

WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH DESIGN BRIEF

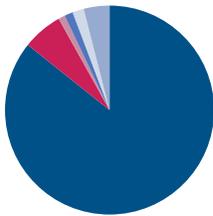
Community Action, Inc.

ABOUT THE AGENCY

MISSION	Community Action, Inc., helps people move from poverty toward prosperity.	AGENCY TYPE	Nonprofit
CLIENTS SERVED ANNUALLY	Approximately 3,500	ANNUAL BUDGET	\$5 million
SERVICE AREA	Counties in northeast, north-central Kansas, including Shawnee County, home to Topeka, the state Capital. Saline and Shawnee counties are urban/suburban areas, while the other counties in the agency's footprint are rural.	STAFF	73
		PROGRAMS	Head Start; Early Head Start; Affordable Housing; English Language Classes; Homelessness Prevention (rent/utilities/deposits); Diaper Depot; Period Pantry; Weatherization

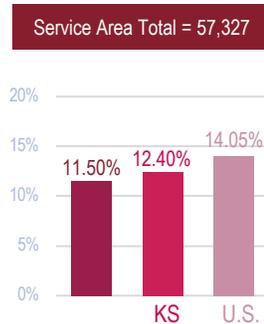
AREA DEMOGRAPHICS

DISTRIBUTION OF RACE



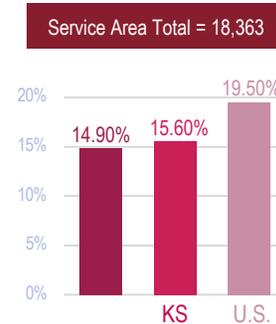
- White (85.72%)
- Black or African American (6.20%)
- American Indian and Alaska Native (1.03%)
- Asian (1.28%)
- Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander (0.11%)
- Some other race (1.69%)
- Two or more races (3.99%)

PEOPLE LIVING BELOW 100% FPL

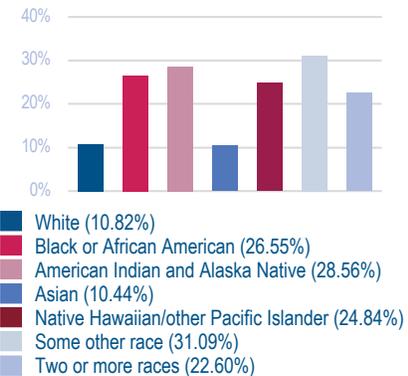


Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014-18

ALL CHILDREN IN POVERTY (Ages 0-17)



CHILDREN IN POVERTY BY RACE (Ages 0-17)



WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH PROGRAM PROFILE

THEORY OF CHANGE

If we believe everyone has potential to change their lives, help people meet their basic needs, and create opportunities and partnerships for people to grow at their own pace, then people will prosper from one generation to the next.

TARGET POPULATION

Parents and children enrolled in Head Start or Early Head Start programs who are: (1) eligible for at least a second year of participation in HS/EHS, (2) single, female heads of household, (3) identify as a household with minority population members, and (4) have been financially affected by COVID-19. Extra consideration given to households with individuals 16-24 years old.

KEY COMPONENTS

Parents

Goal planning; customized supports; coordination with partners to provide work readiness certifications; access to technical and higher education; subsidized employment opportunities; subsidized rent; second-chance renter certifications; homeownership classes and down-payment assistance; no or very low-cost dental care; subsidized mental health counseling; matched savings to develop assets (e.g., tuition, laptop, vehicle)

Children

High-quality early learning and care services to promote children's social-emotional, language, cognitive, and motor skills development; nutrition services; health and dental screenings; child and youth enrichment activities; employment and training for young adults

Families

Family socialization opportunities; financial assistance and supports that benefit the entire family

2020 THEORY OF CHANGE



COMMUNITY ACTION'S INNOVATION STORY

The move from a traditional, funder-driven, programmatic organizational culture to an integrated, progressive, and experimental culture has required tremendous innovation. Our leadership group created a wide variety of interactive events and activities to help demonstrate both need and value for change. Our products included a group activity that helped visually separate all our existing programs and services and demonstrate that, by themselves, none of them was truly effective at helping families escape poverty. We also produced a popular simulation experience called "Silos N Bundles" that conveys the value of wraparound services versus "one-and-done" transactional services. Silos N Bundles has been unexpectedly popular with staff, the board, and even other Community Action Agencies.

SUCCESSSES

- By developing a shared vision, conducting inclusive planning, and carefully managing change, the agency has been able to set the stage such that WFA no longer seems radical, rather, the logical evolution of agency growth.
- Over a four-year period the governing board was carefully engaged in understanding how a 3-paragraph mission statement and siloed service delivery system failed to maintain a focus on mission-driven outcomes. A cross-section of staff was engaged in becoming reacquainted with the poverty-fighting mission (versus program-running functions) of the organization and together developed a plan for dismantling the silos and improving customer access to supports.
- Incorporated a commitment to an integrated service delivery system and WFA into the 2021–2025 agency-wide strategic plan, including building accountability measures to the commitment.
- Launched a WFA pilot with clear plans for what design elements and outcomes the pilot will test.

CHALLENGES

- Time to plan and implement. It's a challenge to bring team members together to plan for work that isn't required by a funder or necessary as a response to a crisis.
- Taking the plunge from studying to planning and not worrying about getting it perfect right out of the gate. It has taken a lot of internal coaching and mutual reassurance to build comfort levels with trying something, even if all the answers or pieces are not put together yet.

WISDOM

- Having knowledgeable experts available to critically review design plans along the way is invaluable. A WFA coach provided by the National Partnership's Community of Practice (COP) helped the WFA team refine and focus on important issues.
- Break down internal silos and integrate services BEFORE tackling a WFA. The agency established understanding and gained buy-in from stakeholders to the concepts of wraparound supports, braiding resources, and re-focusing on agency mission vs. funder requirements as a precursor to diving into the complexities of WFA implementation.
- Develop a community network supportive of WFA. It's rare that a single organization can create a robust WFA support system without engaging key partners in the community. Partnerships are critical to opening opportunities for participant success. The agency WFA journey started with "2G3T" (2-Generation Topeka Think Tank). 2G3T included key leaders from the CAA, United Way, Community Foundation, state human services and child welfare agencies. 2G3T members engaged in a shared 2G learning curriculum and held several retreats.

Asia, a single mother of two young children, was searching for affordable housing that would meet her family's space and safety needs. Before coming to Community Action, Asia was living doubled up with her sister's family. Two adults and five children in a three-bedroom home was cramped and didn't afford either family the independence or structure they desired. Asia learned of Community Action through her family and was soon connected with her very own "Community Action Partner" to begin her journey with the agency. The family's application and screening process resulted in their qualification for a place to call home in which each family member now has their own bedroom. But this is not where Asia's Community Action engagement ends. The agency's mission to "help people move from poverty towards prosperity" means integration of a "bundle" of supports, chosen by each family and provided in a trauma-informed environment, to help the entire family succeed. Since one of Asia's children is still in diapers, she chose to receive supplies from the agency's Diaper Depot service and to sign up for participation in the agency's Early Childhood Outcomes programs. The agency will continue partnering with Asia and her children as the family continues their journey to prosperity.

Community Action's Building Block Focus:

ENGAGING FAMILY VOICES

Engaging family voices has become a priority for our agency, and we are active advocates for others in the community to do likewise. In 2018 we hosted 29 focus groups totaling 159 adults with low incomes. We analyzed and published our findings and have used those results to develop our "Whole Family Advantage" pilot project intentionally.

During focus groups Topekans told us the single most daunting barrier to their capacity to escape poverty was racism. A thorough review of our community demographic data and our agency service data confirmed there were inequities that resulted in more people of color living with lower incomes and disproportionately accessing basic needs assistance. We decided to target single, female, minority households for our Whole Family Advantage pilot to address equity head-on by creating opportunities that may help level the economic playing field. Additionally, our agency is undertaking an extensive internal review of service delivery systems and other operations to address potential biases in access and opportunity based on race. We plan to work with the partners in our WFA pilot to ensure we are on common ground with our understanding and support of racial equity. We realize that though we can work very hard to provide a racial equity lens internally, if our partners are not doing the same, little progress, if any, will be made.

TIMELINE

Assessed focus for mission-driven outcomes	Created Integrated Services Task Force; held monthly meetings; developed preferred vision and WFA theory of change	Conducted focus groups; communicated shared vision; restructured organization; introduced agency-wide data system	Refined integrated system; communicated intentionally with staff, board, and stakeholders about progress	Launched Whole Family Advantage pilot
2016	2017	2018	2019	2020

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