



The Community
Action
Agency of Western Connecticut

“TAKING ACTION, ONE NEIGHBOR AT A TIME”

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION

The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut provides social services and programs directly through partnerships to vulnerable and low-income individuals, families and communities in Western Connecticut to help them achieve self-sufficiency and to improve their lives.

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MESSAGE FROM CAAWC

As we reflect on 2024, we are reminded that real change happens when communities come together—with heart, with determination, and with the belief that everyone deserves the chance to thrive.

Across Connecticut, far too many of our neighbors faced uncertainty this past year. Families struggled to keep food on the table. Working parents juggled rising costs with limited wages. Seniors on fixed incomes feared losing the homes they'd lived in for decades. Yet through these challenges, one thing remained constant: CAAWC supported them.

This annual report is more than a collection of numbers—it's a testament to what we can accomplish when compassion meets action.

At the heart of our mission is a simple but powerful goal: to help individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency and improve their lives. That means addressing today's crises and providing tools, guidance, and opportunities to shape a better tomorrow. Whether it's helping a young parent develop a household budget, assisting a senior with accessing benefits or supporting a family through a housing transition, we focus on long-term outcomes—empowering people to take control of their lives and make positive changes.

With your support, in 2024, we strengthened food access by expanding our pantry services, mobile food distributions, and partnerships—delivering thousands of meals to families in crisis. We empowered individuals with financial tools—offering personalized coaching, financial literacy classes, and pathways to self-sufficiency. These tools have not only improved their financial stability but also inspired them to take control of their lives. In 2024, we continued our commitment to the community by helping keep hundreds of households safely housed, providing rental assistance, emergency support, and a lifeline to those facing eviction or displacement.

Behind every number is a name, a face, a family. And behind every success is the trust and support of people like you—our funders, volunteers, partners, and community members—who believe in the mission of lifting people up, not leaving them behind.

As you turn the pages of this report, we hope you feel a sense of shared pride. Every meal served, every child with a warm place to sleep, every individual who took a step forward, it's all possible because we're in this together.



Mary Korin
Board Chair



Michelle H. James
Executive Director

ACTION EARLY LEARNING CENTER (AELC)



AELC 1

My name is Danilsa Almonte, and I am working and a parent at Action Early Learning Center. My daughter attended AELC several years ago and graduated with a positive developmental experience. All the staff at AELC were so helpful to me when my daughter was under their care. They were all very welcoming and supportive and made sure that my daughter received the care she needed. My daughter's teacher observed that my daughter needed services for speech. Ms. Mini (Childcare Director) was right there to help me navigate to resources. With their help, my child was prepared and ready to tackle her kindergarten and is today a very successful 4th grader who is doing extremely well in school.

A year ago, I was looking for the best childcare for my son and without a doubt, AELC is the only center that I know will provide the best care for him as he needs special ed services too. Like my daughter, my son also needed speech services and the AELC team were on my side again, and they never let me walk alone on this journey. AELC became my family, and I know that many children like mine, will have a success story to tell and share.

I was fascinated by the work of the AELC teaching team and became part of the AELC team. While working at AELC, I realized that being an Early Childhood educator is full of commitment, passion, and obligation. Working with young children is a magical experience where we not only become a part of their life, but it is also a fulfilling experience. It is my pleasure to share my story.

AELC 2

We opened our doors with 24 children under the care of our dedicated team of 8 staff members. This initiative serves as an expansion of our 1st location and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to providing quality early childhood services to the community. At Action Early Learning Center 2, we emphasize a nurturing and stimulating environment that fosters the development of each child's unique potential. Our qualified staff is committed to creating a safe and engaging atmosphere, ensuring that children receive the highest standard of early education. We believe that this expansion will not only enhance our capacity to serve more families but also strengthen our contributions to the community's developmental needs. It is our goal to establish lasting relationships with families and support their children's growth during these formative years. We look forward to continuing our mission of excellence in early childhood education and serving our community with pride.



ENERGY ASSISTANCE

A TOTAL OF 9,220 HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVED BENEFITS

TO HELP LOWER THEIR ENERGY COSTS AND KEEP THEIR HOMES SAFE AND WARM.

In the 2024–2025 season, CAAWC successfully assisted two clients in securing approval and installation of new furnaces, ensuring safe, reliable home heating for families in need. This achievement reflects our ongoing commitment to addressing essential housing needs through advocacy and resource coordination.

Through our Energy Assistance Program, CAAWC continued to be a vital lifeline for community members in 2024, especially for seniors, single parents, and individuals facing financial hardship. Whether it's helping an 86-year-old widow stay warm in her home, assisting a single mother with overdue utility bills, or preventing a propane shutoff for a struggling family, our team is there to listen, act, and advocate. By connecting clients with heating repairs, utility discounts, payment plans, and fuel deliveries, we not only provide immediate relief but restore hope and stability. These stories remind us that behind every application is a person and sometimes, a little warmth and compassion can make all the difference.

IN 2024, TWO NEW FURNACES WERE APPROVED AND INSTALLED,
BRINGING MUCH-NEEDED RELIEF TO THE FAMILIES WHO RECEIVED THEM.



CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES



In 2022, *Lidia came to our agency seeking housing assistance and access to any available resources that could help her achieve long-term stability and self-sufficiency for herself and her young son. At the time, she was receiving SNAP and HUSKY benefits, but her goal was to secure a job that would provide lasting support for her family and help her move forward independently.

Through a referral to our Job and Life Skills Specialist, she was introduced to local training programs, including courses in Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), phlebotomy, and EKG testing. She demonstrated determination and initiative, completing all the necessary coursework to earn her certification, opening the door to more career opportunities in the healthcare field.

In addition to job readiness support, we assisted her in applying to several housing programs. The process, however, proved challenging. Her initial application to Charter Oak's Below Market Rate (BMR) apartment was denied due to her credit history. Despite this setback, she did not give up. With the continued support of our staff, other agency advocates, and most importantly her own perseverance, the denial decision was successfully overturned. In January of this year, she was officially approved for the unit and moved into her new home in February 2025.

As part of our holistic support, we also worked with her to complete a detailed budget sheet to review her financial outlook and plan for long-term goals. With a full-time job, a stable place to live, and her professional certificates in hand, she now looks to the future with confidence and hope. Her next goal: homeownership.

Her story is a powerful example of how resilience, community support, and access to resources can transform lives.

*Pseudonym

CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES



Sarah is a single mother who struggled to make ends meet. After losing her job due to COVID-19, she faced not only financial instability but also the stress of providing for her two young children. Our team provided support, including Job Search Assistance, Resume Building, Job Applications, Food Pantry Access, and SNAP Benefits.

With perseverance and the right support, Sarah received an interview invitation within a few weeks. After preparing intensively, she successfully landed a position as a bus driver. This job not only provided her with a stable income but also a sense of purpose and commitment.

11,736 HOUSEHOLDS received case management services, connecting them with vital resources, personalized support, and guidance to help overcome challenges and work toward long-term stability.

513 HOUSEHOLDS received housing support services, helping families find stability, avoid homelessness, and work toward long term housing solutions.

270 HOUSEHOLDS received free income tax preparation through the VITA program, helping them maximize their refunds and relieve the stress of tax season.

1,242 FAMILIES accessed our diaper program, helping them meet their children's basic needs and easing the financial burden on caregivers.



Jane is a resilient single mother of two kids who came to our Agency seeking assistance with Diapers. She's been struggling to make ends meet due to unexpected expenses and limited income. Our team quickly assisted her in applying for SNAP benefits and Food Pantry services. With these benefits, Jane was able to ensure that her children had nutritious food and the necessary supplies. Her story is a beautiful reminder of how community support and compassion can make a real difference in people's lives.

WORKFORCE

DanburyWORKS goal is to increase advancement and wage growth in sustainable careers for low-income individuals in Danbury, CT.

FY24 Results

- 180 clients served
- 101 Placed in Jobs
- \$20 Average Hourly Rate
- 24 New Employers connected
- 10 New Community Partners

FY24 Trainings and Outreach

- 52 ESL Participants
- 41 successfully received a job training certification (Security Guard and Certified Nursing Assistant)
- 16 Attended Outreach Events
- 40 participants completed Job Readiness Workshops



In 2024, we worked with a participant named Diego, who was seeking a sustainable income. Feeling overwhelmed by his inability to find fulfilling work, Diego was uncertain about his future. After meeting with him, we helped him shift his focus to a new career in manufacturing. We supported his application to the manufacturing program at Naugatuck Valley State College, and within six months, Diego became the top student in his honor roll class. His dedication led to a paid internship opportunity, and shortly after, he graduated from Naugatuck Valley Community College with an Advanced Manufacturing Technology Certificate (Phi Zeta Kappa). Today, Diego earns a sustainable wage and is continuing his education, planning to pursue a degree in engineering.

CENTER STAGE (Job & Life Skills Program in Stamford) is a CAAWC employability program committed to assisting clients regardless of their current life status. We provided: Career Counseling, Guidance, and referrals. Workshops, included 2024 Employment Trends/Demands, and Why Soft Skills are in High Demand, and Job Search Assistance.

Our **Computer Skills Program** prepares our clients with national certifications to meet current workplace demands and trends. These included the IC3-GS6 Digital Literacy Certification program, ADOBE (InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator), and CISCO certifications for Cybersecurity, Networking, and IT Support. We also offered a Computer Troubleshooting program that delved into how to repair computers.

We served **174 clients in 2024** with 13% carryover from 2023 that were progressing on their goals.

Of the clients served in 2024:

- Thirty-five (35) obtained jobs. Average earnings were \$18 to \$23 per hour.
- Seventy-two (72) of the clients received other services provided by CAAWC including: case management and financial literacy.
- Fifteen (15) students were referred to external vocational training.
- Twenty-two (22) students enrolled in our computer skills program.

NUTRITION SERVICES



9,423 households / 26,518 individuals were served through our food pantry, helping to address food insecurity and ensure families had access to nutritious meals.

1.5 million pounds of food rescued from grocery stores.

Volunteers dedicated over 3,233 hours to supporting the community, making a difference to reach one neighbor at a time.



THANKSGIVING 2024

We supplied **247** CAAWC clients their Thanksgiving meals!

Community Food Rescue was able to supply Thanksgiving Turkeys, Hams or Pork Shoulders and all the Fixings to the following groups:

Latinos for Education Advocacy (LEAD) 10 meals

APEX 20 meals

First Congregational Church Danbury 20 meals

Homes for Heroes 45 meals and Victory Christian Center 95 meals

Wow! Over 437 Thanksgiving meals total distributed the week of Thanksgiving! An increase of 41% over 2023 Thanksgiving meals.

Huge thanks to United Way for facilitating a grant. Stop & Shop for bagging the dry items, Audi/Mercedes dealer for packing produce and donating a check, and to Nuvance, Duracell and Keller Williams (Debi Orr) for the baskets and bags of supplies so everyone could have a good Thanksgiving.

Thanks to Stew Leonard's for providing turkeys to our Stamford and Danbury clients.

CAAWC AT A GLANCE

PEOPLE SERVED BY PROGRAM

Ethnicity

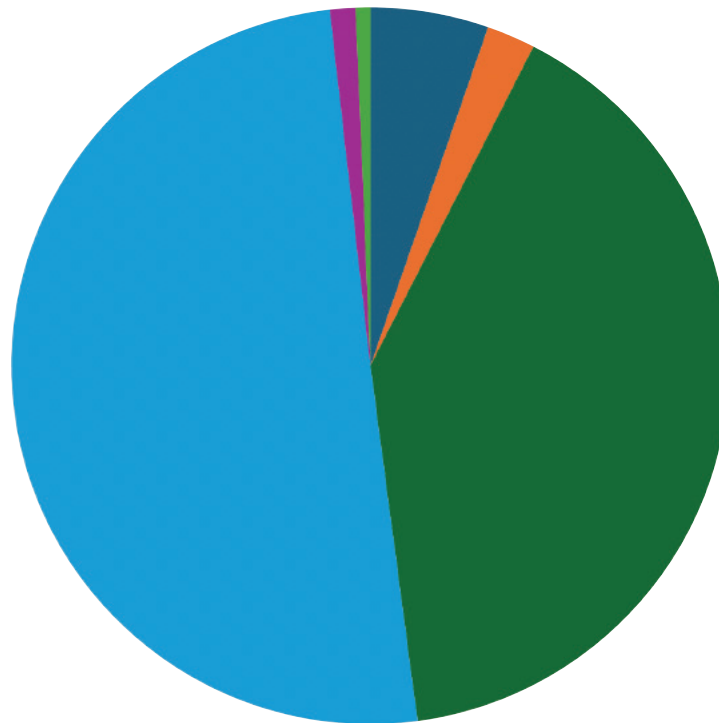
47% Hispanic
53% Non-Hispanic

Age

28% Under 18
10% Adults 18 - 24
33% Adults 25 - 54
29% Adults 55+

Income Levels

50% or less FPL - 36.01%
101%-125% FPL - .01%
126%-150% FPL - .04%
151% - 175% FPL - .02%
176%- Greater FPL - 63.92%



- Diaper
- Housing
- Food
- Case Management
- VITA
- Education

Race

27% White
14% Black
44% Multi Race
15% Other

Gender

40% Male
60% Female

27,323 Individuals Served

11,736 Families/Households Served

THE COMMUNITY ACTION PROMISE

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live.

The Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut
Statement of activities, years ended December 31, 2024 and 2023

CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	2024	2023
Revenues, Gains, and Other Support:		
Federal and State Grants	\$ 11,215,671	\$ 11,728,721
Childcare Program Income	526,147	565,995
Local Grants and Contributions	655,042	272,642
In-kind Contributions	828,359	806,898
Bond Debt Service Funding	20,389	24,295
Other Income	7,206	9,137
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	54,593	6,596
Total Revenues, Gains, and Other Support	13,307,407	13,414,284
Expenses:		
Specific Assistance	7,345,458	8,013,428
Salaries and Benefits	4,451,517	4,061,838
Occupancy	355,776	306,015
Professional and Contracted Services	352,153	221,629
Materials, Supplies, and Other Consumables	345,453	281,819
Depreciation	128,006	101,689
Repairs and Maintenance	97,960	72,665
Other	38,937	39,545
Conferences and Training	50,186	36,178
Interest	4,811	7,106
Total Expenses	13,170,257	13,141,912
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	137,150	272,372
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS		
Support and Revenue:		
Contributions	303,760	230,350
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	{54,593}	{6,596}
Changes in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions	249,167	223,754
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	386,317	496,126
Net Assets - Beginning of Year	2,243,788	1,747,662
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 2,630,105	\$ 2,243,788

COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

Bethel	New Canaan	Sharon
Bridgewater	New Fairfield	Sherman
Brookfield	New Milford	Stamford
Canaan	Newtown	Warren
Cornwall	North Canaan	Washington
Danbury	Redding	Weston
Darien	Ridgefield	Westport
Greenwich	Roxbury	Wilton
Kent	Salisbury	

MANY THANKS

TO ALL OUR STAKEHOLDERS, FUNDERS, DONORS, AND VOLUNTEERS. WE COULD NOT DO THE WORK WITHOUT YOU.

OUR OFFICES

CENTRAL

78 Triangle Street
Danbury, CT 06810
203.744.4700

STAMFORD

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Stamford, CT 06902
203.602.8833

AELC

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203.743.3785

NORWALK

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