



Department of State Community Services

March 2026 CSBG Newsletter

Congratulations on Retirement: Elizabeth Crofut



After seven years of service, three as the Executive Director of Community Action Program (CAP) for Madison County, Inc., Elizabeth Crofut announced her retirement as of December 31, 2025.

During her tenure, Liz was a driving force in advancing the agency's mission of "partnering with individuals, families, and children to address the challenges of today and build hope for the future." Crofut has worked tirelessly to ensure the success and growth of the organization.

In reflecting on her time at CAP, Liz said: "It has been an incredible honor to work alongside such talented and compassionate colleagues. I am so grateful for the dedication of the staff, whose hard work has made CAP such a strong and impactful organization. I leave confident

that the agency will continue to thrive and carry forward its mission with excellence."

Under Liz's leadership, the agency has:

- Substantially increased its budget to nearly \$7.5 million annually
- Significantly expanded housing-related services in response to escalating community needs
- Implemented principles of Trauma Informed Care

DCS extends its deepest gratitude to Liz for her years of service, leadership, and commitment. We wish Liz the best in her retirement!

Highlights Around the Network

CGHC Launches Annual Point-in-Time Count

Columbia Greene Housing Coalition (CGHC) launched its annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count of both sheltered and unsheltered people of all ages in Columbia and Greene Counties (*dated on 1/23/2026*). At the same time, with help from CARES NY, the coalition is completing a Housing Inventory Count (HIC) of existing "beds" already serving local people who were unhoused.

Housing Coalition members and community volunteers work together to identify and assist folks who may not have housing – asking the question "where did you sleep on Thursday, January 22nd"?

Lead agencies for the 2026 count include: Columbia Opportunities, Inc., Community Action of Greene County, Mental Health Association of Columbia and Greene Counties, and the Samuel S. Stratton VA Medical Center.

According to Tina Sharpe, Co-Chair and founding member of the CGHC, and Executive Director of Columbia Opportunities, Inc., says, “the primary causes of homelessness in our community are the inability of people with limited incomes to afford housing combined with the severe shortage of affordable homes. Columbia County has seen a 100% increase in both rental and home ownership housing costs since 2021. Greene County is not far behind. Local incomes have not been able to keep up with these increased costs. Many local folks are living paycheck to paycheck. One financial emergency can cause them to fall behind on their rent or mortgage payment, bringing them one step closer to homelessness. The ability for households to increase their income is influenced by many factors, including employment opportunities, education, health, transportation, age, and the availability of childcare.”

Sharpe states that for both counties to be economically viable, they must increase the availability of both rental and homeownership housing for all income levels and preserve the existing housing stock. The 2024 PIT study saw a 69% increase in people staying in temporary shelters, and the number of unsheltered folks dropped by 50%. The Blanche Hotaling Memorial Warming Center accounts for the reduction in people who were unsheltered.

This year’s count has been impacted by the extreme weather as well as frequent shifts in federal housing policies and priorities.

General Resources and Information

Ensuring Older Adults Live Healthy, Fulfilling Lives

The New York State Department of Health ([NYSDOH](#)) and New York State Office for the Aging ([NYSOFA](#)) coordinated a Master Plan for Aging (MPA): [Final Report](#).

Why an MPA? NYS ranks fourth in the nation of individuals aged 60 and over (4.8 million). By 2030, the population is expected to increase to 5.3 million. This population brings enormous economic, social and cultural value to communities across the State.

The MPA is a new and unprecedented opportunity to support older adults and people of all ages. It also builds on a longstanding foundation of existing coordinated work in New York. This work has long recognized that the concerns of older adults – and the opportunities to support them – exist across traditional service, infrastructure, and program boundaries.

The MPA’s origins extend from several preceding efforts and initiatives. These include Livable New York, in 2011, which helped municipalities better plan for the housing and community needs of older people, younger people with disabilities, families, and caregivers. In addition, the downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) – now in its sixth round of funding – has invigorated and enlivened smaller and rural downtowns to improve quality of life and foster age-friendly community spaces for people of all ages to thrive. To learn more about the MPA, click [HERE](#).

Head Start Spending per Slot Varies Widely Across Grants

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation released a report in February 2026, presenting information on Head Start spending per slot across the country.

Key findings include:

- The median amount grantees spend per slot is \$20,294 in Early Head Start and \$14,532 in Head Start Preschool.
- Spending per slot varies widely across both programs, as well as both across and within states; however, Early Head Start grants have a larger variation in spending per slot compared to Head Start Preschool grants. There is no clear pattern that explains the variation across states or within-state variation in spending per slot.
- **Non-profit, non-Community Action Agency grantee organizations spend \$1,163 more per slot than Community Action Agencies. School systems, in contrast, spend about \$2,492 less per slot than community action agencies.**
- Cost of living explains some – but not all – of the variation in spending per slot.
- Head Start program operation and design factors also explain some of the observed variation in spending per slot, though different factors are relevant to Early Head Start as compared to Head Start Preschool.
- Grants that provide only center-based services spend less per slot than grants that provide services in mixed or other service delivery settings (e.g., home-based services only, both center- and home-based services).
- Larger grants, or grants with more slots, spend less per slot compared to smaller grants. For example, if Grant A is funded to serve 50 more slots than Grant B, Grant A will spend \$85 less per slot than Grant B (or \$4,250 less for all 50 slots, total).
- If Head Start grants that spend above the median per slot amount were to adjust their spending to a state median benchmark, Early Head Start could serve 18,430 more slots, and Head Start Preschool could serve 41,621 more slots.

For the full report click [HERE](#), or visit <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/head-start-spending-slot>.

Signals of Alignment: Trauma-Informed Practices in Community Engagement and Power Sharing

Signals of Alignment: Trauma-informed Practices in Community Engagement and Power Sharing is a reflection tool for anyone working to align care and power in community change efforts. Drawing from trauma-informed engagement, power sharing, and public participation work, the guide highlights how core practices send different signals depending on how influence is structured in practice. By making those signals visible, the tool helps organizations align intention and outcome — strengthening trust in their work with communities.

Check out the tool [HERE](#), and check out their blog on [Six Trauma-informed Practices That Build Trust and Shift Power in Community Engagement](#).

Office for New Americans Hotline

The New York State Office for New Americans ([ONA](#)) announced an expansion of the New York State New Americans Hotline (1-800-566-7636), which will now assist callers on Saturdays and Sundays from 9am to 5pm (EST). The hotline will also continue to operate Monday to Friday, 8am – 8pm (EST). The New Americans Hotline, managed by Catholic Charities Community Services, Archdiocese of NY, under a grant with the New York State Office for New Americans, is a vital resource for all New Yorkers seeking information and referrals for free immigration-related services. The hotline is staffed by multilingual call operators as well as a full-time immigration attorney.

“New York State has long been a state committed to having newcomers feel welcomed and supported. The expansion of the New Americans Hotline includes longer weekday hours and added weekend hours, strengthening our commitment at a time when immigrant families are facing so much fear and uncertainty,” said Secretary of State Walter T. Mosley. “This expanded access reflects Governor Hochul’s ongoing efforts to protect the constitutional rights of New Yorkers, including immigrant New Yorkers, and ensures our state remains a place where all families can feel informed and supported. As a reminder to all New Yorkers seeking assistance—the ONA hotline is 100% free, anonymous, and available in over 200 languages.”

All information provided by the hotline is free and anonymous. Assistance is available in over 200 languages. Representatives from the hotline can assist with making referral to individuals in immigration detention who are seeking free legal services. The hotline can also provide information on available community workshops and training, including Know Your Rights and family preparedness. Callers to the hotline can also report cases of immigration fraud. Since January 2025, the hotline has answered 21,159 calls and made 42,207 referrals.

ONA has also expanded the resources available on its website to include a dedicated Know Your Rights, Know Your Resources page: <https://dos.ny.gov/know-your-rights>.

Summer Food Service Program

The Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), administers the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) at the federal level, while the New York State Education Department (NYSED) administers the program at the state level. Locally, it is operated by sponsors who apply for and are approved to operate the program.

[Information for Potential New Sponsors](#)

Sponsors eligible to participate in SFSP are:

- Public or private nonprofit schools, and Education Service Districts.
- Private, nonprofit organizations and Tribal Organizations.
- Units of local, municipal, county, or state government.
- Public or private nonprofit residential summer camps.
- Public or private nonprofit colleges and universities sponsoring the Upward Bound Program.

Click [HERE](#) for further information, program guidance and deadlines.

Nonprofit Leaders Share Their Top Goals and Strategies for Impact

Blue Avocado released a survey, taken by top nonprofit leaders, regarding top goals and strategies for the year ahead.

Top results included:

- Inclusive growth, collaboration, and meaningful employment
- Utilize workforce wisdom and improve funding strategies
- Building partnerships and workforce inclusion
- Relationships, visibility, and community engagement
- Technology updates for improved efficiency

Click [HERE](#) for the full article and further information.

Celebrating March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month



March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month #DDAM. DDAM celebrates the developmental disability (DD) community and supports their inclusion in all facets of community life while raising awareness for the barriers people with disabilities still face.

To support all individuals with disabilities, including immigrants, the NYS Office for New Americans Ramirez June Initiative is excited to share the [NYS Disability](#)

[Resources Toolkit](#). This new guide aims to help people of all ages and immigration statuses learn about the available disability services they can access. Since 2019, the NYS ONA Ramirez June Initiative, a first of its kind in the nation, has increased access to services for immigrants with disabilities through outreach, training, and partnership. Visit the [ONA Ramirez June Initiative | Department of State](#) website for more resources.

State and National Partner Resources & Training Opportunities

Supporting Fathers and Their Families Surrounding Separation

Wednesday, March 11, at 1:00pm [CLICK HERE](#) to register for this event

Millions of U.S. children have experienced separation from a parent for reasons including parental incarceration, child welfare intervention, job demands, or military deployment. Separation can have profound effects for children, fathers, and families as a whole. This webinar will explore the consequences of separations and strategies to support fathers and their families in sustaining and reestablishing relationships surrounding separation.

Joint Center for Housing Studies: Harvard University

Thursday, March 12, at 4:00pm [CLICK HERE](#) to register for this event

Affordability challenges reach another record high, even as rental market cools. The number of renters with cost burdens has reached another record high, rents for new leases show modest

declines, and vacancy rates are on the rise. Multifamily construction is cooling and reductions in federal safety net programs are forcing state and local governments to fill the gaps.

Your Language Access Right in New York State

Wednesday, March 18, at 10:00am [CLICK HERE](#) to register for this event

This session will provide an overview of the NYS Language Access Law and outline key resources available to promote equitable access to critical information and services for all New Yorkers regardless of their English proficiency or preferred language. Community leaders play a vital role in ensuring individuals and families are aware of their rights and can navigate public services confidently.

Aligning Community Assessments with your Mission and Goals

Wednesday, March 25, at 2:00pm [CLICK HERE](#) to register for this event

Join NCAP to examine how Community Action Agencies can transform Community Assessments from a requirement to a strategic leadership tool. Participants will explore how integrating qualitative and quantitative data with customer input can strengthen alignment of the Agency's mission, strategic goals, and outcomes.

Division of Community Services Updates and Reminders

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Advisory Council Meeting

Save the Dates – 2026 Meeting Schedule:

- **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 2026 Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)

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