



How Community Action Agencies can advance meaningful change through effective state advocacy.

*In this workshop, **three experienced panelists** will share insights from community impact work, legislative affairs, public policy, and state and federal government. Participants will learn practical strategies for building coalitions, advocating for issues that matter to their agencies and communities, and what advocacy in action looks like on the ground.*



History Matters

- Our mission...
- Makes it incumbent on us to advocate
- Federal and state rules allow lobbying





Why State Level Advocacy

- History of Community Action
- Funding Mix: federal, state, private
- Federalism: State public policies are increasingly important
- Mission and structure: trusted local longstanding institutions fighting poverty with often times combined federal and state funds



Landscape

- In New England CAAs are all private nonprofits
- All cities and towns are “capped” in every state but MASS
- All are supported by federal and state resources; in many cases city and town resources; some private
- Relationships at all levels
- Major public policy, budget, program matters



Advocacy Approaches

- Lobbyists
- Developing an agenda
- Local, State, Federal Priorities
- Coalition Building
- Research
- Messaging
- Press
- Outreach to Elected and Appointed
- Taking Stock from time to time
- Seeking Opportunities



Case Studies

■ CT

- **State Line Item Support:** Advocacy helped create HSI "Human Services Infrastructure" budget line item to support CAA work in CT
- **HR1 SNAP/Medicaid Outreach:** Creation of distinct case management and outreach program for CAA network to assist impacted households navigate new eligibility requirements
- **SNAP Grocery Card Initiative:** CAA leadership was integral in working with state leaders to create a program to issue one time grocery cards to support households who had lost SNAP benefits due to HR1.



Case Studies

■ NH

- **Taking a Stand in the Press:** 10.4 Seacoast Online: [Head Start works for NH. Don't weaken what makes it work](#), by Jeanne Agri, Betsey Andrews Parker, Ryan Clouthier, Beth Daniels, Jeanne Robillard, CEOs of NH Community Action Programs : “For generations of New Hampshire families, Head Start has been much more than preschool. It is a place where children learn and grow, receive developmental and health supports, and arrive at kindergarten better prepared for school...”
- **Alliance in support of Social Safety Net:** County level joint effort opposing drastic budget cuts; effort to preserve the social safety net; collective action and impact stressed



Case Studies

- Massachusetts

- **Family Planning Earmark:** intersection of health and human services; ABCD among a few family planning agencies; earmarks can be subject to reduction/calls to limit them; earmarks can support local or statewide efforts
- **Fuel Assistance:** History of federal \$\$ being limited; history of updating state legislators and appointed officials; fuel prices shocks; support from allies; press



- Massachusetts (Cont'd)

- **State CAA Line Item:** Part of a broad bill to support Community Action in Massachusetts; advocacy for CAA line item started 15 years before; COVID crisis played a role
- **Poverty Commission:** Part of a broad bill to support Community Action in Massachusetts; advocacy for such a commission started 5 years before
- **VITA Site Resources:** Under funded infrastructure to access EITC; part of large coalition



Thank you!

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