

FY20 & FY21

A N N U A L R E P O R T



Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Community Action Agency

1401 Rockville Pike, Suite 320
Rockville, MD 20852
240-777-1697

montgomerycountymd.gov/communityaction

The mission of the Montgomery County Community Action Agency is to advance social and economic mobility among communities and neighbors through services, partnerships, and advocacy using an equity lens.

The Montgomery County Community Action Agency is the County's federally designated anti-poverty agency, is part of Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Community Affairs. The agency includes:

- The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which provides free tax assistance to low-to-moderate income Montgomery County households. Services are offered year-round.
- The Takoma East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center is a walk-in information and referral center located in the Long Branch community. Residents can learn about County and non-profit services and receive assistance applying for these services.
- The agency is the grantee for the County's Head Start program, with Montgomery County Public Schools serving as the delegate. Head Start provides high-quality early care and education to children in lower-income households.
- The agency monitors 50+ contracts, working with 31 County non-profit organizations. Organizations offer a wide variety of services, including food and nutrition assistance, clothing, community engagement, English classes, legal services, and more.
- The Community Action Board is the governing body for the Community Action Agency. Along with the Head Start Parents Policy Council, the board is also the governing body for Head Start. The board engages in advocacy work, supporting policies that can help lower-income residents move towards self-sufficiency. The board also facilitates a free advocacy training program for lower-income residents called the Community Advocacy Institute (CAI).

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MD RELAY: 711

Alternative formats of the Community Action Board Annual Report are available upon request. Please call 240-777-1697. TTY users, please call MD Relay (711).

This annual report was approved by the Community Action Board Executive Committee on October 25, 2022.



Community Action staff participated in the Office of Community Affairs retreat at Brookside Gardens in October 2019.

INTRODUCTION

Community Action Responds to the COVID-19 Pandemic

In March 2020, the Montgomery County Community Action Agency immediately shut down its in-person services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Department of Health and Human Services leadership determined that all non-essential services should be conducted remotely. In response, all CAA staff began teleworking. Following guidance from Montgomery County Public Schools, Head Start classes immediately switched to virtual learning. The VITA program had to cancel appointments for a period of time before a virtual tax preparation model could be developed. The TESS team began serving clients via phone and email. Contract monitoring switched to a paperless format so that invoices and other documents could be signed and shared electronically. The Community Action Board immediately began meeting online and continued to participate in virtual public hearings. The Community Advocacy Institute switched to a virtual model, with workshops and the graduation ceremony held online. All of these changes required a significant and immediate adjustment to the agency's service model, which, for the most part, had never included remote services before. At a time when so many in the community were in crisis, facing unemployment, health challenges, food and housing insecurity, Community Action rose to the occasion to ensure that interruptions to services were limited, and clients continued to receive the critical services they required.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

As the nation's antipoverty network, Community Action Agencies across the country were well-positioned to address the urgent needs of residents when the pandemic began. Several staff members from Montgomery County Community

Action immediately stepped in to support the County's COVID-19 response. Contract monitor Aizat Oladapo, who monitors many of the County's food provider contracts, was actively engaged in the Food Security Task Force, helping to guide the County's response to the immense food and nutrition needs of residents. Program Manager Leah Goldfine, who oversees many of the agency's communications, became the co-lead for the Task Force's communications team. The communications team helped to ensure that information about food distribution and other food security resources were readily available to residents. These efforts included creating a detailed multilingual website that includes a calendar of food distribution events; creating multilingual social media ads, bus signs, and postcards; and advertising on local media focused on specific underserved communities.

The TESS Community Action Center played a critical role in linking residents with the Emergency Assistance Relief Payment (EARP) program. The EARP program was established to provide emergency financial assistance to County households that did not qualify for federal emergency assistance. Because the EARP program focused primarily on undocumented residents, TESS, which has been serving this community for decades, was well-positioned to support this program and connect residents with the urgently needed assistance. It is estimated that 2,141 of the 6,425 households who participated in the EARP program were referred by TESS alone. In other words, one-third of the total households served by this program throughout the entire County were referred by the small team at TESS.

At a time when the internet played a critical role in disseminating information, the agency's CASHBACK website became a vital source of communications with County residents in need of a wide variety of services. Since the CASHBACK site was created to serve as a "one-stop-shop" for financial resources and education, it was an ideal platform to share information about the federal and local emergency assistance programs. Up-to-date information about stimulus checks and the County's EARP program was added so that residents would understand eligibility requirements for these programs. A new webpage was created that focused on the expanded and advance Child Tax Credits, including FAQs and multilingual flyers. The website's list of County resources was expanded to include

COVID-19-specific emergency resources addressing the housing, nutrition, health, and other needs of residents.

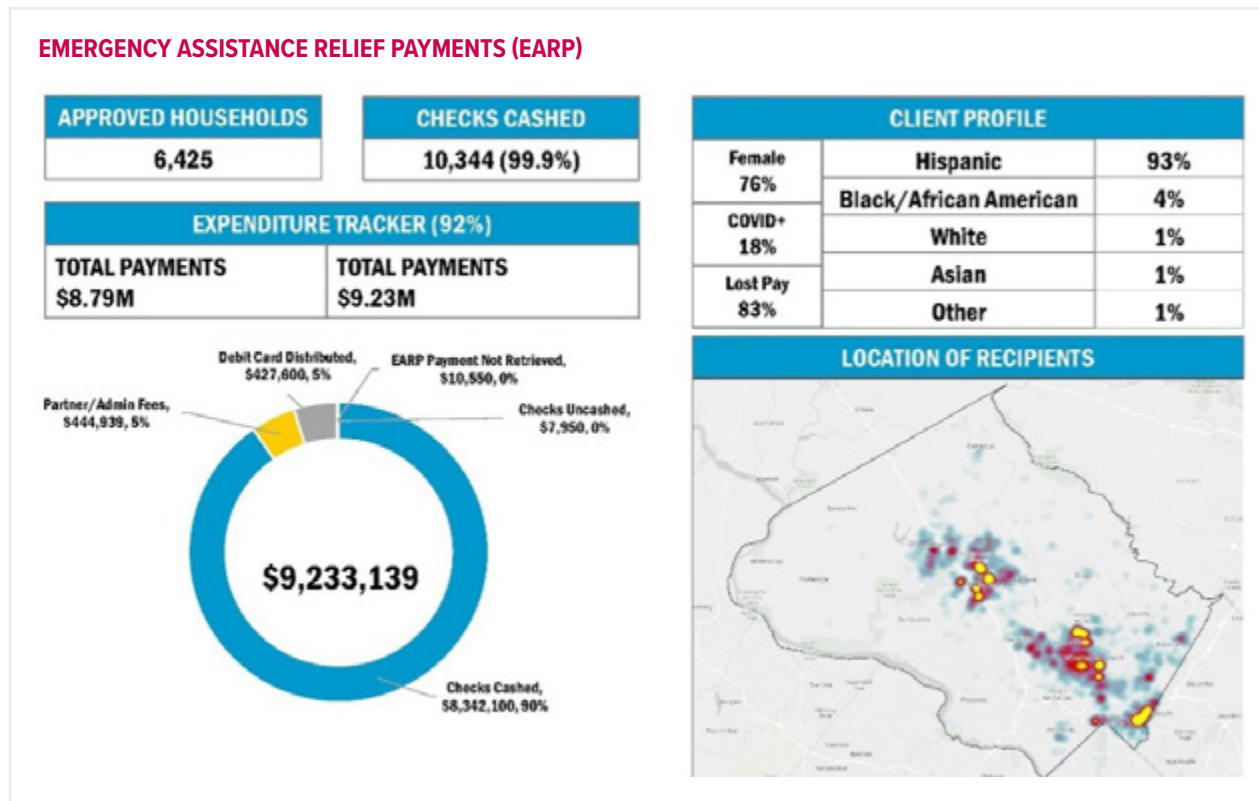
CARES ACT FUNDING

As a trusted source of help for lower-income communities, Community Action Agencies were designated to receive CARES Act funding to provide critical assistance to residents. In preparation for receiving this supplemental funding, Montgomery County Community Action Agency assessed the needs of the local community and its own ability to address these needs. A Limited Community Needs Assessment (LCNA) reviewed the critical issues impacting residents and the areas and populations most disproportionately impacted

by the pandemic. As part of the development of the LCNA, both Community Action Board members and Community Advocacy Institute graduates were asked to participate in an online survey, sharing their feedback on the most pressing community needs. The LCNA was submitted as part of the agency's application for CARES Act Supplemental Funding and helped guide the agency's work utilizing these funds.

The agency was excited to receive \$816,067 in CARES supplemental funding. As a leading agency on the forefront of utilizing the whole family approach in the County, some of the CARES funding was used to create a navigation team at TESS that includes five navigators and one opportunity coach. Navigators are placed at different agencies and programs and help direct clients to services for which they are eligible. Funding initially proposed to bring an Opportunity Coach to serve Long Branch families was deferred to the FFY22 CSBG grant year due to the continuation of the pandemic period, with virtual services continuing, as well as plans to temporarily close the TESS facility on Piney Branch Road and renovation of the new facility on Flower Avenue. The goal is for the Opportunity Coach to serve 25 households, providing guidance to parents/caregivers on goal setting, including employment, and assuring access to early care and education, and family support. The Opportunity Coach will work closely with the team at TESS to support referrals to services delivered by HHS and its partners, emergency assistance, employment resources.

Due to an unprecedented housing emergency caused in large part by high unemployment rates during the pandemic, the County established the COVID-19 Rent Relief Program in an effort to



prevent widespread evictions. The assistance is available to households with a gross income at or below 50% of the Area Median Income who faced financial hardship due to the pandemic. Citizenship was not a requirement for the program. The Community Action Board determined that because housing was such a critical issue for so many households, the agency should allocate \$250,000 of its CARES Act funding to DHHS Services to End and Prevent Homelessness to support the rental assistance program directly.

NAVIGATION PRACTICE

During the pandemic, DHHS engaged in development of its navigation practice, in part due to the challenges many residents faced accessing services during the pandemic. As part of the County's recovery planning, Community Action Executive Director Sharon Strauss joined Office of Community Affairs Chief Betty Lam in the Service Access Equity Workgroup, which explored improvements to service delivery and how to ensure that ongoing community needs were met. This process included extensive analysis, client surveys, and interviews

The Department's Navigation Workgroup, which includes key managers from each of the service areas and is under the leadership of Betty Lam, has made progress in developing training and tools to support navigation throughout the Department, with CAA's team of navigators, TESS staff, and other colleagues providing feedback. The goal is to assure that regardless of their role within the Department, leadership and staff at all levels within the Department have the knowledge and resources to better serve our shared customers by sharing the information that they need, and by strengthening

the skills to better engage and connect them to meet their needs.

Starting in FY20 and continuing into FY21 and beyond, Community Action agency joined with colleagues engaged with the Kresge funded Opportunity Ecosystem project to identify programs that are shared across the DHHS service areas and community partners. With the support of American Public Human Services Association consultants and Jeannie Chaffin, the executive director joined with colleagues in the governance committee to leverage this opportunity to create a map as a visual aid to help guide future decision-making and project development. The map is informing the ongoing work of the customer journey, measuring alignment across various 2Gen programs in Montgomery County, including the TESS Community Action Center. The map is used to help identify potential barriers to customer access, as well as opportunities for improvement.

Community Action remains at the forefront of navigation practice/Whole Family Approach within the department and the County. The culturally and linguistically competent "no wrong door" approach utilized for many years by TESS is considered a best practice. Nationally, the Head Start model is recognized not only for the comprehensive services delivered to preschool children, but for its success in providing a holistic approach to addressing the socioeconomic challenges of the families it serves, while strengthening parent/caregivers aspirational goals and building social capital among participants. TESS staff have provided training to other agencies and are often called on for their expertise. The navigation program supported by CARES funding will serve as model for other agencies that want to incorporate a similar approach.

SECTION 1

Head Start

HEAD START IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY is a comprehensive program to prepare young children, ages 3- 5, for success in school. Services are provided for low-income children and their families including developmentally appropriate pre-school education, health, dental, mental health, nutrition, and social services; services to children with disabilities; and parent and family engagement activities. The Community Action Agency (CAA) is the Grantee agency for the County's Head Start program.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is the Delegate agency that provides direct services for eligible Head Start children and families.

During school year 2019-2020, 711 young children were served in 34 classes at 30 schools.

During school year 2020-2021, an average of 514 young children were served in 34 classes at 30 schools. Although the Head Start program is funded to support 648 Head Start eligible children and families, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted full enrollment throughout the program year.

READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

During the first half of the 2019-2020 school year, MCPS Head Start teachers administered the Early Learning Assessment (ELA), the pre-school version of the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). ELA also aligns with the Head Start Early Learning Framework (ELOF) and supports teachers in developing individualized lesson plans for children. Both the ELA and KRA use age-appropriate performance tasks that measure specific skills and observations of children's work and play to determine what each entering kindergartener knows and is able to do in four specific domains:

Language & Literacy, Mathematics, Physical Well-Being & Motor Development, and Social Foundations. The ELA measures the skills and behaviors that children learned prior to entering kindergarten.

School Readiness data reflects fall and winter child outcome assessments for the FY2020 program year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Head Start program moved to a distance learning format in March 2020. Child outcome assessments for 3rd period (Spring) were not conducted. Children received anecdotal progress report.

During the first half of the 2020-2021 school year, MCPS Head Start teachers administered a modified version of the Early Learning Assessment (ELA), the pre-school version of the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). ELA also aligns with the Head Start Early Learning Framework (ELOF) and supports teachers in developing individualized lesson plans for children. Both the ELA and KRA use age-appropriate performance tasks that measure specific skills and observations of children's work and play to determine what each entering kindergartener knows and can do in four specific domains: Language & Literacy, Mathematics, Physical Well-Being & Motor Development, and Social Foundations. The ELA measures the skills and behaviors that children learned prior to entering kindergarten.

School Readiness data reflects fall and winter child outcome assessments for the FY2020 program year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Head Start program moved to a distance learning format in March 2020. Child outcome assessments for 3rd period (Spring) were not conducted. Children received anecdotal progress report.

DOMAIN	GOAL	MONTGOMERY COUNTY HEAD START CHILDREN'S READINESS
Approaches to Learning	Children will manage actions, word and behaviors with increasing independence.	54% of four year olds demonstrating proficiency. 14% of four year olds were emerging towards proficiency. 6% of three year olds demonstrating proficiency. 66% of three year olds were approaching proficiency.
Social & Emotional Development	Children will manage emotions with increasing independence.	61% of four year olds demonstrating proficiency and 1% were emerging towards proficiency. 39% of three year olds demonstrating proficiency and 61% were approaching proficiency.
Language & Literacy	Children will express self in increasingly long, detailed and sophisticated ways.	Writing to convey meaning: 8% of four year olds demonstrating proficiency, 63% were approaching proficiency. 50% of three year olds were demonstrating proficiency and 50% were emerging towards proficiency. Sentences: 52% of four year olds were demonstrating proficiency, 32% were emerging towards proficiency. 53% of three year olds were approaching proficiency, 47% were emerging towards proficiency.
Cognition	MATH: Children will know number names and the counting sequence.	MATH: 49% of four year olds were demonstrating proficiency while 6% were emerging towards proficiency in counting sequence. 31% of three year olds demonstrating counting sequence, 9% were emerging towards proficiency.
	Scientific Reasoning: Children will observe, describe observable phenomena (i.e. objects, materials, organisms and events).	SCIENCE: 21% of four year olds were demonstrating proficiency in scientific reasonings while 40% were emerging towards proficiency. 65% of three year olds were emerging in scientific reasoning while 35% were approaching proficiency.
Perceptual, Motor & Physical Development	Children will demonstrate personal hygiene and self-care skills.	16% of four year olds were demonstrating proficiency in personal care, while 68% were approaching proficiency. 47% of three year olds were demonstrating proficiency in personal care, 47% were emerging towards proficiency.

During the first half of the 2020-2021 school year, MCPS Head Start teachers administered a modified version of the Early Learning Assessment (ELA), the pre-school version of the Maryland State Department of Education’s (MSDE) Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). ELA also aligns with the Head Start Early Learning Framework (ELOF) and supports teachers in developing individualized lesson plans for children. Both the ELA and KRA use age-appropriate performance tasks that measure specific skills and observations of children’s work and play to determine what each entering kindergartener knows and can do in four specific domains: Language & Literacy, Mathematics, Physical Well-Being & Motor Development, and Social Foundations. The ELA measures the skills and behaviors that children learned prior to entering kindergarten.

School Readiness data reflects fall and winter child outcome assessments for the FY2021 program year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on in-person learning, the Head Start program administered a modified version of the ELA measuring four (4) skill assessments in language & literacy and math.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY’S HEAD START

On April 14, 2020, the Office of Head Start issued Program Information Instruction (PI-HS-20-03) stating that Head Start programs are not required to submit Program Information Report (PIR) data on services provided during the FY2020 program year due to COVID-19 pandemic. Montgomery County Head Start aggregates Family Engagement Data through the PIR reporting process.

DOMAIN	GOAL	MONTGOMERY COUNTY HEAD START CHILDREN’S READINESS
Approaches to Learning	Children will manage actions, word, and behaviors with increasing independence.	No Assessment data for FY2021.
Social & Emotional Development	Children will manage emotions with increasing independence.	No Assessment data for FY2021.
Language & Literacy	Children will express self in increasingly long, detailed and sophisticated ways.	82.3% of four-year-old demonstrating proficiency in language & literacy skills, while 17.7 were emerging towards proficiency. 74.2% of three-year-old demonstrating proficiency in language & literacy, while 25.8% were emerging towards proficiency.
Cognition	MATH: Children will know number names and the counting sequence.	MATH: 85.9% of four-year old were demonstrating proficiency while 14.1% were emerging towards proficiency in counting sequence. 83.3% of three-year old’s demonstrating counting sequence, 16.7% were emerging towards proficiency.
	Scientific Reasoning: Children will observe, describe observable phenomena (i.e. objects, materials, organisms and events).	SCIENCE: No Assessment data for FY2021.
Perceptual, Motor & Physical Development	Children will demonstrate personal hygiene and self-care skills.	SCIENCE: No Assessment data for FY2021.

The following data reflects one-half of the FY2020 program year (July 1, 2019- January 31, 2020) and anecdotal reports.

SERVICES RECEIVED BY HEAD START FAMILIES SY2020	
Emergency/crisis intervention (immediate needs for food, clothing or shelter)	594
Housing assistance (subsidies, utilities, repairs)	20
Mental health services	4
ESL	59
Adult education (including GED)	28
Job training	25
Substance abuse	0
Child abuse and neglect	35
Domestic violence	0
Child support assistance	1
Health education	5
Assistance to families of incarcerated individuals	2
Parenting education	300
Marriage education	4

The following data was submitted to the Office of Head Start for FY2021 (July 1, 2020- June 30, 2021) Program Information Report.

SERVICES RECEIVED BY HEAD START FAMILIES SY2021	
Emergency/crisis intervention (immediate needs for food, clothing or shelter)	202
Housing assistance (subsidies, utilities, repairs)	37
Mental health services	14
ESL	41
Adult education (including GED)	43
Job training	43
Substance abuse	0
Child abuse and neglect	0
Domestic violence	0
Child support assistance	1
Health education	623
Assistance to families of incarcerated individuals	1
Parenting education	72
Marriage education	1

Head Start Enrollment: Head Start in Montgomery County is a school-based program, following the annual calendar of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), with a federally funded enrollment of 648.

HEAD START ENROLLMENT	TOTAL # SERVED SY 17-18	TOTAL # SERVED SY 18-19	TOTAL # SERVED SY 19-20	TOTAL # SERVED SY 20-21
September	646	648	648	537
October	648	648	648	648
November	648	648	648	575
December	648	648	648	648
January	648	648	648	648
February	648	648	648	648
March	648	648	648	648
April	648	648	648	606
May	648	648	648	605
June	648	648	648	605
Attendance Rate	95%	95%	91%	85%
Avg. Enrollment	648	648	648	514

**based on enrollment reported to the Office of Head Start the 5th day of each month.*

Enrollment figures over the past several years reflect a positive family attitude toward participating in the Head Start program. Teaching teams and family service workers collaborate with parents by providing support and problem-solving strategies to remove any barriers that may negatively affect enrollment. During the FY20-21 program year, fluctuations in enrollment and attendance were due to COVID-19 pandemic (parent work schedules, family illnesses, etc.)

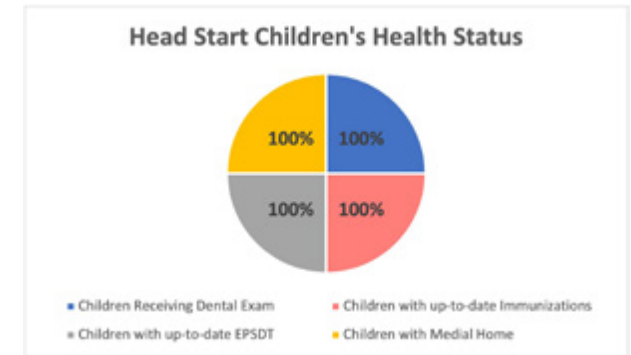
TRENDS

In the spring of the FY2020 program year, Montgomery County Head Start transitioned from a center-based in-person education program to a virtual learning platform due to statewide COVID-19 quarantine mandates. The spring child assessment process was not conducted, and the education curriculum was greatly modified allowing teaching teams to learn new processes for delivering virtual learning and instruction.

Since all 34 Head Start classrooms are located in the public schools, in-person classroom instruction is predicated on the school systems determination regarding children safely returning to the classroom setting.

The FY2021 summer extension program will focus on mental health supports/activities from the school psychologist and home health and safety activities from the school health nurse.

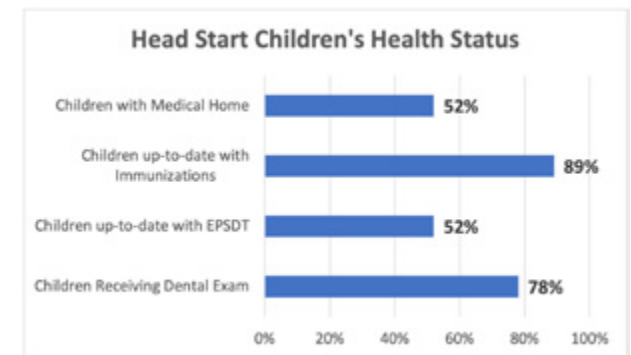
Percentage of Enrolled Children That Received Health and Dental Services in SY19-20



Head Start health services were greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Access to medical and dental services was limited with families relying on telehealth for most health-related visits.

The FY2022 program year will return to in-person instruction. School Health personnel will focus on assuring all enrolled children are up to date on the state's EPSDT health and dental schedule as well as in immunizations.

Percentage of Enrolled Children That Received Health and Dental Services in SY20-21



Head Start Budget Basics

Montgomery County Head Start is supported by federal, state and local funding. The Community Action Agency (CAA) is the grantee recipient of federal and state funds. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is the delegate agency that provides direct services to Head Start children and families. In FY20, 81% of the federal grant and 94% of the state grant is allocated to MCPS. The County’s Health and Human Services School Health division provides health and dental services to Head Start children and families. School Health received 12% of the federal grant and 6% of the state grant. CAA maintains 7% of the federal grant for administrative purposes and 0% of the state grant.



Staff from Early Childhood Services join members of the County Council, Board of Education, and others for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the UpCounty Early Childhood Center.

FY20 Comparison of Head Start Federal Budget and Expenditures & FY21 Proposed Head Start Federal Budget

CATEGORY	FY20 BUDGET	FY20 EXPENDITURES	FY21 BUDGET
Personnel/ Fringe Benefits	\$631,898	\$666,122	\$740,982
Travel	\$17,315	\$4,732	\$8,000
Supplies and Equipment	\$17,257	\$9,641	\$37,352
Contractual	\$4,034,006	\$4,228,583	\$4,176,868
Training*/ Technical Assistance/ Other	\$307,357	\$34,098	\$885,696
Subtotal Federal	\$5,008,065	\$4,943,176	\$5,848,898
Non-Federal Share	\$1,252,016	\$3,120,265	\$1,252,016
TOTAL	\$6,260,081	\$8,063,440	\$7,100,914

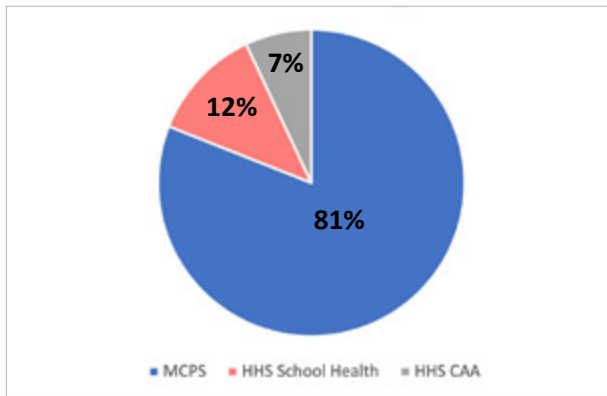
**included in variety of categories*

FY20 BUDGET

Montgomery County Head Start Funding Sources FY20

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Federal	\$5,008,065
MSDE State Supplemental	\$203,694
TOTAL	\$5,211,759

FY20 Head Start Federal Budget Allocation



SOURCE	PERCENT	AMOUNT
Montgomery County Public School (MCPS)	81%	\$4,040,006
HHS - School Health Services (SHS)	12%	\$597,963
HHS - Community Action Agency (CAA)	7%	\$370,096
Total Budget for Federal Funds	100%	\$5,008,065

FY21 BUDGET

Includes annual 2 percent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), Quality Enhancement, and one-time Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funding.

Personnel for Head Start includes: DHHS staffing: community health nurses, school health room aides, dental hygienist, nurse administrator, community services aide, Head Start program manager, Early Childhood education specialist, program aide, and administrative specialist.

Travel includes costs associated with reimbursing staff for travel to Head Start sites to provide health and dental services, and for staff and parents to attend trainings and national, regional, and state conferences.

Equipment and Supplies include laptops, chromebooks and wifi to support virtual learning and telework during COVID-19, Child and Family services supplies, instructional materials for Head Start classrooms- including literacy, mathematics, science, music and art materials, office supplies such as postage, paper products, printer supplies and other registration materials.

Contractual services include MCPS Head Start staff (e.g., teachers, paraeducators, speech pathologists, psychologists, social workers, social services assistants); MCPS' administrative service funds for the Audit Requirements of the OMB Uniformed Guidance Subpart F. Contractual health costs includes specialty dental treatment providers, not available through insurance or dental clinics, and Mobile Medical Care, Inc. to provide contractual Head Start Nurses. Under Community Action Agency (CAA) contractual services includes training for the Policy Council and Community Action Board

on shared governance and methods to achieve board goals within a government structure.

Other funding within MCPS covers a variety of expenses including training & staff development, child liability insurance, parent services such as training, parent/child mathematics and literacy activities, bus transportation for classes to attend field trips, reimbursement of mileage for home visits and parent meetings for teachers, paraeducators, special needs teacher, and social service assistants.

Other funding for CAA helps with costs for family related activities and supplies necessary to conduct various meetings. These funds provide a range of administrative supports to the Montgomery County, MD, Head Start Program such as local travel costs for contract and grant monitoring. Other funding for School Health includes costs associated with continuing education and performance standard training for Head Start School Health Room nurses, technicians and hygienists and providing educational training experiences and materials for parents, students and non-professional staff.

Program-wide Other Funding includes CARES \$569,467.

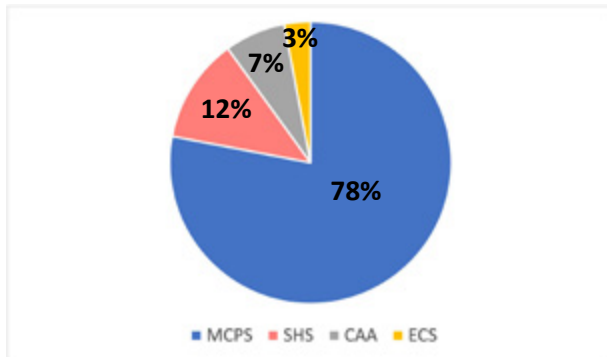
School Year 2020-2021 (Fiscal Year 2021)

In FY21, 78% of the federal grant and 94% of the state grant is allocated to MCPS. The County's Health and Human Services Early Childhood Services receives 3% of federal funding and provides coaching services for teaching staff and parents. School Health division provides health and dental services to Head Start children and families. School Health received 12% of the federal grant and 6% of the state grant. CAA maintains 7% of the federal grant for administrative purposes and 0% of the state grant.

Montgomery County Head Start Funding Sources FY21

SOURCE	AMOUNT
Federal	\$5,848,898
MSDE State Supplemental	\$209,505
TOTAL	\$6,058,403

FY21 Head Start Federal Budget Allocation



SOURCE	PERCENT	AMOUNT
Montgomery County Public School (MCPS)	78%	\$4,119,860
HHS - School Health Services (SHS)	12%	\$609,783
HHS - Community Action Agency (CAA)	7%	\$387,432
HHS - Early Childhood Services (ECS)	3%	\$162,438
CARES - Special Appropriation		\$569,467
Total Budget for Federal Funds	100%	\$5,848,980

FY21 Comparison of Head Start Federal Budget and Expenditures & FY22 Proposed Head Start Federal Budget

CATEGORY	FY21 BUDGET	FY21 EXPENDITURES	FY22 BUDGET
Personnel/ Fringe Benefits	\$740,982	\$662,837	\$733,701
Travel	\$8,000	\$123	\$5,500
Supplies and Equipment	\$37,352	\$13,719	\$37,844
Contractual	\$4,176,868	\$4,224,317	\$4,131,981
Training*/ Technical Assistance/ Other	\$885,696	\$21,187	\$1,340,765
Subtotal Federal	\$5,848,696	\$4,922,182	\$6,249,791
Non-Federal Share	\$1,252,016	\$2,927,156	\$1,319,858
TOTAL	\$5,848,898	\$7,849,338	\$7,569,649

**included in variety of categories*

FY22 BUDGET

Includes annual 2 percent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and one-time America Recovery Plan (ARP) funding (funding period: 4/1/2021- 3/31/2023).

Personnel for Head Start includes: DHHS staffing: community health nurses, school health room aides, dental hygienist, nurse administrator, community services aide, Head Start program manager, Early Childhood education specialist, Head Start program aide, and administrative specialist.

Travel includes costs associated with reimbursing staff for travel to Head Start sites to provide health and dental services, and for staff and parents to attend trainings and national, regional, and state conferences.

Equipment and Supplies include laptops, Chromebook, and Wi-Fi to support virtual learning and telework during COVID-19, Child and Family services supplies, instructional materials for Head Start classrooms- including literacy, mathematics, science, music and art materials, office supplies such as postage, paper products, printer supplies and other registration materials.

Contractual services include MCPS Head Start staff (e.g., teachers, paraeducators, speech pathologists, psychologists, social workers, social services assistants); MCPS' administrative service funds for the Audit Requirements of the OMB Uniformed Guidance Subpart F. Contractual health costs includes specialty dental treatment providers, not available through insurance or dental clinics, and Mobile Medical Care, Inc. to provide contractual Head Start Nurses. Under Community Action Agency (CAA) contractual services includes training for the Policy Council and Community Action Board

on shared governance and methods to achieve board goals within a government structure.

Other funding within MCPS covers a variety of expenses including training & staff development, child liability insurance, parent services such as training, parent/child mathematics and literacy activities, bus transportation for classes to attend field trips, reimbursement of mileage for home visits and parent meetings for teachers, paraeducators, special needs teacher, and social service assistants. Other funding for CAA helps with costs for family related activities and supplies necessary to conduct various meetings. These funds provide a range of administrative supports to the Montgomery County, MD, Head Start Program such as local travel costs for contract and grant monitoring. Other funding for School Health includes costs associated with continuing education and performance standard training for Head Start School Health Room nurses, technicians and hygienists and providing educational training experiences and materials for parents, students, and non-professional staff.

Program-wide Other Funding includes America Recovery Act (ARP) Funding \$970,260. Program-wide services for this funding will be developed and implemented in FY2022.

RESULTS OF THE MOST RECENT REVIEW FINANCIAL AUDIT

Financial Audit: Montgomery County has an annual Independent Auditor's Report on Internal Control, Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters, based on an Audit of Financial Statements Performed in Accordance with the OMB Uniform Administrative Requirement 2 CFR Chapter I, Chapter II, Part 200 et al.

A copy of the Audit for the year ending June 30, 2020, can be found at the County's website: montgomerycountymd.gov/Finance/financial.html. The most current Montgomery County MD Report on Expenditures of Federal Awards for Fiscal Year 2019 was performed for the County Council and County Executive by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, Certified Public Accountants and Consultants.



Outreach signs on Ride On buses are used to help spread the word about Head Start/PreK enrollment each year.

SECTION 2

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

Community Action's VITA program offers free tax assistance to low-to-moderate income Montgomery County households, connecting taxpayers with valuable credits that can help people move towards self-sufficiency. The program works with other VITA sites throughout the County to offer services during the tax season, and the agency's program is the County's only year-round VITA site, offering appointments for prior year and amended returns during the summer and early fall.

In FY20, the tax season started with in-person services in Gaithersburg, Long Branch, Rockville, East County, Germantown, and Wheaton. VITA services were disrupted due to health concerns related to COVID-19 in March 2020. As ordered by the County, CAA immediately shut-down services, leaving hundreds of CAA customers with pending appointments. Staff contacted each taxpayer through the phone, email or mail, and advised them that appointments would be rescheduled when health conditions improved. By May it was clear that DHHS and the VITA workforce would not be returning onsite. CAA VITA staff worked with the IRS to develop a virtual VITA model, with no direct contact with clients, other staff, or volunteers, to safely serve clients. Virtual appointments continued throughout the post-season, mid-July – October 2020.

In FY20, VITA partnered with the CASH Campaign of Maryland to develop FAQs about stimulus checks (CARES Economic Impact Payment) in seven languages, expediting the process by using County resources to review translations. VITA worked with County agencies and partners to disseminate the flyers.

In FY21, the VITA program remained all-virtual throughout the tax season and post-season. Virtual

appointments allowed the VITA team to ensure the health and safety of staff members, contractors, volunteers, and clients. Fewer tax returns were prepared during the FY21 tax season though due to the time involved in preparing tax returns remotely and the smaller number of VITA volunteers.

Throughout FY20 and FY21, during the pandemic and beyond, the VITA program's extensive Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) outreach efforts continued. Outreach included a targeted text messaging campaign to 36,000+ households, multilingual Ride On bus signs, digital monitor signs, and appearances on local media. The CASHBACK website was expanded to include a new page about the Child Tax Credit and an extensive list of resources for those experiencing hardship due to COVID-19.



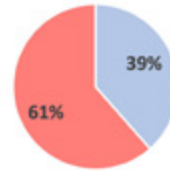
In February 2020, Community Action VITA hosted a special event to draw attention to the Earned Income Tax Credit. Baby bibs were created to help get the word out about tax credits and free tax help.

CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS

FY20 STATISTICS

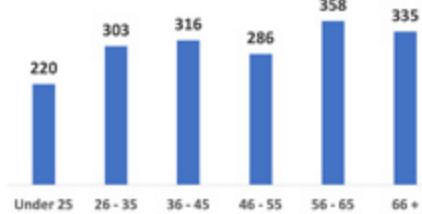
Tax Returns prepared	1,746
Total Federal and State Refunded	\$2,906,494
Total EITC	\$1,316,715
Total CTC	\$684,159
Total free tax impact	\$5,406,724
Total Number of Volunteer Hours	2,719

Clients Reporting Their Gender

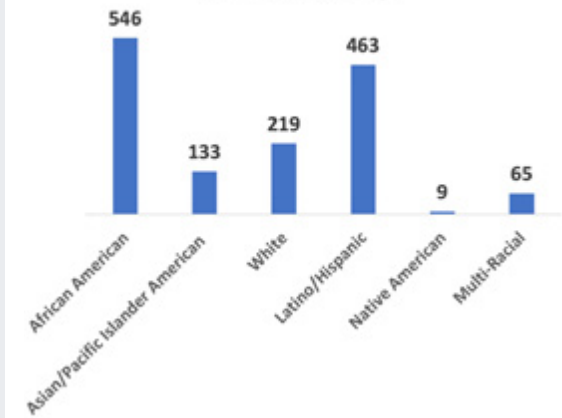


Male Female

Clients Reporting Their Age



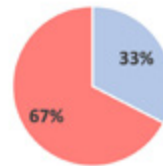
Clients Reporting Their Race/Ethnicity



FY21 STATISTICS

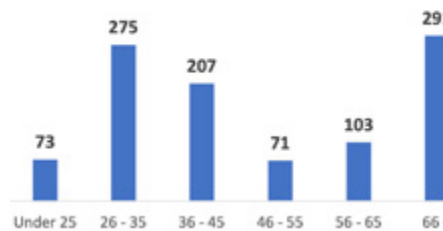
Tax Returns prepared	1,021
Total Federal and State Refunded	\$2,132,634
Total EITC	\$662,448.72
Total CTC	\$375,932
Total free tax impact	\$3,460,694.72
Total Number of Volunteer Hours	4,124

Clients Reporting Their Gender

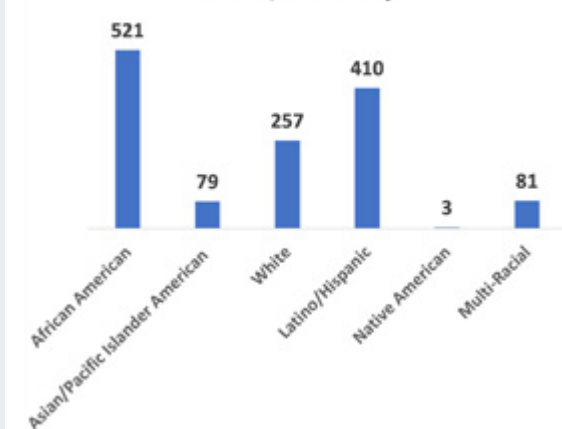


Male Female

Clients Reporting Their Age



Clients Reporting Their Race/Ethnicity



SECTION 3

Takoma East Silver Spring (TESS) Community Action Center

The Community Action Agency’s TESS Center is a walk-in site serving Montgomery County residents. Working with partners, the Center offers information and referrals, interpretation and translation, education programs, free tax assistance, and legal services. TESS has served residents of the Long Branch community for over 60 years, incorporating the whole-family/two generation model that helps to ensure that the needs of the entire family are met.

In FY20, TESS staff and contractors were able to successfully switch to a virtual model of service delivery when the COVID-19 pandemic caused offices to close to the public. TESS continued to serve community members by telephone, email, and virtual meetings, connecting residents with numerous services, including pandemic assistance programs for those who were directly impacted by COVID-19.

TESS continued to serve clients virtually in FY21, later partially reopening to the public in the summer of 2021. Staff played a significant role in assisting community members throughout the pandemic at a time when so many people were struggling to pay for basic necessities. In addition to linking clients with COVID-19 testing, when vaccines became available to the public, TESS also assisted clients with the challenging process of finding vaccine appointments.



**Staff began collecting client data in this format in March 2020*



	CLIENTS SERVED	UNDUPLICATED CLIENTS (NEW CLIENTS)	GROCERIES TO GO	HOLIDAY GIVING
FY20	8229	*Data not available.	325	163
FY21	8173	2181	300	120

**Due to changes in the Enterprise Integrated Case Management (EICM) system, the number of unduplicated clients in FY20 is not available.*



The TESS Community Action Center hosts senior socials where members of the community gather to learn about important topics and socialize with their neighbors.



TESS participates in the holiday giving program every year, working with volunteers to provide food and gifts to families.

TESS EMERGENCY RESPONSE

With the TESS team's expertise in community services and emergency response protocols, they have been at the forefront for numerous emergencies in the County and continue to be the go-to program at some of our County's most challenging moments. On Monday, July 27, 2020, a fire destroyed the homes of fifteen families, totaling nearly sixty people, who lived in an apartment building on Carroll Avenue in Takoma Park. TESS Community Action Center staff immediately stepped in to provide support, connecting families with critical services such as SNAP enrollment and housing assistance. TESS staff also supported the DHHS efforts to provide COVID-19 testing to residents and assisted with interpretation and linking residents to necessities, including VITA services. Community Action partners, including CASA, Spanish-Speaking Community of Maryland (La Comunidad), Montgomery County Maryland Bar Foundation, and Community Health and Empowerment through Education and Research (CHEER), all stepped in to support the fire victims.

Working with the County's Emergency Response and Mass Care Operations teams and other public and nonprofit partners, staff from TESS developed an online tracking system to improve coordination to serve low-income residents recently affected by fires and flooding emergencies. The system was developed based on the team's onsite response to multiple incidents and has facilitated improvement to case management and the distribution of community donations to affected residents. Staff from TESS participate in coordination meetings with partners including the American Red Cross, Department of Health & Human Services' Emergency Response and Mass Care Operations

and Services to End and Prevent Homelessness, and Children, Youth, and Families Office of Eligibility and Support Services and Linkages to Learning, Department of Housing and Community Affairs Landlord Tenant Affairs, city government representatives, MCPS Head Start, and local nonprofit service providers. Defining roles reduces duplication and the trauma experienced by victims.

IMPROVEMENTS TO DATA COLLECTION

Following a review of FY20 performance data from the eICM, and anticipating a move to a new facility in FY22, the TESS team recognized that the eICM data did not reflect the total services provided to residents reporting to the center to request assistance. Brief encounters with residents that do not necessitate a follow-up appointment (i.e. translation of a document or a quick referral) often rely on staff's "hand-counted" reporting, which is not entered into eICM. To address these gaps, and to improve access to services, the management team initiated planning with DHHS Children, Youth, and Families leadership to implement the QLess client management system, which is used within the Office of Eligibility and Support Services. The implementation of developing the business process is continuing, along with training and purchases to support the infrastructure.

SECTION 4

Contract Partners

In Fall 2019, services continued in much the same way they had in the past, including the Annual Contract Partners Meeting on December 3, 2019, an in-person gathering featuring process improvement training and networking. By the end of FY20, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, nothing was the same. Yet throughout the year, the Community Action Agency strived to maintain and strengthen our relationships with non-profit organizations who are awarded County contracts for services. This report features the contract partners’:

- Food access programs
- Services to seniors
- Spotlight on non-profits that joined Community Action’s contract monitoring portfolio
- Academic support for children and adults; and
- Adaptations of contract services and to contract monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food Access Programs: Community Action is an active partner in the Montgomery County Food Council’s strategic plan to work towards food security for all county residents. CAA had representation on the Food Council Board and monitored several nonprofits that distribute food to county families, including contracts with: Manna Food Center, Women Who Care Ministries (WWCM), Kids In Need Distributors (KIND), the Caribbean Help Center, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, and Community Health and Empowerment through Education & Research (CHEER).

Manna, WWCM and KIND provide weekend food security programs for students eligible for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) focused on elementary and middle school students’ needs. WWCM also serves families in the Montgomery Village area. In FY20, WWCM collaborated with over 40 groups



Community Action partner Women Who Care Ministries played a vital role in providing food to families in need during the pandemic.

that include companies and nonprofit organizations that hosted food drives, packed the bags, and delivered the bags to schools they had “adopted.” In the previous year (July 2018 – July 2019), WWCM held 60 food drives, totaling 50,880 pounds of food that was distributed through the weekend program and directly to families in need. WWCM trained 110 new volunteers, who provided 1,929 hours assisting with the food drives. In the 2018 – 2019 school year, 1,387 students in 21 Elementary Schools and 990 students in 18 Middle Schools were provided weekend food bags. WWCM also served 47 unduplicated families and 37 unduplicated individuals who were referred to them as food insecure and partnered with the Montgomery County Family Justice Center to provide 6,438 pounds of food to families.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic an additional \$1,334,500 from the CARES Act was awarded to the weekend food providers—WWCM, KIND, and Manna Food Center—to address food security crises due to job losses among Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)

students' families. These additional funds also covered service provision in July and August, which the contracts don't normally cover. As of September 18, 2020, MCPS has begun providing free weekend meals for youth ages 18 years and under; the three partners continue to work closely with MCPS to address families' gaps in food security.

Due to logistics, in FY20 KIND began providing MCPS students' families with grocery gift cards that were distributed by school staff contacts. Manna and WWCM continue to use their models to distribute weekend food bags at MCPS sites and other geographic areas in the county where food insecurity has been identified. Due to increased community food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, Montgomery County Public Schools and the weekend food providers increased their meeting frequency from quarterly to monthly.

Manna Food Center served 11,502 households across the county at multiple pick-up sites during the same period. An approximate total of 2,321,874 pounds of food was distributed. Families receiving boxes from Manna receive an average of 48.25 pounds of food each month.

In FY2021, Manna Food Center's Smart Sacks program served 5,724 children with 939,080 pounds of food across 33 schools, a spring break childcare hub, and a summer camp. The Women Who Care Ministries' Helping Kids Eat Weekend Meal Program, served 332,558 children/households with 1,829,084 pounds of food. WWCM served children/households at seven elementary schools, five middle schools, twelve high schools, seven day-care or apartment building sites, and two other community service sites. Kids In Need Distributors (KIND) provided for 2,455 students

at 27 MCPS sites: twenty elementary schools, six middle schools, and a learning center. In FY2020, when bulk grocery buying was limited due to the Covid-19 pandemic, KIND pivoted to providing grocery store gift cards to families to buy food, a practice which continued through FY2021. Gift cards are valued at \$20/month during the school year and \$10 during the summer, per student.

Another food security partner in FY20 was First African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church of Gaithersburg. The AME church's grocery distribution program contract, while serving the community for over twenty years, was uniquely assigned to Community Action for contract monitoring that year. The program purchases and distributes Self-Help and Resource Exchange (SHARE) value packages. County funds increased the number of families served from eleven to forty-five, representing a total of 220 people. SHARE packages included \$40 - \$45 worth of groceries, which at that time amounted to four to six pounds of frozen proteins and 8 - 12 lbs. of fresh produce, plus occasional seasonal grocery or dessert items. SHARE recipients contribute a small cost for the food and volunteer two hours a month in exchange for participation in the bulk-buying and distribution program. The AME Church partners with the County's Linkages to Learning program, which provides social services in connection with Montgomery County Public Schools, and Manna Food Center's Food Recovery Program to increase access to fresh produce. For Thanksgiving meal distribution, the AME Church partners with the Pride of Montgomery Elks Lodge and the Washington Conference Branch of the Women's Missionary Society. In FY21, the AME Church was reassigned for contract monitoring to another department agency.

Other food access contracts monitored by Community Action include the Caribbean Help Center, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, and CHEER. The Caribbean Help Center is located in Silver Spring and serves French-Creole and French-speaking County residents and served 459 households with 12,393 pounds of culturally appropriate staple foods from July 2020 - June 2021. The Catholic Charities site in Wheaton turned to distributing food outdoors, serving 1,390 households with 22,910 pounds of food during the same period. CHEER, within a network of providers that began distributing emergency food supplies from New Hampshire Estates Elementary School during the COVID-19 pandemic, served 820 households of up to eleven people each. The total pounds of food CHEER distributed was 227,815 for families in Zip codes near the school.

Community Action's contract partners also work with senior residents of our community, ages 60 and older. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to new light the extended isolation for many seniors in our community, and several contract partners' focus on serving this target population, as well as the TESS Community Action Center.

The Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSCGW) provides both social services and senior academy classes in University Gardens apartments, a HUD-funded building for seniors in eastern Silver Spring. During the pandemic, the senior academy pivoted from group classes to online tutoring on using smartphones, using KaoKao Talk (a Korean-language messaging app) and YouTube to deliver the class. In September 2020, 31 seniors participated in the smartphone class and 24 seniors participated in an online art

class and received the supplies needed to produce artwork and crafts at home. KCSCGW staff have also delivered groceries during the pandemic, often reaching over 100 residents, and made calls for emotional support.

The Korean Association of the State of Maryland Metropolitan Area (KASMMA) helped seniors secure their COVID-19-related relief payments, and continued to assist seniors in preparing for citizenship exams and accessing social services provided by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Since the pandemic began and with a staff of one, KASMMA provided up to 175 social services appointments in a month, nearly all to seniors.

A few years prior, Caribbean Help added home-based services to assist seniors and people with disabilities with organizing and scheduling their bill payments, in addition to connecting residents to food, jobs, and applying for benefits and citizenship. The home-based services reach 35 – 60 people per month. To maintain physical distancing during the pandemic, home-based services continued through drop-off and pick-up. Caribbean Help has also offered group workshops to a limited number of seniors in apartment building lobbies, such as an October 2020 workshop on voter registration.

CHEER continues to provide fresh produce deliveries, in partnership with Hungry Harvest, and emotional support calls to 34 participants of the Food is Medicine program for Long Branch residents with diabetes. In October 2020, this program delivered 124 boxes of produce.

Contract partners who joined Community Action's portfolio in FY20 are the Leadership Montgomery Education Foundation and Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) International.

Leadership Montgomery received a Community Grant that provided partial support for programs to build capacity to address racial disparities and advance racial equity in Montgomery County, in alignment with the County Executive's vision for a more Equitable and Inclusive Montgomery County. The programs were facilitated by the Racial Equity Institute and a consultant, Maegan Scott. The first program is a two-day training session, and the second is an eight-month program held one full day per month. Participants in the programs represent diverse Montgomery County residents and organizations, including leaders and front-line staff. The Community Grant also supports debriefing sessions facilitated by the Democracy Collaborative.

Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) International is based in northeast Washington, DC. The new contract provides trauma-informed case management and employment counseling to under- and unemployed Montgomery County residents, represent County residents in immigration court, and provide Know Your Rights information sessions. TASSC also provides therapy, psychological evaluation, medical evaluation and care, career fairs and cultural lunches.

In September 2020, the first full academic year within the COVID-19 emergency response began, including academic support provided to Montgomery County children and families by six Community Action contract partners. Family Services, Inc. (FSI), a subsidiary of Sheppard Pratt, supports Thriving Germantown, a public-private partnership initiative anchored by the Community Action contract for service coordination and data management. Thriving Germantown, which began in the 2017 - 2018 school year, and aims to boost the academic achievement of students attending



CAA partner Korean Community Services Center provides health information, immigration services, social services, and other supports to community members.

Col. James E. Daly Elementary School by addressing their families' social determinants of health, including housing, food, vision, primary care, and counseling needs. Many of the students attending Daly ES live in a nearby low-income mobile home community.

The Colesville Council of Community Congregations, better known as "C-4," serves families living in "East County," along the county's eastern border with Prince George's County. In addition to distributing clothing, household linens and baby supplies year-round for over thirty years, C-4 has a long history of providing school supplies to area students. Due to the pandemic, recipients registered to pick-up their backpacks filled with supplies, to comply with the CDC's recommendations for social distancing.

Interfaith Works held its Annual School Supplies drive in August 2020 with a goal of filling 2,500 backpacks with school supplies. Outreach included social media platforms and setting up an Amazon List for donors to shop from their homes. Interfaith Works' Twinbrook area office, in Rockville, remained open to receive donations and distribute backpacks. 1,400 backpacks were distributed in Fall 2020.

Academic support continued to be provided to middle school students living in the Rosemary Hills area of Silver Spring who attend Silver Creek Middle School in Kensington. The "Benchmarks" program, run by the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington, Division of Youth and Family Services moved online in synchronicity with MCPS. When the weather was favorable, outdoor activities were held on the grounds of a nearby recreation center, which, throughout the first year of the pandemic, served as a shelter for women experiencing homelessness.

Although the in-person activities were limited to weekly outdoor games, participating families benefitted from the gatherings. The YMCA enhanced its tutoring and mentoring throughout the year to support students as much as possible.

The Literacy Council of Montgomery County's contract for workplace literacy and customer service training deepened its digital literacy program. For instance, landscape workers for Maryland National Capital Area Parks and Planning were trained on how to use their phones to log their work hours, view their paychecks, and additional human resources needs that surfaced when the pandemic broke out.

The Korean Association of the Maryland Metropolitan Area continued to provide case management and translation services. Lessons in English and citizenship test requirements were suspended while churches worked out protocol for on-site classes. Unlike many contract partners that moved to online services, the Korean Association prioritized social services early in the pandemic, especially unemployment filing. As courts reopened and citizenship tests resumed, in-person services were provided individually, suspending group classes until safer conditions could be established.

The vast majority of Community Action's contract partners continued to deliver their services to families in need through the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, weathering staff changes and altering work logistics to continue providing services as safely as possible. Community Action continued to support contract partners, with a renewed focus on the power of collaboration, networking, and keeping each other informed of public services.

Many contract partners rapidly adapted their services at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following are a few examples of the ways services were impacted:

- **CASA**, which addresses social services, employment and training, and immigration needs of diverse low-income residents also went virtual in-service provision for some of their programs. They strictly followed CDC guidelines (temperature checks, sanitizer availability, masks requirements, 6 feet distance markers on the floor, etc.) They assisted in distributing Emergency Assistance Relief Payments (EARP) among the clients they worked with.
- **FAIR Girls**, which addresses human trafficking by providing prevention training in schools and offering case management to victims, provided virtual case management and support to all existing clients. The crisis hotline, which supports law enforcement, government agencies, and survivors, continued to operate with remote staffing.
- **IMPACT Silver Spring** which addresses leadership training and neighborhood networking to build stronger and self-reliant communities, assisted in distributing Emergency Assistance Relief Payment (EARP) program. They held online community mutual support spaces and continued with online English language classes. They established hyper-local mutual aid pods self-organized groups of neighbors who agree to check-in on each other and work together to respond to needs.
- **KindWorks**, which was founded to bring community members together through voluntarism, changed from serving dinner in shelters to dropping off meals at shelters such as Interfaith Works Women's Center. Full home setups for refugee families served by Lutheran Social Services were modified to pickup and delivery of furniture and household goods.

- **Manna Food Center** temporarily waived all income requirements for emergency food. The Choice Pantry closed and was replaced with a “grab and go” model, distributing boxes of food at seven locations. The Community Food Rescue “Chow Match” software matched seniors and those with medical needs to volunteers who delivered specially designed “Stay Put Boxes” containing non-perishable foods in larger quantities than is usually provided.
- **Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) International** adopted HIPAA-compliant software to provide remote counseling and raised funds to support clients who lost their jobs in the rapidly changing economy.

Virtual Contract Monitoring: When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the Montgomery County community in March 2020, the contract monitors increased its support to the network of contract partners by providing frequent updates on rapidly changing and emerging services, such as COVID-19 testing centers, Census 2020 information, the creation of seven new food distribution hubs across the County, unemployment filing, and later, rent relief programs. Through the contract monitors’ email list of over sixty contacts working with contract partners, and the e-newsletter to a broader community of nearly 2,000 subscribers, Community Action kept contract partners abreast of each other’s services.

Building upon a multi-year tradition, CAA Contract Monitors Aizat Oladapo and Melissa E. Ferguson convened contract partners to share updates, contracting tips, and to promote healthy habits on Monday, November 16, 2020. This was the first time the CAA Annual Contract Partners meeting

was held virtually and over fifty people attended, including representatives of nearly all **thirty-one contract partner organizations**, the **Community Action Board**, and DHHS colleagues. Executive Director Sharon Strauss presented an overview of CAA and shared updates on funding to support service navigators, supported by Community Services Block Grant funding appropriated through the CARES Act. Participants also met in breakout groups to share stories and challenges of service provision during the pandemic and received reminder tips on submitting contract invoices.

Head Start Program Manager Charlene Muhammad led participants in exercises of posture adjustment and stretches to align the spine, followed by tips from contract monitor Melissa Ferguson for restoring energy through breaks, power naps, and rest. The meeting ended with a slideshow featuring partners’ online and providing services while adhering to the CDC recommendations of physically distancing and face masking. The CAA is grateful for our community partners’ time spent together in this extended period of high community needs.



IMPACT Silver Spring continued to support its community garden during the pandemic.



Just Neighbors volunteer Nancy Gonzalez.

SECTION 5

Community Action Board

The Community Action Board (CAB) serves in an advisory capacity to the County Executive and County Council, and as an advocate on behalf of lower-income County residents. CAB also serves as the governing body for the Community Action Agency and Head Start, along with the Head Start Parents Policy Council.

In FY20, CAB submitted testimony regarding 13 County-level matters, 18 state-level matters, and 6 federal-level matters. In FY21, CAB submitted testimony regarding four County-level matters, eight state-level matters, and three federal-level matters. The board's advocacy included written testimony, in-person testimony, and sign-on letters. Advocacy focused on historic CAB priorities, such as tax credits, food and nutrition programs, early care and education, and affordable housing, as well as emerging issues that were the result of the COVID-19 pandemic's devastating impact on lower-income households.

Much of the CAB's advocacy in FY21 focused on ensuring full funding for the County's Working Families Income Supplement (WFIS). Advocacy included meetings with County Councilmembers and testimony at a bill hearing that ensure full funding for the credit so that all households who are eligible for the state EITC could continue to claim the County's WFIS.

The following list is a small sample of the Community Action Board's advocacy during FY20 and FY21.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FY20

CAB Supported:

- A non-lapsing Maryland Meals for Achievement Fund.
- Requiring the Comptroller to distribute taxes collected from snack food sales to the Achievement Fund.
- The Housing Impact Fairness Act, which required teardowns to pay impact fees
- Requiring landlords to provide "just cause" prior to evicting a tenant.
- The Renter Relief Act to prevent rent increases during the COVID-19 public health emergency
- Special funding for School Community Health Nurses.
- Tax credits for employers who establish onsite childcare centers or compensate providers who offer childcare to their employees.
- A County grant program for employers with 50 or fewer employees that offer child care Flexible Spending Accounts.
- Preventing employers from asking applicants about wage history.
- Banning discrimination based on hairstyle and hair texture (CROWN Act).
- A Maryland family medical leave insurance program.
- Expanding eligibility for the state's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for single filers without dependents.
- Increasing the value of the state's EITC for single filers without dependents to 100% of the federal EITC.
- Establishing a Child Tax Credit in Maryland.
- Preventing auto insurance companies from using credit history in determining ratings.
- Preventing the Maryland Vehicle Administration (MVA) from suspending driver's licenses or car registration for failure to

pay traffic violation fines and establishing a payment plan for fines of more than \$300.

- Setting the maximum fine for video toll violations at \$5 and preventing the MVA from suspending driver's licenses and car registrations for failure to pay fines.
- An adjustment to the state's CSBG formula.
- A grant program for child care providers impacted by the COVID-19 emergency.
- A Resolution declaring racism a public health crisis.
- Establishing a Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative.
- Establishing a Two-Generation (2-Gen) Family Economic Security Commission.
- A proposed rule change for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which eliminated categorical eligibility.
- A proposed HUD rule change that would have prohibited "mixed-status" households from qualifying for subsidized housing.

CAB Priorities:

- Advocated before the Board of Education for: expansion of Pre-Kindergarten, funding for support Family Service Works and administrative staff, 2-Gen models to reduce poverty, and reducing disparities for students of different backgrounds and socio-economic status.
- Issued a joint statement with the Head Start Parents Policy Council following the murder of George Floyd. The statement emphasized the two groups' ongoing commitment to changing policies that have allowed for system racism and highlighted the history of Community Action and Head Start, both of which grew out of the 1960s Civil Rights movement.
- Advocated for CAB priorities at the HHS Committee worksession for Boards, Committees, and Commissions, Joint Delegation Hearing, and the FY21 County Operating Budget.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FY21

CAB Supported:

- Increasing SNAP benefits and Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) in a forthcoming Coronavirus Relief Package.
- A \$20 million allocation to expand rental assistance.
- Requiring certain restrictions on police use of force.
- A Montgomery Moving Forward Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition letter highlighting the needs of child care providers working to reopen following the COVID-19 emergency.
- The National Head Start Association's advocacy efforts to provide funding for Head Start programs.
- Two sign-on letters to the Governor from Montgomery Moving Forward and the Early Care and Education Workforce Advocacy Coalition that included recommendations for how American Rescue Plan funds for child care should be spent in Maryland.
- Expanding "ban the box" protections in the County.
- Creating a Child Tax Credit for those who are excluded from the federal Child Tax Credit.
- Increasing the value of the state EITC for single filers without dependents.
- Providing grants to childcare providers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Extending the Working Families Income Supplement to filers who qualify for the federal or newly expanded Maryland EITC.

CAB leadership also advocated for the board's priorities at the HHS Committee worksession for Boards, Committees, and Commissions (BCCs), Joint Delegation Hearing, and FY22 County Operating Budget.



Hosted by the Montgomery County Commission for Women, several Community Action Board members and Community Action staff participated in the annual Women's Legislative Briefing.



CAB Chair Laura Irwin with Councilmembers Evan Glass and Will Jawando at a press conference for the Housing Impact Fairness Act.

COMMUNITY ACTION BOARD MEMBERS IN FY20 AND FY21

Laura E. Irwin
FY20 Chair

Tiffany Jones
FY20 Vice Chair

Tiffany Jones
FY21 Chair

Lisette Orellana Engel
FY21 Vice Chair

Meredith Bowers,
Nonprofit Montgomery

Valerie Chatfield-Smith,
*Representative of the Low-Income
Community, Gaithersburg*

Lisa Conlon,
Board of Education

Erika Conner, *Representative of the
Low-Income Community, Burtonsville*

Janice Freeman,
Human Rights Commission

Candace Groudine,
Human Rights Commission

Laura E. Irwin,
*Spanish Catholic Center, Catholic
Charities*

Ron Jennings,
CAFE Montgomery

Dr. Jeffery Johnson,
People's Community Baptist Church

Tiffany Jones,
*Representative of the Head Start
Policy Council and the Low-Income
Community, Rockville*

Will Kenlaw,
Department of Transportation

Donnette Lawrence,
Housing Opportunities Commission

Agnes Leshner,
Montgomery's Kids

Pamela Luckett,
County Council Designee

Lisette Orellana Engel,
*Representative of the Low-Income
Community, Germantown*

Isaac Osei Asare,
*Representative of the Low-Income
Community, Bethesda*

Myriam Paul,
*Representative of the Low-Income
Community, Rockville*

Timothy Robinson,
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

Sam Sharper,
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

Michael Subin,
County Executive's Designee

Zelda Wafer-Jones,
*Representative of the Head Start
Policy Council and the Low-Income
Community, Wheaton*



Community Advocacy Institute

The Community Action Board established the Community Advocacy Institute (CAI) in 2016 to teach advocacy skills to lower-income residents. Participants attend monthly workshops on a variety of topics, including how to work with elected officials, storytelling, letter-writing and developing testimony, and key advocacy issues for low-income residents. Board members facilitate all of the workshops and welcome guest speakers, including County Councilmembers, advocates, and issue experts. Participants must be residents of Montgomery County and meet income eligibility requirements. Successful completion of the CAI includes participation in all workshops throughout the eight-month program and completion of an advocacy project.

The FY20 CAI began as an in-person program but switched to a virtual format in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2020, 14 participants graduated from the program, joining alumni from the first four years of the program.

The FY21 CAI was the first all-virtual program. The program included the same requirements, with participants attending monthly workshops online and completing an advocacy project. In May 2021, 18 participants successfully completed the program.



CAI Participants Nolu Crockett-Ntonga and Susan Palomino practice their testimony before Community Action Board members.



CAI Participants and CAB members at a testimony practice session at the Montgomery County Council Building.



FY21 CAI graduate Freida Williams at the CAI virtual graduation on May 25, 2021.



In June 2021, Community Action Board members joined staff for an outdoor “grab and go” event where CAI graduates received certificates and a gift bag from the board.

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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.

