

Community Action Agency of Somerville 2021-2022 Annual Report





Community Action Agency of Somerville
66-70 Union Square, Ste. #104, Somerville, MA 02143
Working to End Poverty Where We Live

Introduction

Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) has been the federally designated anti-poverty agency serving Somerville, Massachusetts since 1981. CAAS' mission is to help local families and individuals achieve financial security while working to eliminate the root causes of economic injustice.

Each year we leverage the work of some 100 employees, over 100 volunteers, and roughly \$9 million in federal, state, local and private funding to:

- 1) Expand and promote opportunities for all Somerville residents in the fields of education, employment, housing, health, and improved neighborhood life; and
- 2) Serve as a structure for empowering both low-income constituencies and those whose full involvement in the community has been obstructed or discouraged by oppression and discrimination.

CAAS' core programs are Head Start, the Housing Advocacy Program, Community Organizing & Advocacy, and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

Our Programs

Head Start

Head Start is a comprehensive developmental preschool program that provides a variety of wrap-around services to over 275 low-income children and their families each year. Head Start supports the learning and development of children ages three to five in classrooms located throughout Somerville and Cambridge. We also work to engage families, supporting them to set and meet financial, professional, housing, and other family goals, and involving them in their child's education every step of the way.



Over the course of the past year, our program worked diligently to engage families in their children’s learning and to promote school readiness by enhancing children’s development through the provision of culturally responsive educational, health, nutrition and social services. The onset of COVID-19 in March 2020 caused significant disruption and ongoing uncertainty for CAAS Head Start, with our program continuing to proactively navigate this extraordinary mix of unprecedented challenges.

Enrollment: In the 2021-2022 program year our funded enrollment consisted of 252 children funded through the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families



Head Start Grant and 15 children funded through the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care State Supplemental Grant. However, the COVID pandemic changed our actual enrollment dramatically. Reopening fully for in-person services in September 2021, we have maintained an average monthly enrollment of 185 (70% of funded enrollment) children

and families with a total cumulative enrollment of 238 children. We have classrooms located in 6 facilities across Somerville and Cambridge, including 6 full-day full-year daycare classrooms; 1 blended classroom collaboration with the Healey School; and 1 classroom located in the Capuano Early Childhood Center.

Family Well-Being: In the 2021-2022 program year we enjoyed particularly high levels of parent engagement and involvement through the many activities, groups, trainings, courses, and other events we offer. We saw our families involved in monthly parent meetings, our newly updated classroom volunteer training program, a family nutrition workshop series, and ESOL beginner and advanced-beginner courses. We continue to have strong participation in our Parent Policy Council governance body and representation on our Board of Directors.

Despite the COVID pandemic and its many challenges, families actively engaged in our array of supports and services over the year. For example, 96 parents received and/or participated in emergency/crisis intervention such as meeting immediate needs for food, clothing, or shelter; 10 in mental health services; 9 in adult education and/or job training; 67 in education on relationship/marriage, 46 in education on nutrition, 59 in education on relationship/marriage, 163 in transitions between programs,

174 in discussing assessment results and their child's progress, and 21 in English as a Second Language (ESL) training, and 57 in education on preventive medical and oral health. 58% of children received dental exams.

School Readiness: In pursuit of ensuring the kindergarten-readiness of every child, we employ a rich curriculum aligned with each Domain in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, using the Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies Gold tools to design our classroom environment and plan activities, as well as perform in-depth assessments of each child 3 times per year. Teaching staff meet with their classroom Advocate weekly to discuss every child in their classroom, to ensure teaching practices are individualized for each child's needs. Our teaching staff continually strives to grow as professionals through internal and external trainings, individual and team coaching, and CLASS assessments.

School Readiness Goals



Goal 1: Approaches to Learning: *Children will show an interest in varied topics and activities, an eagerness to learn, creativity, and independence in their interactions with activities and materials.*

Goal 2: Social and Emotional Development: *Children will engage in and maintain positive relationships and interactions with peers and adults.*

Goal 3: Language and Literacy: *Children will use and comprehend oral language for conversation, communication, and literacy in developmentally appropriate ways.*

Goal 4: Cognition: *Children will use math regularly and in everyday routines to count, compare, relate, identify patterns, and problem-solve.*

Goal 5: Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development: *Children will demonstrate control of small and large muscles for movement, navigation, and balance.*

Results

As a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote school from the previous year, children arrived to in-person classroom experiences with significantly more delays in development than previously and generally observed. Nonetheless, teachers and support staff worked tirelessly to guide children's learning and development across all domains and bring them closure to widely-held developmental expectations.

Physical Development & Health

- At the Fall 2021 checkpoint, 49.5% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in this domain. By the Spring 2022 checkpoint, 75% of children were meeting or exceeding.

Social & Emotional Development

- At the Fall 2021 checkpoint, 48% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in this domain. By the Spring 2022 checkpoint, 77% of children were meeting or exceeding.

Language

- At the Fall 2021 checkpoint, 42% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in this domain. By the Spring 2022 checkpoint, 63% of children were meeting or exceeding.

Literacy

- At the Fall 2021 checkpoint, 42% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in this domain. By the Spring 2022 checkpoint, 67% of children were meeting or exceeding.

Cognition & General Knowledge

- At the Fall 2021 checkpoint, 47% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in this domain. By the Spring 2022 checkpoint, 72% of children were meeting or exceeding.

Mathematics

- At the Fall 2021 checkpoint, 50% of children were meeting or exceeding widely held expectations in this domain. By the Spring 2022 checkpoint, 75% of children were meeting or exceeding.

Housing Advocacy Program (HAP)

HAP provides a wide range of services to over 336 low-income individuals at risk of homelessness each year, including financial assistance with rent, preventing evictions through advocacy with landlords and in housing court, and maximizing income by improving access to public benefits. Case management targeting the root causes of housing insecurity helps prevent future crises.

In 2021, HAP also provided critical emergency financial assistance to more than 1,200 community members in response to COVID-19.



Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

The VITA program provides low- and moderate-income families with free tax preparation assistance. Our VITA program helps reduce the tax burden for families and assists them in getting money back that can be used to build savings or pay off debts. This past year, VITA filed returns for 177 households, resulting in approximately \$465,000 in state and federal refunds.

Community Organizing & Advocacy (CO&A)

CAAS takes a systemic approach to advancing our mission by engaging low-income residents in collectively pushing for social change. Complementing the organization's existing case management work, CO&A builds individual and peer organizational capacity through tenants' rights training and organizing, develops tenant leadership capacity and catalyzes policy advocacy, and mobilizes neighborhood constituents as allies. Over this past year, the program served 700 community members while working with 68 volunteers.



CAAS' holistic approach to community work and wrap-around services considers the web of connections between housing, physical and mental health, employment, nutrition, immigration, education, transportation, family composition, civic engagement, and social and economic justice, and CAAS supports clients in every arena through direct services or referral. Given the multiple barriers that low-income families often face, the seamlessness of services provided is critical to clients' success. In this way, CAAS acts as a single point of entry, connecting families to appropriate internal, community, state, and federal resources.

Financial Data

For Program Year 2021-22 (current through June 2022), CAAS received the following funding:

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)	\$3,902,593
Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)	\$801,550
Cambridge Full-Day/Full-Year Expansion	\$310,669
Bureau of Nutrition	\$161,738
Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)	\$298,148
CSBG/CARES	\$85,856
Somerville Jobs Creation and Retention Trust	\$45,266
Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund	\$57,261
Somerville Office of Housing Stability	\$90,887
CSBG State Grant	\$266,239
Somerville ESG/CDBG	\$367,835
Somerville Cares Fund	\$36,615
State Earmarks	\$135,800
VITA Grants	\$26,091
Donations	\$216,759
In-Kind Revenue	\$382,603

Audit Results

Each of the agency's annual audits are conducted by an independent, certified auditor, who presents to CAAS an unqualified opinion on its audited financial statements as well as a notation that the agency's reports have been issued in compliance with OMB Circular A-133. CAAS' most recent audit, for the fiscal year ended November 30, 2021, was found to be clean, with no findings or deficiencies reported.

Budget Process

Roughly 63% of CAAS annual budget is devoted to staff salary and related payroll expenses; our people are our most important asset, and we strive to support them financially and otherwise. The second largest expense, just over 18% for the coming year, represents funds that pass through CAAS directly to households in need, whether in the form of rental assistance, utility assistance, food assistance, or direct cash assistance. About 17% of our budget is allocated to the remaining day-to-day expenses of the organization (rent, office supplies, consultant services, etc.), and just under 2% is devoted to fund development.

FY2022-2023 Budget (DRAFT)

Expense by Category			% of total
Salaries and Benefits		\$6,540,638	62.96%
Consultant Services		\$428,124	4.12%
Travel		\$19,100	0.18%
Occupancy		\$585,670	5.64%
Consumable Supplies		\$137,527	1.32%
Client Assistance		\$1,918,750	18.47%
Other Direct Expenses		\$366,747	3.53%
Food Service		\$200,000	1.93%
Fundraising		\$191,867	1.85%
Total Expense		\$10,388,422	