



# COMMUNITY ACTION MONTH | TOOLKIT

MAY 2018

## *Tips for Interviewing with the Press*



**Know the Facts**—Have a list of facts and statistics on **#CSBG** and create opportunities in your region as part of your talking points. (See the list below.)

**Tell Stories**—In your talking points, also include anecdotes about individuals and families served by your agency that can illustrate your points.

**Speak Clearly**—In an interview, enunciate, be direct, and use words and terms that the reporter

and general public can easily understand.

**Practice Interviewing**—Doing interviews is a learned skill, and practicing regularly can help you feel more at ease and feel more prepared.

## *Resources for Finding Talking Points on Creating Opportunities*

[2016 Annual Report](#)

[5 Ways to Use Your State CSBG Fact Sheet](#)

[The State of Poverty Blog](#)

[2016 Census Bureau Poverty Data](#)

[Feeding America on Food Insecurity](#)

[US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\) on Homelessness](#)

[United States Dept. of Agriculture on Rural Poverty](#)

[National Center for Children in Poverty](#)

[US Bureau of Labor Statistics Unemployment Data](#)



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## *Publicizing Community Action Month in the Press*

The press loves good stories. Reporters at newspapers, radio, television stations and online news sites are always looking for fresh content. In particular, local agencies are looking for **compelling, emotionally driven, and useful content with a local angle**. As active and integral parts of their communities, Community Action Agencies are uniquely positioned to provide these stories as well as serve as experts on poverty and related social and economic problems. Positive press coverage can show the wider community the value of Community Action's important work, encourage local engagement with your agency, and promote your events and services.

Maybe your Community Action Agency has already fostered relationships with reporters in your area or maybe you're just getting started in your press outreach. Wherever you are in your public relations efforts, **Community Action Month is a great opportunity for you to reach out to the media and strengthen your relationships with the press**. This section of the toolkit will give you concrete tips and templates for publicizing your agency in the press.

### Tips for Pitching Stories and Responding to Reporters

- **Be Specific**—Reach out to reporters who cover topics and areas related to your agency's geographic scope and program issues.
- **Be Creative**—Find unique hooks or angles that make your story interesting.
- **Be Responsive**—Reporters work on tight deadlines and appreciate prompt replies and follow-ups, especially for interview requests.
- **Be Knowledgeable**—Present yourself as an expert on your agency's programs and on issues of poverty in your community.
- **Be Prepared**—When suggesting a story to reporters or doing an interview, have relevant talking points, facts, and anecdotes on hand.
- **Be Personable**—Public relations is about building and maintaining ongoing, mutually beneficial, positive relationships with reporters.



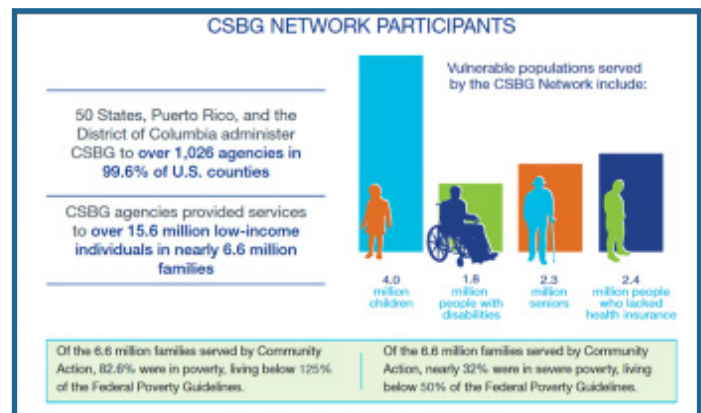
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## Sample Talking Points

We encourage you to use local facts, statistics and success stories from your agency specifically! Below are some sample talking points.

- The mission of CSBG is to provide assistance to states and local communities, working through a network of Community Action Agencies and other neighborhood-based organizations, for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of communities where people with low-incomes live, and the empowerment of families and individuals with low-incomes in rural and urban areas to become fully self-sufficient.
- Every dollar put into CSBG programs leverages an average of \$20.80 in local, state and private funds.
- Community Action Agencies embody our nation's spirit of hope, change people's lives, and improve communities. For example:
  - According to the National Association for State Community Service Programs (NASCSPP), 165,000 unemployed individuals obtained jobs through the services provided by Community Action Agencies.
  - Also according to NASCSPP's Annual Report, 48,923 people enrolled school-age children in before or after school programs.
  - 205,378 people obtained healthcare services for themselves or a family member.
  - More details about Community Action's success are available in NASCSPP's [Annual Report](#)





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## ***Network Talking Points***

<p><b>The Need:</b></p>	<p>Whether our neighbors are experiencing a temporary set back from an event like Hurricane Harvey or have been priced out of affordable housing – too many struggle to achieve a good quality of life. Despite America’s economic recovery, 43 million of us are still living in poverty and even more are just one missed paycheck away from hardship. Everyone should be able to take care of their families and have an equal opportunity at success.</p>
<p><b>How the Network Addresses the Need:</b></p>	<p>The nation’s 1,000-plus Community Action Agencies are a robust, state and local force – reaching children and families in 99% of America’s counties with life-changing services that create pathways to prosperity. These Agencies:</p> <p>Connect individuals and families to approaches that help them succeed – including quality education programs for children, job retraining for adults, stable and affordable housing for families, utility assistance for seniors, and so much more.</p> <p>Promote community-wide solutions to seemingly stubborn challenges throughout our cities, suburbs, and in rural areas – whether it’s the lack of affordable housing or the need to promote economic growth that benefits all families.</p> <p>Share expertise with national, state, and local leaders looking for evidence on what works to promote greater economic opportunity for children and families.</p> <p>Community Action Agencies are locally run but receive a range of public and private resources for their work. This includes funding from the federal Community Services Block Grant – America’s commitment to putting tax dollars back into communities to strengthen the economic security of families.</p>
<p><b>The Vision:</b>  <i>Voice for Opportunity</i></p>	<p>America’s Community Action Agencies connect millions of children and families to greater opportunity, transforming their lives and making our communities – and our nation – stronger. Every year, these agencies help:</p> <p>Tens of thousands of children and youth with before-and after-school programs. More than 165,000 unemployed people get a job. Almost 220,000 families find safe and affordable housing. About 6.5 million people, including seniors, make their homes more energy efficient and lower their utility bills.</p>



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## Template Community Action Press Release

Insert Your Agency's Logo at the Top of the Press Release

### [Insert Your Agency Name] Celebrates 54 Years of Service in [Community]

*For Immediate Release*

Contact:

[Insert Name, Phone Number, and Email of Your Communications Staff]

([Insert Your City], [Insert Your State], May 1, 2018)—[Insert your agency name] is celebrating Community Action Month, dedicated to recognizing the success of the national Community Action Network. America's Community Action Agencies connect millions of children and families to greater opportunity, transforming their lives and making our communities — and our nation— stronger. This month, [your agency name] will be engaging in programs and events that showcase our innovative work in [your community].

"Community Action Month is a wonderful time to honor and celebrate the impact Community Action has in the lives of families and communities across the country," stated [Executive Director/President of your agency - name and title]. "The Community Action Partnership Network offers insight to leaders looking to understand what is working on the ground to help families thrive—creating smarter solutions that can be put to work within communities across the country."

[Last name of spokesperson] continued, "This past year, our agency has served [insert number] of families in [your community] and empowered them to attain self-sufficiency. [Insert a very brief statistic or piece of information that highlights your agency's success, such as the number of children served in a Head Start program, the number of homeless individuals now in housing, or the number of people who graduated from a job training program.] Our work changes lives and strengthens our entire community."

To celebrate its success and raise awareness in the community, [insert your agency name] will host [insert event name] on [date] to [insert event details—what is the event? Where will it take place? Why is it important?]. For more information, visit [Insert link to event information online].

[Insert your agency name] was established in [insert year] to create opportunities in [insert city, county and/or state] through [insert major programs/needs served]. [Agency name] is a member of the Community Action Network, originally created in 1964.

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[Insert your agency name, hyperlinked to your website]'s mission is [insert your mission].