

East Missouri Action Agency
2019-2020
Comprehensive Community Needs
Assessment



EMAA Overview and History

East Missouri Action Agency, Inc. (EMAA) was established in 1965 as a Community Action Agency under the Economic Opportunity Act signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. For more than 50 years, EMAA has worked to promote initiatives and efforts that strive to end poverty and put low income neighborhoods and families on the track to self-sufficiency. Families and children in EMAA's eight county service area suffer from many hardships ranging from joblessness to hunger. These hardships present serious hurdles in creating a thriving community. There are also trends of underemployment, lack of decent, affordable housing, and children living in poverty in EMAA's service area. EMAA works to address these hardships through the agency's four departments. In 2019, EMAA's four departments provided the following services:

- **Community Services:** Provides intake, assessment, and referral for 13,367 low income persons, intervened in over 13,100 emergencies, and provided heating assistance to 5,601 persons.
- **Head Start:** Provides preschool, health screening, nutritious meals, and child development to over 636 children of low income families.
- **Housing:** Provides housing rental assistance for low income families in 12 counties totaling 1,979 households and 4,637 individuals, housing also provides weatherization services, home repair services, develops low income housing, and helps low income families achieve home ownership.
- **Women's Wellness:** Provided reproductive care that includes HIV tests and cancer screening(s) to 1,683 women.

Counties Served:

Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Iron, Madison, Perry, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, and Washington. Housing provided Section 8 Vouchers to Stoddard, Mississippi, Dunklin, and Pemiscot in the Bootheel.

EMAA Mission: EMAA cultivates communities of opportunity and supports people in reaching their highest potential.

EMAA Vision: Communities where everyone's potential to thrive is unlimited by community conditions.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Community Services Department provides assistance to a range of low-income individuals and families within EMAA's service area. We take a holistic approach to ending poverty; starting by addressing the most basic needs, eliminating them and applying progressive programs designed to move families into financial freedom. Over 21,000 people received services last year through EMAA's Community Service programs.

- *Family Intake, Assessment & Referral – Community Service Representatives (CSR)*: are housed in all eight EMAA Outreach offices. CSR's analyze each household member's individual needs as well as the family as a whole. Referrals are made to EMAA programs as well as community partners and local resources based on identified needs.
- *SEMO Assets* – This IDA savings program helps low-income families save money to be used in one of three ways: to purchase a home, for post-secondary education or to start and/or expand a small business. Families' savings are matched with funds from EMAA at different rates depending on the asset they choose to save for. Home ownership is matched 4-1; \$1000 savings will receive a match of \$4000. Post Secondary Education and Small Business are matched 8-1; \$500 savings will receive a match of \$4000. Participants of this program receive support through case management and obtain instruction in financial management, homeownership and micro-enterprise development to better ensure success and financial freedom.
- *Supporting, Empowering & Leveraging for Families (S.E.L.F.)* – This program helps low-income families overcome barriers to achieve success by providing support and bundled services. This program is a combined effort between all EMAA departments.

- *Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program*: Through our partnership with the IRS, Volunteers and CSR's can prepare and electronically file Federal and State taxes for low-income households. They also prepare the Missouri Property Tax Credit (MO-PTC) for elderly and/or disabled households. In late January of 2019, EMAA began using the Fasciculated Self-Assist (FSA) Program for income tax preparation.
- *Emergency Food and Rental Assistance* – Emergency food is distributed primarily through a network of food pantries established by local churches and organizations in cooperation with EMAA and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP). EFSP funding is also utilized to assist in emergency situations with rent.
- *Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)* – This is a federally funded program. The LIHEAP program has two components: Energy Assistance (EA) and Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP). EA is a one time benefit designed to assist low-income people with their heating bills between October 1-May 31. To qualify applicants must meet income guidelines and be responsible for their heating bill. ECIP is designed to alleviate a crisis. To qualify, applicants must be in disconnection threat, low on propane or wood.
- *Other Community Services* - In addition to the above mentioned services, EMAA also administers dollars that are privately funded emergency energy programs such as Dollar More, Dollar Help, Round-Up, and Liberty Utilities. Funds are limited and certain restrictions apply.

- *Step Up to Leadership* -This is a 12-session course designed for low-income people who are interested in making a difference in their local community. There is a strong focus on developing leadership skills, service on nonprofit boards, public speaking and grant writing. The goal of this program is to offer low-income people a voice and skills to make a change in their community.
- *Summer Food Service Program* -The Summer Food Program is available to all children through age 18, as well as disabled adults 18-21 who are enrolled in public or private school during the regular school year.
- *Reality Enrichment And Life Lessons (REALL)* – The REALL simulation was developed by Ozarks Area Community Action Corporation (OACAC). It is designed to challenge youth to think critically about how choices and decisions made in adolescence may have consequences in adulthood. During a REALL Simulation, youth will encounter issues of inadequate education, inadequate income, managing a budget, being labeled as an ex-offender, caring for small children and more. They will be challenged to make REAL decisions.
- *Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS)* – Understanding the day-to-day reality of poverty is important for everyone involved in fighting poverty – from policymakers to service providers. MISSOURI'S COMMUNITY ACTION POVERTY SIMULATION (CAPS) is a unique tool that helps people begin to understand what life is like with a shortage of money and an abundance of stress.