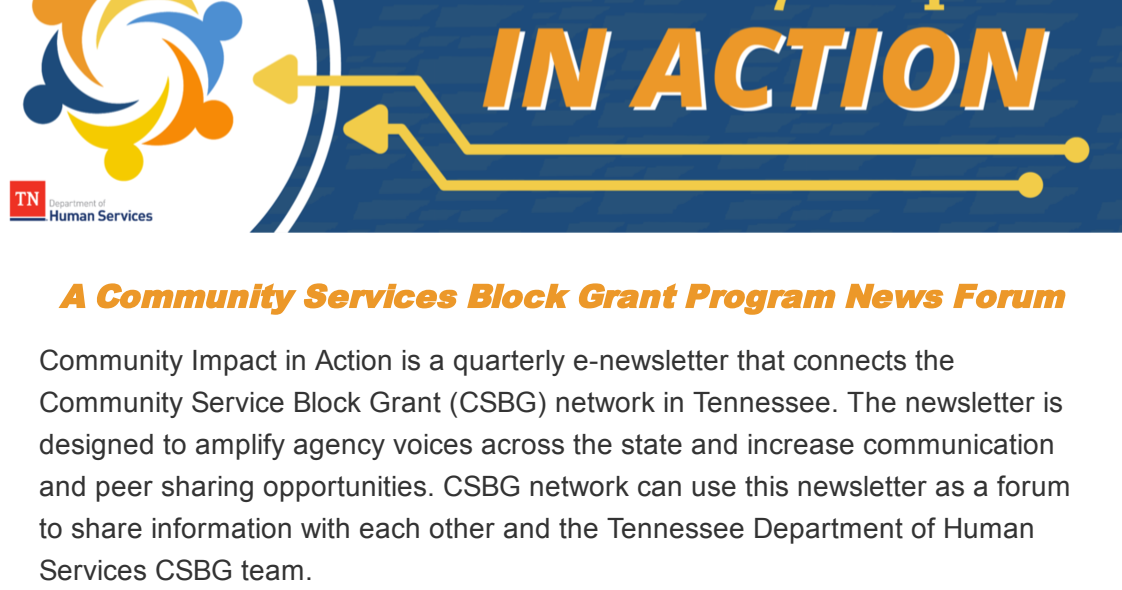


CSBG Newsletter



A Community Services Block Grant Program News Forum

Community Impact in Action is a quarterly e-newsletter that connects the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) network in Tennessee. The newsletter is designed to amplify agency voices across the state and increase communication and peer sharing opportunities. CSBG network can use this newsletter as a forum to share information with each other and the Tennessee Department of Human Services CSBG team.

Content in This Newsletter:

Agency Wins

- Knoxville-Knox County CAC *Steps to Success* Changes Adult Lives Through Education Opportunities
- Chattanooga's Office of Family Empowerment Celebrates Inaugural Graduation of EMPACT Program
- Upper Cumberland HRA Awarded Tennessee Opportunity Act Planning Grant

The Best Play Book

- Increased Access to Benefits with Certified Counselor

Team Highlights

- Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee

Policy Updates

- Updated Policy Manual in Progress

Ask the Community

Happenings in Tennessee

Agency Wins

This column spotlights innovative programs, services, achievements, community awards, and accomplishments from agencies across the state. Agencies are invited to submit content that highlights new or existing program victories and operational developments with positive outcomes.

Knoxville-Knox County CAC *Steps to Success* Changes Adult Lives Through Education Opportunities

Knoxville-Knox County CAC's *Steps to Success* program receives referrals from higher education institutions, including Pellissippi State Community College and the Tennessee College of Applied Technology, Knoxville-Knox County CAC then refers clients to other programs and services as identified in each client's goal plan. The wide array of resources available—which include tuition costs, paying rent and utility deposits, and offering financial support for smaller items such as textbooks, uniforms, and school supplies—have been a tremendous asset for the students served by the program.

The Knoxville-Knox County CAC *Steps to Success* case manager serves 30 students at a time, with approximately 50 students receiving services a year. Each student has a detailed person-centered goal plan. Ten students graduated during the 2021 calendar year and received a variety of degrees, including five who received nursing degrees. The remaining students pursued career paths related to engineering, law, and accounting.

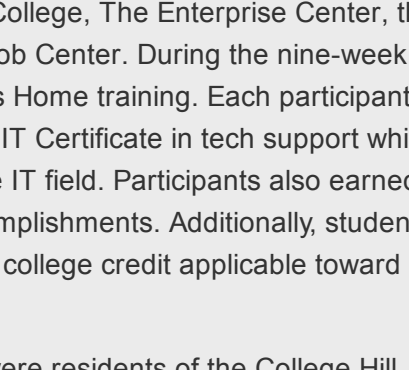
Learn More About this Agency Win

[Click Here](#) to read an example of how *Steps to Success* is helping clients reach success.

To learn more about CAC's *Steps to Success* program, you may contact Barbara Kelly at barbara.kelley@knoxcac.org.



Chattanooga's Office of Family Empowerment Celebrates Inaugural Graduation of EMPACT Program



On December 6, Chattanooga's Office of Family Empowerment (OFE) proudly celebrated the graduation of the inaugural cohort of its EMPACT Program.

EMPACT (Economic Mobility Program for Advancement and Career Training) is a new initiative within OFE, made possible by CSBG funding and supported by partners at Chattanooga State Community College, The Enterprise Center, the Chattanooga Chamber, and the American Job Center. During the nine-week program, students participated in Tech Goes Home training. Each participant earned a Chromebook, as well as a Google IT Certificate in tech support which prepares them for living-wage careers in the IT field. Participants also earned stipends of up to \$4,500 each for their accomplishments. Additionally, students completing the program earned 12 hours of college credit applicable toward an Associate's degree at Chattanooga State.

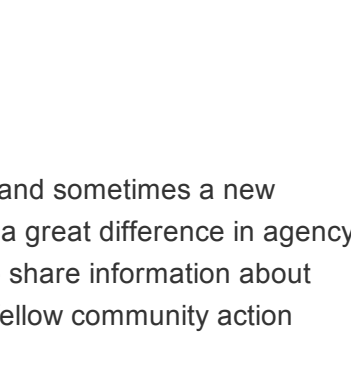
Students selected for the inaugural cohort were residents of the College Hill Courts public housing development—a location chosen for its proximity to the training site in order to minimize barriers, such as transportation. As part of the curriculum, students participated in financial literacy workshops, job readiness training, resume writing workshops, and job interview preparation. The class also welcomed visitors from the Electric Power Board, Chattanooga State, Zycron, and the City of Chattanooga as they learned about career opportunities and applied for positions. To date, two of the eight graduates have secured full-time employment in the IT field earning above a living wage. All participants will be monitored for one year post-graduation so that they may access continued support and resources to help maintain family stability.

In his remarks during the graduation ceremony, Chattanooga Mayor Tim Kelly praised the group for their hard work and commitment to success, noting that EMPACT represents the type of opportunity he envisions being available to all Chattanooga residents and stating his commitment to continuing the program's efforts. OFE anticipates hosting two more EMPACT cohorts during the FY22 program period.

Learn More About this Agency Win

For more information about the EMPACT program, contact Rachel Howard at rhoward@chattanooga.gov.

Upper Cumberland HRA Awarded Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative Planning Grant



The Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency (UCHRA) has been identified by the State of Tennessee as one of the 17 backbone organizations to receive a Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative Planning Grant. UCHRA was notified of the award in early December. The agency will work to further align the social services agencies, industries, faith-based organizations, and workforce and education pathways through the end of March, with the opportunity to receive a Pilot Implementation Grant based on the final proposal and presentation. The UC Collaborative includes several core partners, such as:

- Cookeville Regional Medical Foundation,
- Highland Economic Partnership,
- Tennessee Technological University,
- Upper Cumberland Local Workforce Development Board,
- The UC Interfaith Coalition,
- The Upper Cumberland Development District, and
- Other partners throughout the region.

Through this opportunity, UCHRA hopes to align the mission and vision of the region in order to develop a poverty alleviation system by coordinating streamlined, accessible pathways so that families can reach their desired level of self-sufficiency.

Learn More About this Agency Win

[Read the press release to learn more about other recipients of the Planning Grant HERE.](#)

To learn more about the UC Collaborative, contact Megan Spurgeon at mjspurgeon@uchra.com.

How to Share Your Agency's Win

Has your agency broken new ground, increased services, achieved a milestone, or created an innovative experience? If there's an activity or agency accomplishment you're proud of, we want to hear from you. Your story can inspire others.

[Click Here to Share Your Agency's Win](#)

The Best Play Book

Both small and large plays can be game-changers and sometimes a new resource, tool, or administrative practice can make a great difference in agency effectiveness and efficiency. Agencies are invited to share information about resources or best practices that could also benefit fellow community action agencies across the state.

Knoxville-Knox County CAC

Best Practice: Increased Access to Benefits with Certified Counselor

Focus: Program/Service Delivery

Implementation: January 2021

Knoxville-Knox County CAC's Access to Benefits program employs a counselor certified in SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) to provide one-on-one assistance to adults and children in obtaining medical, legal, and identification documents necessary to obtain Social Security Administration (SSA) disability benefits. SOAR training provides case managers with comprehensive information about SSI/SSDI, SSA's disability determination process, and the SOAR Critical Components for completing and submitting high-quality SSI/SSDI applications. Through the SOAR training, the Access to Benefits staff has learned how to navigate the complex benefits system, which has expedited the determination process for clients.

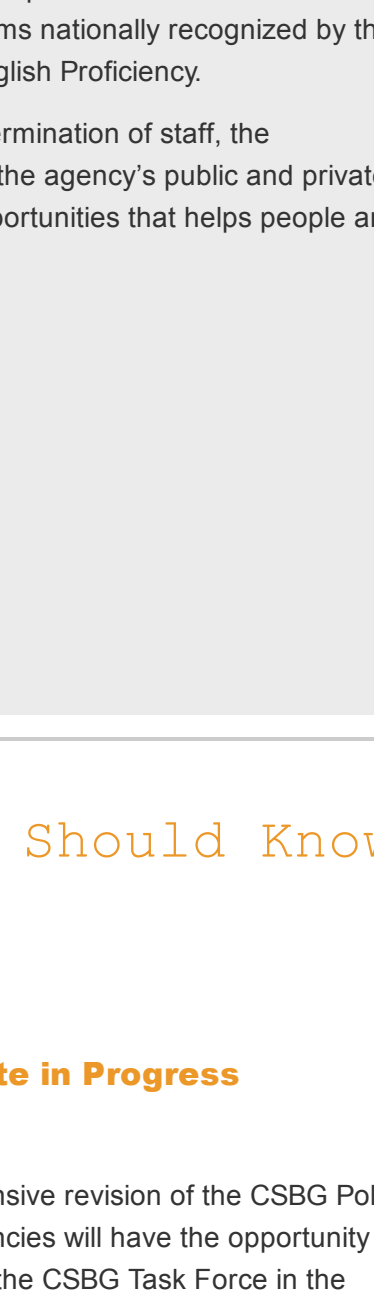
Learn More About this Best Play

For additional information about the Knoxville-Knox County CAC's Access to Benefits Program, contact Barbara Kelly at barbara.kelley@knoxcac.org.

Tell Us About Your Best Plays

We want to know what the best practices are for your agency's service delivery/administration or if there is advice you'd like to share with others as they work to serve communities in our state.

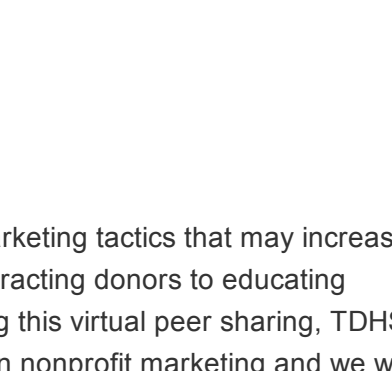
[Click Here to Share Your Best Play](#)



Team Highlights

Each quarter, *Community Impact in Action* celebrates agency programs and impact by sharing agency profiles. Featured agencies are contacted in advance and invited to share information to be used in the "Team Highlights" during the months leading up to their feature.

Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee



Knoxville-Knox County CAC is known in the community as versatile, resourceful, and forward-thinking. 2020-21 has been a time of unprecedented action for Knoxville-Knox County CAC. In a time of crisis, the important thing is to ACT – decisively, effectively, and caringly. When the Shelter at Home Order went into effect as a COVID-19 safety measure, Knoxville-Knox County CAC remained open, providing essential services to the community. The leadership decided that operations would continue on site and practically overnight the agency reinvented every aspect of its service delivery so that staff, volunteers, partners, and clients would be safe.

The Numbers Tell the Story

Through September 2021, Knoxville-Knox County CAC Transit provided 161,322 trips, including transit for COVID patients to and from the shelter. The Mobile Meals Kitchen provided 816,489 meals, including 482,669 home-delivered meals. Beardsley Community Farm harvested and distributed 97,057 lbs. of fresh food. 426 homeless families were placed in permanent housing. Senior Care Calls made 16,764 calls, providing a lifeline at a critical time. LIHEAP utility assistance was provided in excess of \$3.5 million to 7,321 households, while 9,057 residents and 289 businesses received utility assistance as part of an initiative with the Knoxville Utility Board (KUB) using designated TVA Pandemic Tax Credit Funds. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program assisted with 2,695 returns, resulting in more than \$5.5 million in refunds to people in need. Knoxville-Knox County CAC's VITA program is one of five programs nationally recognized by the IRS for their work with individuals with Limited English Proficiency.

The needs of their clients show the way. The determination of staff, the commitment of volunteers, and the generosity of the agency's public and private partners work together to create a network of opportunities that helps people and changes lives.

CAC Quick Facts

Founded: 1964
Counties Served: Knox
Number of Employees: 301 – 500
Number of Volunteers: 501+

Website: www.knoxcac.org

Policy Updates You Should Know About

Policy and Procedure Manual Update in Progress

TDHS CSBG is currently working on a comprehensive revision of the CSBG Policy and Procedure Manual. During this process, agencies will have the opportunity to comment on the revisions—first with a review by the CSBG Task Force in the spring, then by an all agency review in the summer. It is our goal to have the final updates distributed by August 15, 2022 so that agencies will have the opportunity to make any necessary program changes by the start of the FY23 program year.

Some of the updates that will be made include, but are not limited to:

- Removing repetition
- Consolidating and reordering content
- Clarifying ambiguous language and processes
- Updating resource links and references
- Adding procedures for purchasing equipment over \$5,000 and Community Action Plan and Needs Assessment amendments

We hope that these revisions will result in a more effective and efficient resource and we look forward to receiving your feedback!

Ask the Community

Community Impact in Action is meant to not only provide answers from the TDHS CSBG Office but also act as a "crowd-sourcing" forum. This column is an opportunity for agencies to pose questions to both the CSBG team and other agencies. Agency staff members are encouraged to both ask questions and respond directly to questions from other agencies in the "Ask the Community" column.

Ask the Community a Question

Have a question for the TDHS CSBG team, want to know how other CSBG members are handling a problem, or are curious about a particular topic?

Questions will be included in a future newsletter with contact information for answering questions.

[Click Here to Ask the CSBG Community](#)

Happenings in Tennessee

Event: Increasing Your Reach in the Community

Type: Virtual Peer Sharing Event

Date: March 22, 2022

Time: 9:00 am – 10:30 am Central

Let's get together and learn from each other marketing tactics that may increase your agency's reach in the community—from attracting donors to educating potential clients on the services you offer. During this virtual peer sharing, TDHS CSBG will share some identified best practices in nonprofit marketing and we will have guest speakers from agencies sharing their successful strategies. We hope you will join us for this network learning event!

Please save the date. Registration information will be coming soon.

Submit a Community Happening

In this column, TDHS shares information about important CSBG dates as well as future community events, fundraisers, and happenings hosted by partner agencies. Submitted events may also be included on the Tennessee Department of Human Services online calendar located at tn.gov/humanservices/events.html and TDHS social media pages.

[Click Here to Submit an Upcoming Event](#)

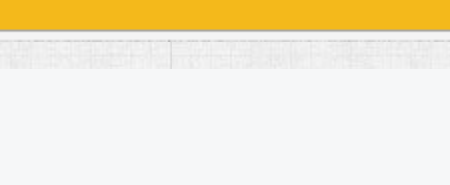
Who can make a submission to Community Impact in Action?

Any agency representative can create and submit content for "Agency Wins, The Best Play Book, Ask the Community or Community Events" articles and we look forward to reading and sharing your submissions. However, we strongly recommend that agencies establish an internal approval process for submitting content to *Community Impact in Action*. TDHS reserves the right to edit content and a representative may contact content contributors for additional information.

When to Make Submissions

Community Impact in Action is published on a quarterly basis (January, April, July, October) and **submissions for the next newsletter should be submitted no later than the 15th day of the last month in the quarter**. This is especially true for upcoming event submissions. For example, an event scheduled to take place in April, May or June should be submitted no later than March 15th. However, in some cases, events may be shared on the TDHS online event calendar or social media calendar without being shared in the newsletter. These events should be submitted no later than four weeks prior to the event.

Follow @TNHumanServices



For questions about submissions, email CSBG Program Coordinator Amanda Yanez at Amanda.yanez@tn.gov with the subject line "Newsletter"

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