



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF
COMMUNITY SERVICES/CSBG

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
Rossana Rosado, Secretary of State

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March 2021

Connecting Communities in Action—CSBG Discretionary Funds Support

Launch of Fatherhood Connection Pilot



The Cattaraugus County Group of the Fatherhood Connection Program in the village of Allegany that met on March 4, 2021.

The Division of Community Services has approved funding for a three-county pilot project designed to engage men as father figures in the lives of their children, stepchildren or grandchildren. The Fatherhood Connection curriculum, created by Reginald Cox of the Rochester area, is the focus of the project. ACCORD Corporation, ProAction of Steuben and Yates, and Connecting Communities in Action (formerly Cattaraugus Community Action) are partnering with Mr. Cox, and with their local

Departments of Social Services, Probation and Court Systems to pilot the Fatherhood Connection Program across the Western Southern Tier.

Research establishes links between fathers’ healthy, consistent involvement in their children’s lives and positive outcomes for children and youth. Healthy father involvement (spending time with children, providing emotional support, giving everyday assistance, monitoring behavior, using non-coercive discipline and providing clear boundaries and expectations) benefits children through greater academic success, more positive social behavior, fewer conduct problems, better self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and reduced contact with juvenile justice system.

In order to achieve both short-term and long-term health and social impacts for families, direct service to fathers and families, training of facilitators, and research for longitudinal validation will occur. Mr. Cox will facilitate at least two 13-week Fatherhood Connection groups across the three-county area, engaging both father figures and new facilitators from each CAA who will be trained to continue the facilitation of the groups into the future. The funded goals are that forty men will be referred to the groups, 30 will participate, and 20 will graduate from the program. Six representatives from the three agencies will be trained as facilitators during the process.

In the last quarter of 2020, one full cohort of eleven men graduated from the first group, sponsored by ProAction in Steuben County. A new cohort is underway in Allegany County as well, with an anticipated graduation date in early April. CCA, which operates a variety of Fatherhood programs, will begin another cohort in late April or early May. As four new facilitators are in the process of being trained, they will continue the work across these counties as new cohorts are scheduled. Two more facilitators are targeted for training in the coming months.

Data points for improved father involvement will be established and measured throughout the course of the project. Christopher St. Vil, Ph.D, MSW, from the University of Buffalo School of Social Work is researching the data and outcomes for validation in the first effort to accredit the Fatherhood Connection as an evidence-informed curriculum. Data points include but are not limited to quality time spent with children, improved custody and visitation for non-custodial fathers, improved co-parenting and relationship with children's mothers, improved employment and money management, and improved family health and wellness. Pre-and post-session assessments measure participants' understanding of the material presented in each of the 13-week sessions. Assessments of participants will take place 90 days following graduation to ensure long-term lasting impact. Knowledge of the curriculum and improved facilitation skills will be measured for the six facilitators.

The Community Action Agencies are enrolling the participants in the project, collecting the data associated with each family, and providing wrap around services through a trauma informed lens that include but are not limited to transportation, housing, employment supports, food, and services to children and extended families.

It is the intent of the pilot project that additional funding will be identified, possibly through NYS Office of Children and Family Services, and that the project will expand to other Community Action Agencies

after the first year of implementation. To date, funding from additional sources has been secured for the creation of a promotional video, and for the planning of a Fatherhood summit.

Here's what participants have to say about the value of their experiences:

"My girlfriend and I are raising her sister's baby, so I became a dad instantly. I didn't have a clue on what to do, this group and learnings have been so valuable. It helps me walk through the door of Response-Ability even when I don't feel like it. I find such affirmation and approval in my life and I have never gotten that before. It's amazing!" - Luke S (on raising a 6-month-old)

"I didn't know what to do with all this pent-up emotion toward my ex when she would use the kids against me to manipulate me to doing what she wants – even though I knew it wasn't healthy. I have learned a lot, and still have a long way to go as I increase my Emotional Intelligence and learn to cancel the debts to reduce my anger threshold. Fatherhood Connection literally saved my life!" - Tyler P (2 years co-parenting and supporting 4 school aged children)

And here's what the Commissioner of Social Services in Cattaraugus County thinks of the Fatherhood Connection: "The work we've done over the past 8 years with the Fatherhood Connection has been a key part to a culture shift at our agency which has led to better outcomes for families. We have been more inclusive, and men have responded by being more responsive to our efforts. Our staff have gained skills in engaging men and keeping them connected to their children. It has also been a pleasure being part of the movement to advance this work in our community." – Tony Turano

For more information on the pilot, contact Tina Zerbian at tzerbian@ccaction.org.

For more information on the Fatherhood Connection, [watch this video](#); visit <https://fatherhoodconnection.com/>, or email Reggie Cox at thefatherhoodconnection@gmail.com.

For more information on CCA's Fatherhood focus, including its subcontract with Chautauqua Opportunities, check out the video [here](#).

Schenectady Community Action Program—Working Remotely



Schenectady Community Action Program’s strategic plan includes goals to integrate services. Even before the pandemic hit, SCAP planned ways to integrate services and greater assist customers in obtaining services. In July 2020, the agency rolled out a pilot “SCAP Portal” an online portal to help support the agency’s goal of assisting customers gain access to services. Deb Schimpf, CEO, reported as a result of the

COVID-19 pandemic, people became more comfortable using the internet and going online to get things done. Using the SCAP Portal, customers select programs and services they are interested in and get access to every program that they are eligible for. Income documents are obtained remotely and uploaded. Elise Martin, SCAP’s Director of Community Services, reported SCAP assists approximately 180 customers each week, via remote services, phone and walk-in. As a result of COVID-19 the grantee has assisted people who have not accessed services or needed safety nets before. Although SCAP employees are transitioning back to the office, the agency will continue to use the online portal to connect customers with services to meet their needs.

For more information visit their website: <https://scapny.org/>.

Opportunities for Otsego—Hosts Second Workforce Development Training

Copied from OFO March News Release

In partnership with the New York State Weatherization Directors Association (NYSWDA) and CDO Workforce, Opportunities for Otsego will host a free weeklong training session on the basics of building science and energy efficiency, intended to move attendees into the weatherization and home performance field.

Training will be a combination of hands-on and classroom learning, taught by industry experts. Successful attendees will earn certifications from NYSWDA and OSHA and have an opportunity to talk with local employers about job opportunities.

Training sessions will be held in Oneonta the week of March 22, 2021 beginning at 9:00AM each day. Lunch will be provided. For more information or to apply, contact Penny at CDO Workforce at 607.432.4800, ext. 0 or email seegerp@otsegocounty.com.

This partnership is part of CDO Workforce's development strategy and Opportunities for Otsego COVID-19 recovery efforts under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

About New York State Weatherization Directors Association (NYSWDA): NYSWDA is the leading provider of building science training in New York State and New England. Established in 1985, NYSWDA has successfully trained thousands of field staff from weatherization agencies, home performance contractors, energy auditing firms and Energy Star home builders.

About CDO Workforce: CDO Workforce coordinates and focuses employment, training, and education development resources across Chenango, Delaware, and Otsego counties, providing service to employed people, unemployed people and employers alike. Their goal is to improve the long-term growth and development of the work force.

About Opportunities for Otsego (OFO): OFO is a Community Action Agency that has been fighting the "War on Poverty" in Otsego County since 1966. OFO's preferred future is a community that strives to alleviate poverty through collaborations that foster economic stability and social justice. OFO's mission is to be the leader in developing innovative solutions that promote healthy lives, thriving families, and caring communities.

For more information visit their website: <https://www.ofoinc.org/>.

Office for New Americans—2019 Public Charge Rule Has Been Permanently Blocked: What does this mean for our new American communities?

On March 9th, 2021, the Biden Administration withdrew its defense of the various pending court appeals of the “public charge” rule issued in 2019 by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), giving way to a **permanent** dismissal of the 2019 public charge rule. This decision has provided relief to many of our new American families. Fear of repercussions to their immigration status, prompted by the 2019 public charge rule, kept many new American households from accessing services they needed and were otherwise eligible for, such as nutrition assistance and most recently, the COVID-19 vaccine.

Public charge is a ground for inadmissibility and applies when an applicant seeks admission to the United States, or adjustment of immigration status. A public charge is defined as an individual who would be “primarily dependent on the government for subsistence.” The public charge test does not apply to humanitarian-based immigration, for instance refugees and asylees.

In light of the decision by the Biden Administration, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the federal agency responsible for immigration and naturalization service functions, has stopped applying the 2019 public charge rule to all pending applications and petitions. Public charge as an admissibility standard has not been eliminated. Instead, USCIS is now applying the [1999 Interim Field Guidance](#) on public charge to the adjudication of any application for adjustment of status that was pending or received on or after **March 9, 2021**. The 1999 public charge guidance considers the use of fewer public benefits to determine if one is a “public charge.”

The Biden Administration’s decision to vacate the rule responded to concerns expressed across the nation, including by New York State and the Office for New Americans (ONA) and its partners, regarding the significantly negative impact - chilling effect—the rule was having on immigrants in New York State. For example, the 2019 public charge rule “chilled” the use of public benefits among new American families. For new Americans with intellectual / developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families, the 2019 public charge rule made legal permanent residence less accessible and caused distress for the use of public benefits that are vital for the health, safety, and overall wellbeing of

individuals with I/DD. Before the proposal for the new public charge rule was released in 2018, ONA began raising awareness. Once the 2019 public charge rule was out in place, ONA also highlighted the new rule's consequences for individuals with I/DD and helped to address public charge-related fears among new American communities – and these efforts paid off.

Since the chilling effect of the “public charge” rule was significant, it is now important to share the news with immigrant and refugees communities and refer those in need of assistance to the New York State New Americans Hotline at **1-800-566-7636** from 9AM to 8PM (ET), Monday through Friday (excluding Federal holidays). The New Americans hotline is a **toll-free**, multi-lingual hotline. The hotline provides live assistance in more than 200 languages. Anyone can call the hotline for information and referrals, regardless of citizenship or documented status. Calls to the hotline are confidential and anonymous.

Office for New Americans—Request for Applications (RFA#20-ONA-30)

The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) has announced a grant opportunity for organizations across New York State to comprise a network of community-based providers under the New York State Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants program, which will enable low-income immigrants who received higher education abroad, to overcome barriers to professional development through the screening, training and/or re-credentialing of candidates and the identification of job placement opportunities in each region of the state.

The New York State Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants program will respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by assisting New York's low-income immigrant population to fully utilize their potential.

The New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) has posted the answers to questions submitted in response to RFA #20-ONA-30, New York State Professional Pathways for High-Skilled Immigrants.

The link to the **Q&A and amendments to the RFA** can be found via the link below:

<https://www.dos.ny.gov/funding/rfa-20-ona-30/index.html>

Please note, **applications are due no later than March 31, 2021 by 4pm.**

COVID-19 Scam Alert

Alert – How to Spot, Avoid, and Report COVID-19 scams

With all that is going on in the world today, the populations served by the Community Action Network is exposed to more than just COVID-19. Here is some helpful information to share with our customers:

- Government Imposter Scams
 - Callers may claim you “WON” the lottery/sweepstakes or owe a debt
 - **FACTS TO KNOW:**
 - Do not wire money, give out any banking or personal information
 - People who have “WON” a prize do not pay any charges
 - Screen your calls, if the number is unknown, have the caller leave a message, utilize the National Do Not Call Registry (donotcall.gov)
 - Report the SCAM (ftc.gov/complaint)
- Tech Support Scams
 - Caller may randomly call or send pop-up to your devices
 - **FACTS TO KNOW:**
 - Random tech companies do not reach out to customers asking for remote access to personal devices, and ask for payment to fix the problem
 - Installing Anti-Virus software on your devices, scammers may use random pop-ups asking to call or download for support
 - Routinely update security settings and software
 - Report the SCAM (ftc.gov/complaint)
- Phishing Scam/Emails and Text Messages
 - Scammers use email and text messages to access your personal information (including passwords, account numbers, or social security numbers)
 - **FACT TO KNOW:**
 - Emails may look like they are from a bank – check the from email
 - Requests often have you clicking a link or open an attachment
 - Protect yourself:
 - Update security software on devices
 - Use multi-factor authentication
 - Report the SCAM (ftc.gov/complaint)
- **Beware of COVID vaccine fraud**
 - To help root out vaccination fraud or scams across the State, New York established a hotline that New Yorkers can call to report suspected fraud. It is a red flag if anyone is promising you the vaccine in exchange for payment. To make a report, call 1-833-VAX-SCAM (1-833-829-7226) or email STOPVAXFRAUD@health.ny.gov.

For more detailed information, please visit: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/>.

Contract Reminder:

You can request an amendment for your CARES Contract at any point by contacting your program analyst.

CSBG Workplan and ROMA Concepts Training

On February 9, 2021, Jackie Orr, NYSCAA and Jessica Lowell, CSPA 2 DOS, presented a training to the Community Action Network titled “Building Your CSBG Work Plan.” More than 65 Community Action staff from agencies across NYS participated in the training.

The training discussed how to utilize ROMA concepts in the development of the CSBG work plan. Concepts reviewed included elements from the CSBG contract Attachment C and the work plan, specifically how to:

- Integrate and connect community needs into the CAA’s services
- ROMA funnel concept built into the work plan
- Identify services codes and outcome codes for similar programs

The training was recorded by NYSCAA and is available on their website:

<https://nyscaa.memberclicks.net/2021-webinars>.

Resources for responding to COVID-19

[Community Action Partnership: COVID-19 Community Needs Assessment](#)

[CAPLAW: Coronavirus Updates for the Community Action Network](#)

[NASCSP Coronavirus Resources](#)

[NYSCAA Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources](#)

[Food Pantries across New York State](#)

[New York State Department of Health](#)

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