Doña Ana, Hidalgo, Sierra, Luna, and Grant Counties. Specific programs, actions and anticipated outcomes will be found in *CAASNM COP, SFY 2021*.

### **Mission and Vision**

CAASNM Mission: Our mission is to partner with New Mexicans to overcome adversity by connecting our communities, encouraging family wellness, empowering families and bridging resources.

CAASNM Vision: Our vision is to live in thriving, equitable communities.

CAASNM Core Values: We are an adaptive organization that believes:

- People want to thrive.
- People can guide their own lives and overcome poverty and adversity.
- People we serve will be treated with compassion and respect.
- Everyone should have equitable access to healthy food; safe, sanitary and affordable housing; educational opportunities; gainful employment; and quality healthcare.
- In being morally and ethically accountable.
- Collaboration and teamwork will strengthen those we serve.
- Families thrive when connected to their communities in meaningful ways.
- Innovation is necessary to foster our vision and mission.

A trusted local leader for over 50 years, Community Action Agency of Southern New Mexico has been working to lift Southern New Mexicans out of poverty through programs that build family strength, self-empowerment, and resilience. One of the agency's strengths is this innovative, unified network of programs that helps people face and rise above the many economic, family, and life adversities they may encounter.

CAASNM prides itself on having assembled a multicultural and bilingual team to interpret and address the needs of vulnerable families in the community in a culturally sensitive manner. With over 50 years of experience of being embedded and practicing in a multicultural, multi-language, and multi-generational border region, CAASNM staff celebrate diversity and respond to the cultural needs of the communities they serve. They continuously strive to build understanding between cultures in order to support cultural security and racial equity.

CAASNM currently serves as many as 15,000 clients per year by addressing the most challenging poverty issues our communities face. CAASNM fights to improve the lives of low-income children, youth, adults, and families through four service areas: Family Empowerment, Community Connections, Bridging Resources and Family Wellness. CAASNM focuses its efforts to promote whole-family wellness through evidence-based and community-driven programs. The agency has an established history of success in mobilizing communities, representing the poor and voicing community concerns.

## **BOARD GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**

CAASNMs Board of Directors maintains a strong degree of commitment, ethical standing, and proactive initiative in the interests of effectiveness and good governance. The Board of Directors sets priorities based on major poverty-related problems in Southern New Mexico. The Board works to enhance the organization's public standing and garner support from the community, reflecting the varied geographical, social, economic, business and cultural backgrounds of the communities CAASNMs serves.

The Board of Directors actively participates in the overall planning process for the organization and closely monitors program outcomes. The Board fully participates in the development planning, implementation and evaluation and approves the Community Action Plan (CAP) to ensure that it articulates the organization's goals, means, and primary constituents served. The current Community Action Plan will be approved at a Board of Directors meeting **September 17, 2020**.

The Board of Directors reviews and approves any data collection tools including needs assessments and surveys completed by CAASNMs and uses the results to monitor and strengthen programs and services directly and indirectly related to the CAP. Data is collected from NM Department of Labor and NM Health and Human Services Department monthly statistics and relevant state, national, and foundation reports. In addition, CAASNMs works with its community partners to receive reports that specifically define emerging needs in the five-county service area of southwestern New Mexico.

In implementation of the CAP, it is also the Board's responsibility to protect organizational assets and provide proper financial oversight to maintain legal, ethical, and financial integrity. The Board assists in developing the annual budget and ensures that proper financial controls are in place for all program budgets.

## **IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY NEEDS**

CAASNM has defined poverty as *“the inability to participate in society – socially, economically, culturally and politically”*. Poverty is more than a lack of cash. Poverty is characterized by a lack of access to services, facilities and resources. Linked with negative conditions such as substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition and food insecurity, inadequate child care, lack of access to health care, unsafe neighborhoods, and under-resourced schools, poverty creates persistent social barriers that can allow members of a community to believe in and share despair, hopelessness, apathy, and timidity.

CAASNM recognizes that residents in CAASNM's service area have not been immune to the effects of the lagging National economy. The combination of job cuts, home foreclosures, and rising costs for daily living expenses has forced more people into poverty in the last few years. The Board of Directors sets organizational priorities for anti-poverty efforts based on major poverty-related problems in Southern New Mexico. These priorities are based upon community needs assessments, Census information, relevant research, client in-put, information from other agencies and partners, information from staff, and other anecdotal information.

### **Community Needs Assessment**

The 2018 Community Needs Assessment identified significant compelling and seemingly overwhelming health and social issues confronting families in southern New Mexico. Among just a few disrupters to the health and wellbeing of the families that CAASNM encounters include: barriers to employment and education and the ability to earn a self-sufficiency wage; adverse childhood experiences; mental health issues and substance abuse; institutional, physical, and policy obstacles; disconnects among community service providers; and, particularly, an absence of meaningful family-based services in both urban and especially rural border communities.

Further, local family and child support services in the region are not presently collaborating in a meaningful, wrap-around way that avoids either the duplication or absence of needed family support. This is especially true in the rural communities CAASNM serves, where vital services may come and go as grants are first funded and then conclude. CAASNM's new Thriving Families agency-wide initiative represents CAASNM's plan to bring providers together in a meaningful dialogue to synchronize their shared aims and objectives.

### **CAASNM--Significant Changes**

Notably in 2018, CAASNM's 15-person community-focused board and leadership staff authored a 5-year **strategic plan**, with these board members contributing over 120 hours toward its design, as well as the significant contributions the leadership staff made. CAASNM has now conceived of and launched an organization-wide, community-driven initiative called **Thriving Families** to best accommodate the health and social needs of southern New Mexico families and children. Truly sweeping in its reach, it represents a historic milestone for the Agency. While CAASNM has

successfully conducted family case management services for many years, the realignment represents a more comprehensive model to serve family needs for holistic well-being. Now, all CAASNМ programs are seamlessly coordinated and speak to the high need of families in CAASNМ's service area.

Thriving Families is intended to reduce and overcome the barriers families and communities may encounter on their journey toward self-sufficiency. The program will increase access to services by providing the necessary tools and resources so that people can connect to educational, nutritional, economic, medical and other services. Clients are taught to navigate complex educational, employment and benefit systems on their own.

Thus, Thriving Families is envisioned from the start as having a community-wide impact. There is an exciting wellspring of collaborative enthusiasm in Dona Ana County and regionally, involving private agencies, providers and public entities. The initiative will further network among all that share the common aim of advancing family health. Going forward, these many community services will be truly united to build the network of activities that will truly make southern New Mexico families thrive and become effective and informed self-advocates for their own care and well-being.

2018 and 2019 saw major new awards to CAASNМ from the **State of New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department** exceeding \$2 million over four years. These wellness initiatives, now called "Thriving Kids" by CAASNМ, will provide home-based visiting services for at-risk families with young children in primarily rural areas.

## **Demographic Data and Census Records**

CAASNМ relies on current Census information, relevant research, and other resources to inform us on current and emerging poverty issues and trends. All demographic data can be found in the 2018 Community Needs Assessment on the CAASNМ website.

With current research, CAASNМ believes that close to 45% of the population of southern New Mexico lives in poverty (in contrast to the federal government's statistics of closer to one-quarter of the population). Struggling families are often faced with cruel choices between housing, health care, food, and basic needs. Poverty impacts families within their various contexts.

At home, parents in poverty struggle to provide adequate housing and may be forced into homelessness. Inadequate access to quality food can lead to poor nutrition, hunger or obesity. Poverty and economic hardship are particularly difficult for parents who may experience chronic stress, which may result in child abuse and neglect.

In school, poorer children and teens are at greater risk for poor academic achievement and dropping out of school. Poor teens are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as substance abuse or engaging in early sexual activity. Children born into poverty may be malnourished from the womb, which can lead to compromised cognitive ability and health issues that interfere with a stable learning environment. Inadequate education contributes to the cycle of poverty by making it more difficult for low-income children to lift themselves and future generations out of poverty.

Many neighborhoods where poverty is concentrated demonstrate high rates of crime. Unsafe neighborhoods may expose low-income children to violence that can cause several psychosocial difficulties, trauma, injury, disability, and mortality. Violence exposure can also predict future violent behavior in youth that places them at greater risk of injury and mortality and

entry into the juvenile justice system.

These effects are combined to create communities with fewer skilled or educated workers, exposure to environmental contaminants, families with chronic health conditions, and developmental delays in children. A more insidious consequence of poverty in communities is the lack of a network of support to lead children in positive directions. This lack of opportunity creates a disproportionate share of intergenerational and persistent poverty, wherein families stay poor from one generation to the next.

## **Strategic Goals**

CAASNMs mission is to help individuals achieve economic success, and permanently end poverty for families of southern New Mexico. The agency's approach is rooted in positivity, openness, compassion, and persistence, giving clients hope and renewed excitement about improved economic conditions. CAASNMs believes this approach will have a larger impact on the clients it works with and the community at large. The agency's priorities are two-fold. In the short term, this means helping families access the resources needed to meet their basic needs. In the long-term, this means helping families grow assets, gain new skills, increase educational achievement, and pursue entrepreneurship. CAASNMs focus will continue to be permanently ending poverty for families of southern New Mexico.

**Goal 1: Accessible Services and Resources:** Reduce barriers for clients to access resources in their communities.

**Goal 2: Diversify Funding:** Create a diversified funding portfolio to ensure sustainability for current and new initiatives.

**Goal 3: Consistent, Tailored Messaging:** Communicate consistent, tailored messaging that resonates with a variety of stakeholders.

**Goal 4: Partner with Local, Trusted Groups:** Cultivate and advance meaningful collaborations built on trust to address community challenges and leverage services.

**Goal 5: Deliver Programs to Help Families Thrive:** Deliver a more holistic, multi-generational service model in order to help families thrive.

**Goal 6: Stakeholder Advocacy:** Advocate for those we serve to build support for CAASNMs mission and strengthen our communities.

## **CAASNMs CORE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

CAASNMs programs are organized into four allied "pillars" which provide a comprehensive array of health, financial, and social service programs. These pillars are: Family Wellness; Family (Financial) Empowerment; Bridging Resources; and Community Connections. Family Wellness programs work with families, home childcare providers and licensed childcare centers to improve access to healthy, nutritious meals for children and train providers on topics of nutrition, exercise, safety, and child development. The Family Empowerment pillar assists families to become more self-sufficient by providing programs and services that allow them to improve their economic quality of life. The Bridging Resources staff connect families to community resources and benefits that can increase family and financial stability. Community Connections represent collaborations between CAASNMs and other independent organizations and programs in the community, such as Coats4Kids, The Children's

Reading Alliance, and Cancer Aid Resource & Education, Inc. (CARE).

**Family Empowerment: Helps families increase their personal assets through training, financial literacy and business development**

**Family Wellness: Keeps families healthy by providing supplemental funding for nutritional meals to children and disabled adults in home-based daycares and educating their caregivers**

**Bridging Resources: Connects families to community resources and benefits which can increase financial stability**

**Community Connections: CAASNMM works with community partners to leverage resources and increase the impact of our services for our clients and the community (see section entitled 'Linkages and Coordination' below)**

## **LINKAGES AND COORDINATION**

CAASNMM has been an integral part of southern New Mexico for over 50 years building resources to sustain and expand the results we have achieved in helping clients address short-term needs and secure long-term benefits. In addition to the current programs operated by CAASNMM, the Board of Directors and the CEO prioritize linkages with state, county, and other non-profit organizations providing similar, complimentary or emergency services. CAASNMM has developed many linkages and partnerships in order to share lessons learned, be more effective as an organization, more efficiently deliver services, to maximize coordination of services, and increase the collective impact of organizations throughout the five-county service area. When appropriate, referrals are made to other agencies.

CAASNMM has mapped social services, resources and essential safety net programs in Doña Ana County, Grant, Sierra, Hidalgo, and Luna Counties. If funding can be secured, CAASNMM hopes to GIS map these services, in cooperation with these financially strapped counties that may not have the resources.

CAASNMM is currently working with: Human Needs Coordinating Council; NM CAP Association; Doña Ana Workforce Action Council; Workforce Development Board; Mesilla Valley Economic Development Alliance; two Council of Government(s) in our area; Voices for Children; Southern New Mexico Homeless Providers Coalition; Colonias Development Council; Community of Hope; NM Center on Law and Poverty; NACAP; NCAF; many local faith-based organizations; several local banks including U.S. Bank and First American Bank; Memorial Medical Center; LCPS; SCORE, The Small Business Development Center at Doña Ana Community College, The Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and over 100 others.

CAASNMM also works with many state and federal agencies such as Department of Health; USDA Rural Development; Human Services Department; Children, Youth and Families Department; Environmental Improvement Agency, Housing and Urban Development; and many others.

CAASNMM continuously works with community leaders in business, social services, health, and education to share lessons learned and help clients address short-term needs and achieve long-term goals. Efforts are ongoing to develop new and build on existing relationships with community organizations and programs to link families with services close to home and school.

## **EVALUATION, MEASUREMENT AND VERIFICATION**

CAASNМ's experience in project management means that it "sweats the details" and keep budgets and schedules tightly on track. Use of Results Oriented Management Assessment (ROMA) quantitative, qualitative, outcomes-based and process-based evaluation is an ongoing practice for CAASNМ. Database and software systems allow CAASNМ to collect, track, and analyze data to determine the effectiveness of the service, client outcomes over time, return on investment, and demographic patterns.

CAASNМ evaluates:

1. how well the programs meet the needs of the people they are designed for, and how program delivery is experienced by clients—qualitative;
2. how successful CAASNМ is in reaching and serving appropriate numbers of the target population—quantitative;
3. How effective our programs are in changing the lives of the people we serve—outcomes.
4. how efficiently the service/program policies and procedures, financial reporting mechanisms, work flow processes, organizational structure, communications, collaborations and partnerships operate.

This data is regularly compiled into reports for the Board and staff to review service delivery, financial reporting, and overall operations. This creates an objective view of the organization's current reality and helps us identify and overcome barriers to successful program implementation and success of the whole organization.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

CAASNМ's experienced team integrates technology, grassroots outreach activities, collaboration, and hands-on assistance to help make sure families with the greatest economic need in our service area know about our programs and services. At every step of the way, CAASNМ staff are responsive to community feedback and will revise outreach approaches as needed. Outreach efforts will include the following public involvement measures:

**Coordination with other Programs, Groups and Institutions** - CAASNМ will develop new and build on existing relationships with community organizations and programs to create greater exposure of enrollment activities and information.

**Grassroots Outreach Methods** – Staff will conduct outreach efforts and distribute informational material in English and Spanish directly to families through canvassing and at public venues as appropriate.

**Notification of the Media and General Public** - Press releases and notices will be sent to local and regional media including newspapers, radio stations, and television stations, elected officials, chambers, public transportation providers, public interest groups, school districts, and libraries.

**Special Events-** CAASNМ staff will attend and co-host special events, open houses and meetings as appropriate at accessible locations with comfortable settings during both non-work hours and regular work hours to encourage greater attendance.

**Internet and Electronic Outreach-** CAASNM's main website will provide the public with on-line access to enrollment locations, program guidelines, upcoming events and other pertinent information. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook will be used to provide greater exposure and video streaming where appropriate.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

The public hearing on the CAASNM Plan for administering the Community Services Block Grant Program for state fiscal year 2021 was held at 12:00 p.m. July 30, 2020 online. Notice of the public hearing was published on the CAASNM website.