




Partnering with Community Action Agencies (CAAs)


A Practical Guide for Child Welfare Offices


Introduction to A Home for Every Child Initiative


This guide outlines the concrete supports that Community Action Agencies (CAAs) can provide to help child welfare offices:


- Prevent unnecessary foster care placement and other child welfare system engagement
- Stabilize kinship and foster caregivers
- Support reunification and long-term permanency
- Address drivers of neglect


Concrete Supports	How CAAs Help	Child Welfare Impact
 <p>Housing Stabilization & Homelessness Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency rental assistance • Utility shutoff prevention (LIHEAP) • Security deposit assistance • Rapid re-housing services • Landlord mediation • Minor home repairs to meet licensing standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents removal due to unsafe or unstable housing • Helps kinship caregivers meet placement requirements • Stabilizes families during reunification


Concrete Supports	How CAAs Help	Child Welfare Impact
 <p>Economic Stability & Employment Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job readiness and placement programs • Resume and interview coaching • Workforce certification programs • Work supports (e.g., gas vouchers, work clothing, fees) • Child Care resource and referral • Financial literacy and budgeting classes • Tax preparation and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) assistance • Benefits enrollment support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces neglect risk linked to limited income driving material hardship and financial stress, • Strengthens reunification plans • Improves short-and long-term family stability

Concrete Supports	How CAAs Help	Child Welfare Impact
 <p>Education Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Education (e.g., Head Start and Early Head Start) • K-12 Student Support (e.g., tutoring, afterschool and summer programs) • Adult Education (e.g., GED and High School Equivalency) • Post-Secondary Education & Vocational Training • Educational support (e.g., tuition, books, transportation, childcare) • Coaching support and collaboration with educational institutions (e.g., navigating the college system, accessing tutoring, financial aid, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports child development and identifies concerns early • Supports youth aging out of foster care to build independence and avoid future system involvement • Increases employability, improves income stability, and reduces economic stress for parents and caregivers

Concrete Supports	How CAAs Help	Child Welfare Impact
 <p>Emergency Financial Assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis stabilization funds • Transportation vouchers • Food pantry/voucher services • Diapers and basic needs support • Short-term emergency grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents crisis escalation • Supports immediate safety plans • Reduces placement disruptions

Concrete Supports	How CAAs Help	Child Welfare Impact
 <p>Early Childhood & Family Development Services</p>	<p><i>Many CAAs operate State Pre-K, Head Start, Early Head Start, home visiting, WIC, and family planning programs, and other early childhood and family development services.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood education to aid education and social and emotional development • Developmental screenings (health, vision, hearing, behavioral) • Parenting education • Family goal planning • Two-generation/Whole Family Approach services (parent and child) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification of child delays and connection to treatment • Early identification of family stressors • Strengthens protective factors • Supports young children in reunification

Concrete Supports	How CAAs Help	Child Welfare Impact
 <p>Kinship & Foster Caregiver Stabilization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and utility support to meet licensing standards • Financial coaching for kin caregivers such as grandparents • Access to food, clothing, and household goods • Parenting support groups • Case management for caregiver households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converts informal kinship arrangements into licensed homes • Reduces caregiver burnout • Expands and retains foster home capacity

Concrete Supports	How CAAs Help	Child Welfare Impact
 <p>Intensive Coaching, Case Management & Wraparound Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive assessments for child, parent, and family needs • Supportive coaching relationships that can persist over time and beyond immediate crisis • Individualized family stabilization plans • Service coordination across programs and systems • Ongoing progress monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports families at risk of removal • Strengthens safety plans • Reduces recidivism into care

When to Engage a CAA

Child welfare staff should consider referral to a CAA when:

- A family is at risk of removal due primarily to poverty-related conditions
- Housing instability is identified as a primary risk factor
- A kinship caregiver needs support to qualify for placement
- A reunification plan requires employment or financial stabilization
- A foster caregiver is experiencing financial strain

Building an Effective Partnership

To maximize impact, child welfare offices can:

- Recognize that CAAs are often a trusted source of support for families that may be able to engage with families in ways the Child Welfare System cannot
- Meet with your local CAA and identify shared purposes and goals and opportunities for partnership and collaboration
- Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Develop clear two-way referral pathways with warm handoffs and follow up

Shared Outcomes

To maximize impact, child welfare offices can:

- Reduced foster care entries related to poverty
- Increased kinship placements
- Improved foster caregiver retention
- Faster and more stable reunifications
- Reduced placement disruptions
- Increase family voice in planning and implementation of services

Key Takeaway

Community Action Agencies play a critical role in preventing child abuse and neglect by addressing the underlying causes of family instability and strengthening support systems for parents and caregivers. Strategic collaboration between child welfare offices and Community Action Agencies can help families remain safely together, reduce unnecessary foster care placements, and increase the availability of stable foster and kinship homes.

