



Department of State Community Services

January 2026 CSBG Newsletter

A Message of Appreciation and Gratitude

Greetings Colleagues,

As we begin a new year, I want to take a moment to thank you for the vital work you do in communities across the state. As I finish my first year in this position, I have gained a deeper appreciation for the many responsibilities your agencies manage to keep programs running smoothly - and the patience, understanding, and flexibility you bring to this work.

2025 was a challenging year. Throughout it, your resilience, adaptability, and leadership in the face of uncertainty and changing needs made a meaningful difference for the individuals and families you serve, and highlighted your commitment to helping communities thrive.

I look forward to continuing our collaboration in the year ahead and supporting your efforts to improve the communities we serve. As always, DCS remains committed to clear communication, technical support, and shared problem-solving in the year ahead, and we encourage you to reach out whenever needed.

Thank you for your continued dedication, and best wishes for a productive and successful year ahead.

With sincere appreciation,

Jackie Orr

Director, Division of Community Services

General Resources and Information

Affordable Housing Program (AHP) Overview

The Federal Home Loan Bank of New York (FHLBNY) has announced that the 2026 Affordable Housing Program General Fund Round opens on Monday, February 9th, 2026, at 8:30 am EST. For more information on virtual training sessions, click [HERE](#).

Since 1990, the [FHLBNY](#) has utilized 10% of its private earnings to support the creation and preservation of housing for low-income families and individuals through the Affordable Housing Program. The AHP grant funds are awarded to applicants on behalf of project sponsors who plan to purchase, rehabilitate, or construct affordable homes and/or apartments. Projects have included long-term shelters, transitional housing, group homes, mutual housing associations, and single room occupancy facilities. To contact AHP, send an email to AHP@fhlbny.com.

Employer Practices to Support Mental Health

In 2022, nearly one in four adults (23 percent) were estimated to have a mental health condition in the previous year. It was even more pronounced for young adults, affecting more than one out of every three people between the ages of 18 and 25.

Mental health problems don't stop when people arrive at work; from 2022 to 2023, 61 percent of all workers had at least one mental health challenge, such as anxiety, depression, or burnout. Some aspects of work can even worsen workers' mental health. For example, stressful and dangerous working conditions put workers at risk of long-lasting health conditions and injuries.

In addition to the toll on workers and other societal costs, unsupported mental health challenges are expensive for employers and the US economy. Inadequate employee mental health support adds direct costs, such as medication expenses, and indirect costs, like when employees work while sick and are less productive, known as "presenteeism." The effects of major depressive disorder alone bring economic costs of more than \$300 billion, more than half of which (61 percent) come from workplace costs.

In their 2021 literature review, Ashley Wu and her coauthors summarize the evidence on successful workplace mental health practices from more than two decades of research ([read full article](#)).

Key findings from the literature:

- Mental health has a two-way relationship with the workplace. Work can drive some causes of poor mental health, and poor mental health can lead to negative work outcomes such as absenteeism and reduced productivity. Work is one of the leading causes of stress for US adults and is specifically linked to poor mental health.
- Poor mental health has an excessive cost for employers and the overall US economy, including direct costs from the health care expense of treating comorbidities associated with poor mental health conditions, as well as indirect costs via lost productivity and absenteeism.
- Workplaces see measurable gains from improved employee mental health and effective mental health support systems and policies, which together are shown to lead to improved employee outcomes with regard to existing health conditions and access to care.
- Mental health apps are not enough on their own. Employee assistance programs, such as memberships to applications such as Headspace, are commonly offered but rarely used by workers (2 percent average utilization rate).

Click [HERE](#) to read the full research article and more on key findings and employer practices that can lead to better employee health and well-being, reduce turnover, lower health care costs, and improve productivity.

Also, learn more about [WorkRise](#), their mission aims to expand economic security and opportunity for people working for low wages, ensuring their contributions are valued, and their dignity is recognized.

Highlights Around the Network

NYC DYCD Host Recognition Ceremony



The Family Development Credential Program (FDC) is a professional development training that provides frontline staff with the skills and competencies they need to empower families. FDC-trained staff help families capitalize on their strengths and set attainable goals.

The FDC curriculum, developed by the National FDC Program at the University of Connecticut, consists of approximately 90 hours of intensive, interactive classroom study and includes additional small group instruction in portfolio development. The FDC is critical to achieving a more family-focused and strengths-based approach.

Many may not be aware that the FDC was developed under a partnership between the New York State Department of State, Division of Community Services, and Cornell University's College of Human Ecology, where the curriculum was developed. Currently, the National FDC trains official FDC instructors, and the University of Connecticut issues the credential.

For the past 28 years, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has organized and hosted a recognition ceremony, celebrating those who successfully attain the credential. 133 individuals were recognized on December 9, 2025, at the Graduate Center at CUNY. Additionally, at the ceremony, Commissioner Keith Howard was presented with the Heart of Community Award for his commitment and dedication to those employees who attain their FDC to advance their work with families. Jackie Orr, Director of the Division of Community Services, shared with the graduates that attaining the FDC is both a credential and a commitment—one that calls to keep learning, keep reflecting, and keep showing up with curiosity, compassion, and courage.

EOP, Inc. of Chemung County is Awarded a \$7.51M NY BRICKS Grant

The Economic Opportunity Program, Inc. (EOP, Inc.) is proud to announce that they have received a \$7.51M NY BRICKS grant (New York Building Recreational Infrastructure for Communities, Kids and Seniors), overseen by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and administered by the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York, for renovations to the Ernie Davis Community Center located at 350 East Fifth Street, Elmira.

NYS Governor Kathy Hochul's office invited municipalities and nonprofit organizations across the state to apply for the awards, which are dedicated to the building or renovating of community centers that boost physical health, mental well-being, and community connections for both children and adults.

The existing Ernie Davis Community Center building was constructed in 1971 and will get a new HVAC system, renovations to restrooms, upgrades for ADA compliance, and expansion to provide more dedicated space for programming and community events.

To learn more about EOP, Inc., please visit <https://www.cseop.org/> or find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/EconomicOpportunityProgram.

Breaking Stigma, Building Safety: How TOI is Transforming Harm Prevention in Tioga County

It started with something small, but concerning staff at Tioga Opportunities, Inc.'s (TOI) Family Health Clinic discovered used needles in close proximity to their facility. At first, it seemed like an isolated issue, but it quickly revealed a new reality, a growing need for harm reduction supplies, and a gap in community resources to keep people safe. For TOI, it was a clear call to action. Staff reached out to local community partners who serve at-risk community members, asking one simple, meaningful question: "How can we help?"

What they learned was clear- accessibility matters. While TOI already had a Narcan box inside the clinic's lobby area, it was only available during regular business hours, leaving it out of reach when many people might need it most. Sharps disposal was a challenge, too. Residents had to provide personal details at the few available drop-off sites in the county. This created a barrier for those just trying to do the right thing and left many with no safe, private way to discard needles.

The solution, TOI realized, was about making help easy, safe, and stigma-free. Today, the clinic offers a 24/7 outdoor harm reduction vending machine and the county's only anonymous sharps disposal site—tools that protect everyone.

"When people hear 'harm reduction,' there's often a stigma attached. Many immediately think of 'drug users' and the challenges that come with substance use. Harm reduction is really about compassion, safety, and care for everyone in our community," explains Ashley Tomazin, Family Health Services Director. "These initiatives support elderly adults safely disposing of sharps, diabetics managing their health, those who use injection drugs or medication, or anyone who wants to be prepared with Narcan in case of an emergency."

These efforts were made possible through collaboration and creative problem-solving. The harm reduction vending machine was fully funded through the MATTERS, Medication for Addiction Treatment and Electronic Referrals Program. The sharps container became a reality thanks to TOI's dedication to partnering with the Expanded Syringe Access Program (ESAP).

As TOI celebrates 60 years of service, these initiatives reflect its ongoing commitment to helping to reduce health risks, promote safety, and improve access to care for all community members. You can learn more by visiting www.tiogaopp.org.



CAPDC and Hudson Valley CASH Coalition Prepare for Tax Filing Season

Community Action Partnership for Dutchess County (CAPDC), AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program, and several other community partners are preparing to provide free, reliable tax preparation assistance to those in need throughout the Hudson Valley.

Last season, 6,765 filers received support to prepare and e-file their tax return at 33 host sites in the Hudson Valley. Families, seniors, and individuals who access this service received over \$3.6 million in refunds and tax credits. The average tax refund was \$1,330, and the median income of those receiving the service was \$39,221.

The successful partnership of the many members of the Hudson Valley CASH Coalition ensures this service is provided throughout Dutchess, Orange, and Putnam Counties. CASH – Creating Assets, Savings, and Hope is a Coalition of non-profits, churches, government entities, community members, financial institutions, and local colleges that assist with the many aspects of program planning and delivery.

AARP Foundation Tax-Aide provides training and tax site operations, while Coalition members assist with securing funding, recruiting volunteers, host site support, and outreach. With the financial assistance of United Way of Dutchess Orange Region, the Coalition contracts with the United Way Help Line 211 of the Hudson Valley Region for appointment scheduling.

This service is available to individuals, seniors, and families with no age or membership restrictions. Many low-income residents of Dutchess, Orange, and Putnam Counties rely on the IRS-certified Tax-Aide volunteer counselors to prepare their tax returns. Without this assistance, families may miss important tax credits or not receive the benefit of their full refund. “The residents who participate in this program often tell us that they received important information about their eligible tax credits or were pleasantly surprised to learn that their refund was larger than expected. These funds are so helpful to people who are struggling to make ends meet,” said Linda Haas Manley, CEO of CAPDC.

CAPDC credits the program’s success to the over 200 Tax-Aide and support volunteers who complete the extensive training and receive IRS certification each year. Haas Manley noted that “because of their efforts, families can use their tax refunds for everyday expenses, groceries, housing, car repairs, rent, and the many financial obligations they face, all without having to pay for tax preparation services.”

State and National Partner Resources & Training Opportunities

Free Webinar: N-648 Medical Certification

Thursday, January 8, 2026; 1pm – 2:30pm

Join this **FREE** webinar to learn about the N-648 form, the “Medical Certification for Disability Exceptions,” which is intended for immigrants with disabilities who are seeking to waive the English and/or civics naturalization requirements. This webinar will discuss naturalization policy changes and resources, with a focus on the N-648 form. This presentation will feature information

and resources from the [NALEO Educational Fund](#), [the Center for Elder Law and Justice](#), and the [ONA Ramirez June Initiative](#).

During this webinar, participants will:

- Information about recent policy changes to the naturalization exam
- Basic proficiency and understanding of the N-648 document.
- Best practices for advising on the N-648.
- An understanding of the USCIS procedures surrounding the N-648

This webinar is open to all participants; however, it will be of particular interest to organizations and attorneys or DOJ-accredited representatives providing legal assistance to new Americans applying for citizenship.

Certified Community Action Professional (CCAP)

Thursday, January 15, 2026; 1pm – 2pm

Learn about Certified Community Action Professional (CCAP). Whether you are a new candidate or exploring CCAP for the future, this session will help you start your journey with confidence.

Register for the Webinar [HERE](#)

CAPLAW: Conducting Effective Internal Investigations

Thursday, January 22, 2026; 1pm – 2:15pm

This webinar is presented by Feldesman Training Solutions. Every recipient of federal funding is eventually confronted with allegations of wrongdoing by staff, employees, or officers. When faced with such a circumstance, the grantee will need to determine whether the situation warrants a significant internal inquiry—with the end goal of determining whether the grantee has complied with (or deviated from) applicable federal requirements. Regardless of the type of accusation, your organization must be able to promptly and effectively distinguish credible allegations from false and baseless statements.

Conducting effective internal investigations is critical to ensuring compliance with the myriad of laws, regulations, and other obligations facing federal funding recipients. Join us for this webinar covering the investigation process, from initial evaluation to final report. Attorneys with considerable experience in leading internal investigations will discuss concrete considerations, including:

- Who should conduct the investigation and how formal it should be,
- When to involve outside lawyers,
- Vital “do’s and don’ts” to spread across the entirety of your organization as the investigation proceeds, and
- What the final steps—including a summary or report—may entail.

No matter the context, when properly and practically conducted, an internal investigation can help an organization identify risks and remedy potential issues. For registration and more information, click [HERE](#).

NCAP Management and Leadership Training Conference 2026

Orlando, Florida | January 28th -30th, 2026; (Pre-Conference: January 27th)

NCAP's [Management and Leadership Training Conference \(MLTC\)](#) is designed for both current and aspiring leaders in Community Action and human services. The 2026 MLTC will offer immersive training sessions, dynamic roundtable discussions, and meaningful networking opportunities. Whether you're a seasoned leader or preparing to take that next step into management, MLTC will equip you with the tools and insights to lead with confidence and impact. Click here for the [preliminary agenda](#).

MyPeers: Social Network for Early Childhood Professionals

MyPeers is a virtual space where Early Childhood Professionals can brainstorm, exchange ideas, and share resources with fellow professionals across the country. Every day, members are asking questions, highlighting successes, and developing solutions to challenges. Different communities and workgroups allow Head Start leaders, staff, and partners to connect around early childhood topics and roles that matter to them.

Register for the beginner orientation, scheduled for [January](#). Learn more about the [MyPeers Social Network](#) and other information at [Head Start](#).

Division of Community Services Updates and Reminders

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Advisory Council Meeting

Save the Dates – 2026 Meeting Schedule:

- **Thursday, February 5th, 2026, 10:00AM**
- **Thursday, April 23rd, 2026, 10:00AM**
- **Thursday, July 23rd, 2026, 10:00AM**
- **Thursday, October 8th, 2026, 10:00AM**

Locations and meeting links will be posted on dos.ny.gov prior to the meetings.

Division of Community Services Online Resources

The Department of State has a YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@nysdosvideos/playlists>
Check out the Division of Community Services' playlists: [CSBG Public Meetings](#) and [CSBG Training](#)
Please reach out to your Program Analyst or dos.sm.dcs@dos.ny.gov for more information.

CSBG Eligibility Guidelines continue at 200% Federal Poverty Level

[Click for the 2025 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)

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