EOP Provides Access to Address Financial Literacy

The Economic Opportunity Program, Inc. of Chemung County (EOP) received Emergency Tool Kit funding through the CARES Act. This gave them the ability to assist participants with their rent, utility payments, and medical emergencies which fall under the umbrella of the CARES Rental Assistance Program.

Participants don’t just get a check. Instead, they are counselled one-on-one. Working one-on-one allows EOP and their staff to understand the reasons behind each participant’s need for financial assistance. As a part of getting emergency assistance, participants also make a commitment to receive financial education and support from a financial institution of their choosing. If they do not have one, EOP recommends one and assists them in making the proper appointments.

Empower Federal Credit Union is one local financial institution EOP partners with. Kurt Bartenstein EFCU’s Regional Business Development Manager, says,

“When I am contacted by EOP to coach a rental assistance client, I attempt to reach each person as soon as possible to set up an appointment. I ask the client to describe the issues they are encountering in their finances, and we discuss what is impeding their ability to pay rent. We discuss their financial history as well. This allows us to identify any patterns that have been in place that need to be addressed. The pandemic has put many people in financial positions that they were not prepared for. We identify the financial issues that are the most urgent, which could be childcare, employment, lack of savings, or lack of an emergency fund.

We try to get a picture of the client and their financial status. We ask that each client chronicle how they spend money every day for five days. Once we have that data, the client and I can examine how they spend money and how they can save money. A lot of what we teach are basic, good financial practices. For instance, we had a client who was buying supplies on a day-to-day basis. We showed them that with some planning and buying in bulk, they could save a substantial amount of money. We also teach clients how to budget their money to make it last longer and obtain more of what they need. The last piece of the puzzle is to dig in and teach clients how to save, regardless of the amount they can begin saving. Once we can establish a habit of saving, the financial growth will not be far behind. Obviously, every client is different, and we pride ourselves on being able to find a way to assist everyone.”

EOP is working with American Capital RE, LLC, a business that helps tenants to achieve homeownership following a rental period. In addition, American Capital RE, LLC is working to include information and resources for tenants in need of assistance, and to help them maintain good tenant practices.
WCCA SHIELD Project Provides Care Coordination to Inmates

Wyoming County Community Action, Inc. (WCCA), under the SHIELD Project has worked to develop an exceptional partnership with the Wyoming County Jail. WCCA is excited to announce the addition of in person interactions and care coordination with inmates, the likes of which were not possible just a few months ago. These interactions are proving beneficial in fostering communication and expediting future needs/concerns for those exiting incarceration and returning to family/work life upon their exit. WCCA also recognizes the struggles incarceration places on the family unit itself and prides themselves on viewing and working with the whole picture.

Attendance at the monthly Jail Transition Meetings at the Wyoming County Jail has allowed for connections and communications to grow. Each interaction has helped to shape contacts with numerous agencies and support systems within the Wyoming County community. It is WCCA’s goal to improve the client’s ability to secure fulltime employment, remain sober, develop his/her mental perception of who he/she wants to be at the end of their incarceration.

WCCA has also furnished “Transition Backpacks” filled with twenty plus personal items, food, clothing, books (furnished by Project Read), board games, and bus passes to the Wyoming County Jail to help soften the transition for those exiting.

Success stories are happening outside of the jail as well. The strategies/services used by WCCA have also been applied in helping a young single mother who had fallen into legal troubles and experienced loss custody. Through her own efforts and WCCA’s support this individual has been able to regain custody of their children, improved their living situation, and is enroll in LPN course.

We look forward to seeing continued success from individuals enrolled in this program. The SHIELD Project has and will continue to prove vital in abolishing limitations and promoting individual and community growth. When compassion, experience, and knowledge are combined with receptiveness, humans can achieve all goals. Wyoming County Community Action believes this.

May is Community Action Month

It’s May, what is your Community Action Agency doing to celebrate Community Action Month? The Division of Community Services (DCS) wants to hear from your agency! DCS is planning to highlight the incredible work happening across the State. The National Community Action Partnership (NCAP) has created a Community Action Month toolkit, to promote all the wonderful work of CSBG! To access the toolkit, click here.

This toolkit provides resources to promote your Community Action Agency and raise awareness of Community Action Month in May! This tool kit contains templates for social media posts, press releases, government proclamations, fundraising ideas, video production tips, and event and activity ideas your agency can use to increase visibility! Click here to download the toolkit.

Additionally, NCAP has outlined some activities in the Community Action Month Calendar, which includes daily themes and hashtags the CSBG Network can participate along with.
The ONA Ramirez June Initiative Celebrates Autistic New Americans

This April, the ONA Ramirez June Initiative is celebrating Autism Acceptance Month. Autism Acceptance Month promotes the acceptance, inclusion, and celebration of autistic people as family members, friends, classmates, co-workers, and community members who make valuable contributions to our world. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how an autistic person communicates with and relates to other people and how they experience the world. Autism is a “spectrum” disorder because people on the spectrum have a wide range of behaviors, abilities, and challenges. Autism can also be viewed as a form of neurodiversity. Embracing neurodiversity means accepting and respecting neurological differences as you would for any other human differences. Autistic self-advocates feel that autism itself does not need to be fixed or cured. However, many autistic people feel that they would benefit from others’ understanding and acceptance of autism. Together we can create a world which values, includes, and celebrates all kinds of minds. Since 2019, the Office for New Americans Ramirez June Initiative strives to create positive change to connect new Americans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), including autism, to vital resources and services in NYS. If you would like to connect with the ONA Ramirez June Initiative, contact Cynthia.Stewart@dos.ny.gov.

Office for New Americans (ONA) Ready to Assist Ukrainians in New York

New York State is home to the largest Ukrainian population in the United States, and in April Governor Hochul launched a new website with resources for Ukrainians in New York and abroad, and with information for New Yorkers looking to assist – https://www.ny.gov/ukraine. Ukrainians can now apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and ONA’s statewide network of legal providers are available to provide free screenings and immigration legal services to anyone in New York looking for assistance. In addition, ONA’s partners provide mental health support through the Golden Door program, and other free assistance such as naturalization preparation, English Language Learning, and workforce training. Anyone looking to access ONA’s free services can contact the New York State New Americans Hotline at 1-800-566-7636, Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm. All calls are confidential, and assistance is available in over 200 languages, including Ukrainian.
Practice Bicycle Safety with Department of Consumer Protection!

With the warmer weather that comes in May, bicycle enthusiasts will be out celebrating National Bike Month. Bicycling is a great way to get exercise and explore New York, whether through local towns or through the whole state on the 750-mile Empire State Trail. On May 2nd, the League of American Bicyclists will be celebrating National Ride a Bike Day, promoting bike riding and healthy living.

However, bicyclists also experience hazards on the road. According to the National Safety Council (NSC), the number of deaths from bicycle incidents nationwide has increased 37% in the last decade. Millions of bicyclists share the road with vehicles each year. As with any sport, consumers should take steps to keep themselves and their families safe.

The NYS Division of Consumer Protection (DCP) serves to educate and empower consumers. Below is some guidance on how to safely celebrate National Bicycle Month:

- **Always wear a helmet**: Bicyclists of all ages should have a properly fitting helmet while riding. The strap of the helmet should make a “V” under the ears, the helmet should be no more than two fingers above the eyes, and the fit should be snug. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has a guide on properly fitting helmets, helmet certifications and laws, and more information.

- **Check your equipment**: An ill-fitting bicycle is not safe to ride. Bicyclists should make sure that the bicycle they are riding is comfortable for their height and weight. Also ensure that the seat is adjusted to a comfortable height and is not loose. Check the brakes before going out to ride, and make sure that the tires are properly inflated and that there are no leaks.

- **Plan to be seen**: It’s important that drivers in vehicles can see bicyclists on the road. Wear bright colors when riding to be more noticeable. Wear reflective clothing and use flashing lights when riding at night. A bell or horn can also alert vehicles to bicyclists’ presence.

- **Follow the rules of the road**: Bicyclists should adhere to the same rules of the road as motorists. They should also remain in bicycle lanes and use hand signals to indicate changes in direction. If riding a group, bicyclists should ride in a single file. Look out for hazards and pedestrians in the road and remain alert.

- **Motorists should practice safety, too**: Drivers have a responsibility to watch for others sharing the road. Motorists should follow the rules of the road and give right of way to bicyclists. When stopping and turning at intersections, always look for pedestrians and bicyclists alike. Always check side mirrors prior to opening car doors; the NSC suggests utilizing the far-hand reach to train drivers to check side-mirrors first by opening doors with the hand that is farther away from the door.

Further information on helmet safety can be found at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), including helmet standards and other activities where a helmet should be used.

The New York State Division of Consumer Protection provides resources and education materials to consumer on product safety, as well as voluntary mediation services between consumers and businesses. The Consumer Assistance Helpline 1-800-697-1220 is available Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:30pm, excluding State Holidays, and consumer complaints can be filed at any time at www.dos.ny.gov/consumer-protection.

For more consumer protection tips, follow the Division on social media at Twitter: @NYSConsumer and Facebook: www.facebook.com/nysconsumer.
Did you Know...

Update Your Vend Reps!

This is a friendly reminder to logon to the State Comptroller Website and update your Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire (also referred to as a VendRep) [HERE]! When reviewing your Vend Rep, ask yourself these questions:

1. Have you updated it within the last 6 months? To be considered current, each Vend Rep must have a date which falls within the last 6 months. An expired Vend Rep will slow approval of your contract.
2. At the time you submitted your contract, the Vend Rep was current, is it still? At the time of contract submission your Vend Rep might be current, but it needs to be current at the time of review and execution. Keep an eye on it even after you submit your contract documents.
3. Do you have any issues and concerns which need to be disclosed? The Vend Rep is a self-certification which ensures every vendor is responsible. Disclosing issues in advance of your contract review will help to speed it along to execution.

If you have any questions, reach out to your assigned program analyst or the ARU directly at dos.sm.DCS.ARU@dos.ny.gov.

Reminder: all CARES funding needs to be spent by 09/30/2022, please contact your assigned Program Analyst for assistance.

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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