



UNION-SNYDER

CAA

Community Action Agency

# Bulletin



H E L P I N G   P E O P L E .   C H A N G I N G   L I V E S .

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## Getting Things Done Where the Need is Greatest—that is what AmeriCorps is about

AmeriCorps is a National Service program, funded by the Corporation for National & Community Service.

**CORE Susquehanna/AmeriCorps** is the local AmeriCorps program administered by Union-Snyder Community Action Agency.

AmeriCorps members provide service as a group in the community at least 4 times a year. If your non-profit organization could use 25 people to get a particular job completed, contact Robyn @ 570-374-0181 to discuss your need and to arrange a day of service.

Non-profit organizations that have an interest in hosting an AmeriCorps member may contact CORE Susquehanna @ 570-374-0181 and ask for Dennis.

For additional information, feel free to visit our website @ [www.coresusquehanna.org](http://www.coresusquehanna.org)



### Wig Bank Opened

The American Cancer Society Greater Susquehanna Valley Unit recently opened its wig bank.

Located in the new Selinsgrove office, this program offers new wigs, prostheses and bras to area cancer patients for free. The office has a private wig and resource room.

The American Cancer Society Greater Susquehanna Valley Unit serves Columbia, Montour, Snyder, Union and Northumberland counties.

To register with the American Cancer Society please call 800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org). For more information, please call 888-227-5445, option 3.

The new office is located off of Lori Lane, behind Wendy's and adjacent to Perkins.

## **The Family Development Approach**

Shifting the focus from “What’s Wrong” to “What’s Strong”

Are you a frontline worker who works with individuals and families ? Or are you a college student seeking professional coursework in family services? The Family Development Credentialing Program (FDC) is professional development and credentialing course for human service workers to empower families through “family development”- a multi-disciplinary approach that helps families identify their strengths and develop a plan to solve problems and achieve their own goal of healthy self-reliance.

This well researched, strength-based approach curriculum was developed by Cornell University and is currently offered in hundreds of communities in twenty states. FDC is administered statewide by the Community Action Association of PA in conjunction with Temple University, the national FDC coordinator. The Union-Snyder Community Action Agency (CAA) is the local lead affiliate agency for this cross-agency training that consists of 90 hours of instruction, preparation of a portfolio, and a credentialing exam. Workers who earn this nationally recognized and respected credential are also eligible for undergraduate college credits and continuing education units (CEUs).

A recently FDC-credentialed worker said, “FDC training teaches us that in order to help families achieve goals of healthy self-reliance, they need to recognize their strengths and develop a plan to reach goals that are important to them. FDC empowered me both as a person and a family worker, and it helped me build on my years of experience and training. It was great to learn with other family professionals. The course information and networking with other agencies has definitely helped me help the families I work with.”

The training is provided locally in conjunction with the Integrated Family Services Council. 49 workers from Snyder County Children and Youth, Union County Children and Youth, SUM Child Development, CSIU, TIU, CMSU, Nurse Family Partnership, CORE Susquehanna AmeriCorps, and Union-Snyder CAA have earned certification since the first course in 2009. The implementation of the program was sponsored in part by the PA Court system, and developed in coordination with Snyder County Children and Youth.

The next FDC course, taught by certified instructors, is scheduled to begin at Union-Snyder Community Action Agency in the beginning of the year, 2012. The cost of the course is \$900. Some scholarships are available. For more information about the course, please contact Denise Kiess at Union-Snyder CAA, 374-0181, ext 176 or email [dkiess@union-snyder caa.org](mailto:dkiess@union-snyder caa.org).

## **Disaster Relief**

If you have been affected by the recent flood in Pennsylvania, you may be eligible for some help. The deadline has been extended to December 15, 2011. Please contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at 1-800-621- FEMA (3362). FEMA can also be found on the web at [www.DisasterAssistance.gov](http://www.DisasterAssistance.gov) or on your mobile phone at [m.fema.gov](http://m.fema.gov).

## **Union-Snyder Agency on Aging plans for 2012 Medicare Part D Enrollment Appointments**

The Medicare open enrollment period begins October 15 and ends on December 7, 2011. During this time you have the opportunity to compare your present prescription drug plan with what is available for the year 2012. All plans make yearly changes, so it is in your best interest to take advantage of a yearly comparison. Medicare beneficiaries, both seniors and those with disabilities, who have not previously enrolled may do so at this time. It is important to note that not all current prescription drug plans including Advantage plans will be available next year. Watch your mail as your current plan will notify you in writing of any changes for 2012. Every year insurance companies make changes to the list of medicines their plan includes. Look for differences in your plans co-pays, deductibles and coverage during the gap.

Assistance will be available for one-on-one counseling sessions with APPRISE (PA State Health Insurance Counselors) during this upcoming open enrollment period. Items to bring along to your appointment include your Medicare card, insurance cards and list of medications with milligrams and dosages or the actual containers medications are dispensed in. Keep in mind the plan you have now may not be the best plan for you next year.

Appointments with an APPRISE counselor will be held at each of the Senior Centers. We partner with The Susquehanna Valley Mall who is once again hosting an enrollment event for residents of Union and Snyder counties. We are currently taking appointment requests for all of these locations by calling 524-2100 or 374-5558. The Union-Snyder Agency on Aging also partners with Evangelical Community Health Education allowing additional opportunities for enrollments. Please call Evangelical Community Health Education at 522-2693 or 800-377-3826 ext. 2693 for an appointment being held in their Lewisburg Staples Plaza location.

## **2-1-1 is Becoming a Reality in PA**

2-1-1 is an easy to remember three digit number that will provide assistance to consumers with questions about accessing health and/or human services. Pennsylvania is one of only two states where 2-1-1 is not yet available. This will change in the upcoming months.

Locally, Union-Snyder Community Action Agency has started the process of collecting information from organizations to be entered into the state-wide database. Organizations as well as consumers will be able to easily access information about available services in the region and state.

Union-Snyder CAA is asking for your cooperation to complete the database. Comprehensive collection of agency services information will provide both agencies and consumers with appropriate information and referrals.

Workshops are being offered throughout Union, Snyder and Northumberland Counties to provide 2-1-1 information and to assist your agency with collection and compiling your appropriate data. To attend a workshop, contact Grace Long at 570-374-0181 or [glong@union-snydercaa.org](mailto:glong@union-snydercaa.org)

## Union-Snyder Community Action Agency Services

Despite the move of the PA CareerLink, the Union-Snyder Community Action Agency continues to remain at 713 Bridge Street, Selinsgrove. To check out our services visit [www.union-snydercaa.org](http://www.union-snydercaa.org), call 570-374-0181 or 877-497-1257 or visit us Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 4:00pm, Tuesday from 9:00am to 4:00pm.

If you find yourself in need, or know of someone in need--contact Union-Snyder CAA to inquire how to qualify for the following services:

Information & Referral  
Energy Assistance  
Rental Assistance  
Transportation Assistance  
Emergency Food Referrals  
Housing Assistance  
GED classes  
Family Literacy classes  
Work Ready training  
AmeriCorps

All applicants must meet federal/state eligibility requirements to receive service.

In addition:

- CAA is a site for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program. The **VITA** Program provides certified volunteers to assist income eligible households prepare basic tax returns at no cost.
- CAA administers the 4 local Food Pantries in Snyder & Union County
- 211 Call Center Partnering Agency
- Poverty Simulation Coordinators for the local community
- In partnership with Snyder County Children and Youth Services provides Family Development Credentialing Training.

Union-Snyder CAA's mission is to strengthen families and individuals by working cooperatively with families to build skills and to work in partnership with organizations and communities to address community needs.

## Acronyms Glossary for Article on pages 5-7

ARRA-American Recovery and Reinvestment Act  
CAA-Union-Snyder Community Action Agency  
CCIS-Child Care Information System  
CHIP-Children's Health Insurance Program  
CPWDC-Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation  
DPW-Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare  
EHS-Early Head Start  
HAP-Housing Assistance Program  
HPRP-Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program  
HS-Head Start  
HUD-U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

HUS-Home Utility Savings Program  
L&I-Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry  
LIHEAP-Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program  
MA-Medical Assistance  
SDC-Pennsylvania State Data Center  
SHP-Supportive Housing Program  
SNAP-State Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps)  
SUM CD-Snyder, Union, Mifflin Child Development  
UCAO-Union County Assistance Office  
UCHA-Union County Housing Authority

# The Economy and Its Impact on Local Social Services

Defining the kinds of information provided: information for this newsletter was obtained from a variety of sources which includes census data, labor data, advocacy groups, specialized data crunchers, local and state management information systems and local anecdotal observations. In looking for impacts of the economy on social service providers and the users of those services it is necessary to compare information from 2007 or 2008 to the present. Sometimes the information is not available yet (i.e. detailed 2010 census information is just starting to come out) and projections with a margin of error must be used. In other cases the latest information might only be available for 2009. There is enough good information to, at a minimum, give us a "picture" or sense of what is occurring locally.

General statement of the process: it is necessary to not only consider the local economy and its impact on social services but we must consider Pennsylvania and the U.S. economy. Most funding for many of the social services available in Union County comes from state and federal sources. The inability to gather sufficient revenues at the state and local level has a dramatic impact on local agencies and users of the services they provide. It is important to not only think of the local loss of jobs and jobs with sustainable income and benefits but to consider when families and individuals "fall short" on meeting their needs, what resources are available to help them.

ARRA clouding the information: some of the data and other information that was utilized actually obscures the information. In many cases agencies received one year increases or funding for new short term initiatives. Frequently, there was an emphasis on getting the funding out of the system quickly and to stimulate the economy. There was little time for community based planning and an emphasis on accountability or transparency required additional resources to manage. In many cases new eligibility rules for similar programs made it difficult to measure the real consumer impact. There was a strong emphasis on job creation rather than impacts on families and individuals that benefitted from the funding. When there was flexibility, many agencies selected services that were short term "fixes" rather than long term strategies because there was no foreseeable way to sustain the effort. Many families and individuals were helped with ARRA funding and we must look at it as a one-time, "stand alone" program or service.

Sources of information provided: information/data was provided by the Union County Assistance Office, Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporation, SUM Child Development, Union-Snyder Agency on Aging, Union County Housing Authority, Union-Snyder Community Action Agency, The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, PA Child Stat, Pennsylvania Research Center, Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, Pennsylvania State Data Center, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry and the U.S. Census Bureau. In several cases I asked for some information or compilation of data with very little notice. The response was very much appreciated.

## Education

Between 2006 and 2011 there was a 3.5% increase in residents of Union County with a high school diploma as compared to a 2% decrease in Snyder County and a .9% decrease in PA.

Between 2006 and 2011 there was a 1.4% decrease in residents of Union County in those obtaining an Associate's Degree as compared to a 1% increase in Snyder County and a .1% increase in PA. Between 2006 and 2011 there was a .4% decrease in residents of Union County with a Bachelor's Degree as compared to a .8% decrease in Snyder and a .2% increase in PA.

Between 2006 and 2011 there was a .5% decrease in residents with a bachelor's Degree or higher as compared to .1% increase in Snyder and a .3% increase in PA.

Between 2006 and 2009 there was 5.1% decrease in those that started ninth grade in the Lewisburg School District and did not graduate there as compared to a 2.4% decrease in Mifflinburg School District, a 3.6% increase in Midd-West (Snyder County), an 18.3 % increase in Selinsgrove School District and a .3% decrease in PA.

### **Employment/Unemployment**

In 2007 the unemployment rate in Union County was 5.2% as compared to 4.3% in PA.  
 In 2008 the unemployment rate in Union County was 6.3% as compared to 5.3% in PA.  
 In 2009 the unemployment rate in Union County was 9% as compared to 8% in PA.  
 In 2010 the unemployment rate in Union County was 9.1% as compared to 8.7% in PA.

In February 2011 the unemployment rate in Union County was 8.4% as compared to 8.5% in PA (this was not seasonally adjusted).

The latest data was not available from the 2010 census but it is likely that employer based health care benefits decreased in Union County from 2007 to 2011. This was the general trend in the United States, Pennsylvania and larger rural counties in Pennsylvania.

### **Early Child and Child Care**

Head Start- In 2008, 99 full day children were served with financial help for child care costs from the state, CCIS and Head Start. In 2009, the number was decreased to 94 due to lack of funding for the child care portion of Head Start. In the current year the number was decreased to 81 due to reduced state child care funding for children enrolled in Head Start, CCIS waiting lists and lack of children needing full time day care.

Waiting lists for HS (Head Start) and EHS (Early Head Start)-In 2008-2009, 89 were on the HS and 54 on the EHS waiting lists. However, 464 were served but here was funding for 377 (due to many moving and being replaced by waiting list children).

In 2009-2010 there were 178 on the HS waiting list and 96 on the EHS waiting list.  
 In 2010-2011 there were 147 on the HS waiting list and 107 on the EHS waiting list.  
 Currently, in 2011-2012 there are 89 on the HS waiting list and 31 on the EHS waiting list.

The decline in waiting lists is anecdotally thought to reflect the economy. Some have moved out of the area to obtain employment. HS has shortened or eliminated transportation and many families have one car and the price of fuel have made transporting to HS unaffordable. Additionally, many families are using relatives for child care. For the first time in years there are openings in day care in Mifflinburg. Frequently, one parent is unemployed and they provide the child care.

In Union County the number of children enrolled in the CHIP program increased from 4.2% to 6% from 2007 to 2011. Statewide the percent increased from 5.3% to 6.5%. The average monthly enrollment increased from 378 children in 2007 to 520 in 2010.

In 2006, 19.1% of all children in Union County were enrolled in MA. The percentage increased to 22.1% in 2010. This compares to 27.5% of children in PA in 2006 and 32.1% in 2010.

### **Poverty and Welfare**

In 2007, 13.2% of Union County's population was at or below the poverty level. The level increased to 14.3% in 2009. 11.6% of the state population was at or below the poverty level in 2007 and 17.1% in 2009.

Between August 2008 and August 2011 the number of individuals receiving cash assistance in Union County grew from 228 to 266 (a 16.6% increase).

Between August 2008 and August 2011 the number of individuals receiving food stamps grew from 2168 to 3434 (a 48.3% increase). In 2006, 4.2% of families received food stamps in Union County and it increased to 7.1% by 2010. This compares to 8.9% in 2006 statewide and 13% statewide in 2010.

Between August 2008 and August 2011 the number of individuals receiving Medicaid grew from 4028 to 4655 (a 15.5% increase).

As a result of decreased federal funding this year the number of households served in Union County through the LIHEAP program will decrease and the level of assistance for those households will decrease.

## **Housing**

The Union County Housing Authority reported that from 2010 to 2011, there were 88 more households that had decreased income (income is utilized to determine the households share of housing costs). Lack of employment opportunity and decrease in employment were the primary reasons for the growth in decreased income.

The Section 8 director at UCHA has reported the highest level of applicants in his 27 years of working at the UCHA. As a result the average wait time for an eligible applicant is between 12-18 months.

Decreased funding for the voucher program in the last year has resulted in serving 30 fewer households in Union County.

In 2010 the turnover rate was 20% for participants leaving the program as compared to 33% in 2006 and 31% in 2008. The UCHA had the highest turnover rate of 42% in 1998. The most frequent reason for turnover is increased earned income and the ability to manage housing costs in the unsubsidized market.

In 2012 the FMR's for Union County were lowered by 9% for every bedroom size by HUD. This will result in a decrease of the available pool of rental units in the private sector. This will also result in more households paying above 30% of their adjusted gross outcome.

In 2010 the vacancy rate for non-seasonal housing in Union County was 5.2 % as compared to 5% in Snyder County and 11.5% in Northumberland. There only 6 out of 67 counties in Pennsylvania that had vacancy rates lower than 5.1%. Lower vacancy rates make it more difficult to find adequate housing.

## **Aging Services**

Aging reports an increase in the number of seniors making ends meet and choosing between food, prescription medications and utility payments between 2008 and 2011.

In home services, which are utilized to maintain a senior in their residence, had a waiting list of 49 in January 2008 and the waiting list had increased by 60% to 81 by September 2011.

Aging staff have noticed an increase in inability to pay property taxes and receiving sheriff sale notices and an increase in utility shutoffs because of payment delinquencies.

Maintaining employment in retirement was not a rare occurrence before 2008 but assessment staff at aging have seen an increase in the number of senior households where it is maintained as a necessity to meet budget needs rather than by choice.

## **Community Action**

CAA normally assists 50 to 60 individuals in Union County with housing/housing related issues annually through HAP and HPRP and SHP. In 2010, 19 additional Union County individuals (close to a 30% increase) received rental assistance through an ARRA grant. Many received higher levels of assistance than we normally provide through HAP.

In 2010, a new service was provided by CAA through the previously mentioned ARRA grant. HUS, a utility savings program in which savings were matched by the grant to pay energy costs, was developed to help meet household energy costs. 69 Union County residents received a HUS services. Unfortunately, the ARRA grant existed for only one year.

The number of households in Union County requiring utility assistance through "customer assistance programs" provided through CAA from utility partners continues to grow steadily even though CAA's biggest contract is with PPL which serves a lower percentage of households in Union County than in Snyder or Northumberland Counties.

## **Conclusion**

Many economists believe there is a 33% change of a double dip recession in the United States and a 50% chance of a double dip recession in Europe. Most economists believe that the recovery will be slow and take several years. It is likely that we will see continued levels of "need for assistance" for several years and during that same period a decreased level of funding for social services to meet that need.

## GED and Family Literacy Schedule

### **Union-Snyder Community Action Agency**

713 Bridge Street  
Selinsgrove, PA 17870  
(570) 374-0181

\*Transportation provided for Family Literacy

**Assessments:** Appointments available

### **Families Learning Together:**

Monday-Thursday 10am-2pm

**GED:** Monday-Thursday 9am-12pm

### **CSIU Adult Learning Center**

Northumberland County Career & Arts Center  
2 E. Arch Street  
Shamokin, PA 17872  
(570) 644-6575

**Assessment:** Tue 12-4pm

**GED:** Monday-Thursday 9am-12pm

### **NOTICE:**

If you no longer want to receive this newsletter or would like to update your information, please call 570-374-0181 ext. 145. Please share this newsletter with a friend or co-worker.

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please e-mail Christine Hart at [chart@union-snydercaa.org](mailto:chart@union-snydercaa.org) and I will remove your name from the postal mailing list.

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