

Allegheny County Department of Human Services

Community Services Advisory Council (CSAC)

Meeting Minutes

June 9th, 2025

The June 9th meeting is held on Microsoft Teams.

Welcome and Call to Order

Lynn Tatala welcomed all in attendance and called the meeting to order at **12:04 pm.**

All members are asked to introduce themselves, name and affiliation so any persons who are guests (who are persons formally invited) or any community residents who learned of the meeting and joined may hear all who is in attendance at the meeting.

Attendance:

- CSAC Members in person: N/A, virtual meeting
- Online: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters
- OCS staff: Mara Schwabenbauer, Abigail Horn
- Guests: Celeste Shelton OCS staff, Jessica Ruffin and Robert Burak, DHS Consultants
- Community Residents: None

Approval of March 10th, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Lynn Tatala asked CSAC members for any concerns, corrections, or additions to the December 9th, 2024 meeting minutes which were provided and posted in Govenda. There are no updates to minutes. Stephanie Eson motioned; Dee Lenier seconded the motion.

The vote was unanimous to approve minutes: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Membership Report

Welcome New CSAC Members

Notes: Lynn Tatala, CSAC President and Mara Schwabenbauer, OCS, welcomed all new members to their first CSAC meeting.

Nomination and Vote for Tom Baker for another 2-year term:

Notes: Stephanie Eson provided the nomination for Tom Baker for another 2-year term as a member representative for services for low-income persons. Laura Zinski provided the motion and Andrea Horton Mericli provided the second.

The vote was unanimous and motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Nomination and Vote for Dee Lanier for another 2-year term:

Notes: Elayne Masters provided the nomination for Dee Lanier for another 2-year term as a member representative of persons with low income. Andrea Horton-Mercil provided the motion and Laura Zinski provided a second.

The vote was unanimous and motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Member Vacancies Update and Nominations – Mara Schwabenbauer

Mara Schwabenbauer shared that with the addition of 2 additional appointed members to the CSAC, the advisory council has to stay in compliance of the tripartite board structure of 1/3 appointed members, 1/3 representatives of services for low income persons, and 1/3 representatives of residents of low income, therefore an increase from 15 members to 21 members, and nominations following for the increased vacant member seats across the private and low income member sectors.

Nomination and Vote for Ruthanne Hackman for member representative for services for low income:

Ruthann Hackman has a wealth of knowledge in education and experience as a whole and her service to people in communities. She has 10 years+ of experience post her master's in social work and has her PhD. She has specialized in healthcare and aging services, and she's taught in multiple universities and colleges, including curriculum on community practice, content on advisory boards and also results-oriented management and accountability. Ruthann currently serves as the Director of Programs at Allegheny Valley Association of Churches.

Notes: Lynn Tatala asked for a motion, Elayne Masters provided the motion, Dee Lanier provided the second.

The vote was unanimous, and motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Nomination and Vote for Allison Hindman for member representative for services for low-income:

Allison is a Community Relations Representative with AmeriHealth Caritas. In her role, she serves people across Western Pennsylvania, including Allegheny County. She has experience in healthcare, outreach, relationship building, and connecting individuals with resources that enhance their well-being. She works with individuals who are dual eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, people with disabilities, and people with low income. She is actively involved in volunteer leadership and strategic collaboration to support underserved populations.

Notes: Lynn Tatala asked for a motion. Rico Carter provided the motion and Andrea Horton-Mericli provided the second.

The vote was unanimous, and motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Nomination and Vote for Katie Bulova for member representative for services of low-income:

Katie currently services as an ISAC Service Coordinator at Literacy Pittsburgh. She works to help connect immigrants and refugees to community services. She has a master's in public health, has worked in public health research, and has experience running her own nonprofit in the past focused on caregiver support. She has skills in community development and organizational assessment. She has a special interest in a quality-of-life concerns for individuals and communities with experience in areas of focus around HIV prevention and quality of life measures for diabetes and aging.

Notes: Lynn Tatala called for a motion. Sally Ellwein provided a motion. Autumn Monaghan provided a second.

The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Nomination and Vote for Kyla Ross for representative of persons of low income:

Kyla Ross grew up as 1 of 9 children. Shas experience as a single teen mom growing up in Clairton and became emancipated at 16 years of age. She's been on her own for quite some time, as she put it, navigating the complexities of life.

Kyla has many family members still living in underserved communities. She has a desire to support other single moms and others facing complex issues who need support with their experiences in a non-judgmental and compassionate way. She has been a client of services herself and is now serving with SHIM as the basic needs coordinator to help individuals and families coming into the center receive utility assistance and other basic need supports such as food pantry distribution. She does have a passion again to support the single moms just like she was, not only in her local community but Kyla is also supporting a single mom in Zambia helping her son access education opportunities there.

Notes: Lynn Tatala asked for a motion. Andrea Horton-Mericli provided a motion and Sally Ellwein provided a second.

The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Nomination and Vote for Eliane Harris-Fulton as member representative for persons of low income:

Elaine Harris- Fulton has a wealth of experience in her 30 years as a volunteer with the family support center network. She shared that she walked into a family support center as a young parent, just looking for haircuts for her children, and was asked to participate in the parent council and has been doing it ever since. She reluctantly became a member but says this is a place that she's able to speak her truth about the needs of her community and community members.

In her years as a volunteer, Elaine was involved in organizing the 4 Corners to Peace block party and other projects to take on community problems. She led the rally in a Box effort, including speeches and rally posters from family centers across the state, that ended up being shared with Governor Corbett at the time to help support the family center for funding. She's a passionate community advocate with experience as legal professional, family support services, public policy and grassroots organizing. Elaine is also the Chair of Community voices, which is a parent led coalition and understands the needs of parents and families across all family centers in the communities across Allegheny County.

Notes: Lynn Tatala asked for a motion. Elayne Masters provided a motion, and Rico Carter provided a second.

The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Nomination Committee Update for Officers by Lynn Tatala

Lynn shared there are officer nominations as well.

Nomination for Andrea Horton-Mericli for President

Notes: The Nominating Committee puts forth a nomination for Andrea Horton - Mericli for President. Laura Zinski provided the motion and Salley Ellwein provide the second.

The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Nomination for Dee Lanier for Vice President

Notes: The Nominating Committee puts forth a nomination for Dee Lanier for Vice President. Elayne Masters provided the motion and Andrea Horton-Mericli provided the second.

The vote was unanimous, and the motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, , Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters

Call for By-Laws Committee Review by Lynn Tatala

Lynn Tatala reviewed that the CSAC By-Laws need reviewed annually and therefore is calling for volunteers for a By-Laws Committee.

Notes: Monique Yost, Dee Lenier and Autumn Monaghan volunteered to sit on the committee.

Member Update

Andrea Horton Mericli shared that the University of Pittsburgh is still hiring. We're technically on a hiring freeze but have positions that are posted on our career site which have been deemed by leadership to be operationally critical or essential, and so we are hiring for those positions and that is on the staff and temp side. If any of you have any clients who are interested in applying for any of those positions or have questions about any of those positions, you can contact me.

Elayne Masters shared she is on Neighborhood Leadership Council and wants to encourage a program called Food Bucks in the state of Pennsylvania – what food bucks does is when people are on programs like SNAP, this helps them make healthy choices, then they get additional dollars back into their accounts. There's been a bill that was recently passed by the Pennsylvania House Committee. And we're waiting for the Senate to see it next. We're at a really important place looking at legislation on Snap and Medicaid. I'm also part of Feeding America's Elevating Voices Digital Community, and we've all been to DC working with Feeding America on advocacy, and so it's important at this point that we all try to contact your representatives in Congress and let them know information and what we'd like to see them do. I can forward the easy to fill out forms that help you make that connection, or if you'd like for your organization to send out to others, I'm happy to share any of that information.

Elayne Master also shared she is working with a neurologist who is putting together a study on people with brain injury and how the effective community works in recovery. He's looking for a grant, and there's a lot of research out there showing how important it is in a person's well-being and the ability to move forward from a traumatic brain injury. To give some parameters to it- there are 5 million people in Pennsylvania alone who are documented with brain injuries. It's much more prevalent than what the media focuses on. The focus so far has typically been more towards sports, but it's something that affects many of us. We are all that split second away from bumping our noggin and life-changing on a dime, so it's something to keep an eye out for and part of my awareness campaign is to say if you hit your head or if somebody, you know, hits their head, do something about it, go to a doctor, go to a concussion clinic.

Sally Ellwein shared that the United Way is running a request for proposals processed right now which will close on June 30th. It's for our community food solutions which are mini grants up to \$7000 for grassroots, local organizations, or individuals who are working on addressing food insecurity in their neighborhoods. The goal is programs that are promoting food access. They don't need to be 501C 3's, or you can have a fiscal sponsor, the goal is really to help support local folks in your communities who are trying to address food insecurity. I have more information, reach out if you have specific questions.

Dee Lenier shared that the Turtle Creek Satellite Rotary Club announced a cookout at the New Monroeville Community Park, it's open to anyone in the community. They are going to be giving free health screenings by UPMC. They are also going to have a raffle for a barbecue package which includes a Wi-Fi grill, Omaha Steak package, gift card and drinks. She can

send you the information if you want to share with others, but it's open to the community. The cookout will be August 3, 2025, Monroeville Community Park.

Community Residents Comments: None

Program Report by Mara Schwabenbauer

2025 Community Action Report

Mara Schwabenbauer provided an overview of the Community Action Report. This report covers key data on funding which supports CSBG, FEC, and Allegheny Go. If you have any questions, we can discuss. This report covers the first quarter, January through March 2025.

The report details funding information. The funding release for 2025 totals \$1,243,034. This is the final 2025 CSBG allocation including the 3rd and 4th quarter funding which was released in May. CSBG funding for 2025 is slightly less than the CSBG funding for 2024 by \$18,482.

The report details the number of people served by type of service. Overall enrollment is slightly under with 145 heads of households served compared to 165 during the time period last year. Each service type is more than 25% enrolled towards the target for the year. The services for VITA have exceeded their annual target at 104%, serving 685 households resulting in 709 tax returns which netted \$878,249. The Financial Empowerment Community Outreach events are at 13% for the first quarter.

The report details race and gender data showing more black people accessing employment assistance compared to more white people than black people accessing transportation services and a comparable rate for self-sufficiency services. More females than males continue to access self-sufficiency, basic needs, and transportation services while more males continue to access employment assistance services. Single parent female households are enrolled at a higher rate in self-sufficiency services and single persons are enrolled at a higher rate in employment assistance services. The majority of people accessing services do not have a disability, but we see some people with disabilities are accessing services.

Outcome indicators are reviewed by category or domain. First the domain of Income and Asset Building is reviewed. We see some activity towards outcomes for improving financial well-being, achieving and maintaining basic needs for 90 days, and for those receiving assistance to meet basic needs, and working towards obtaining one or more public benefit. There is slight activity for those working towards increasing their savings and improving their credit score.

For the employment domain, we see some good activity for those who are unemployed working towards employment up to a living wage and slight activity for those who are unemployed and underemployed working towards employment at a living wage.

For the Health domain, we see good activity for those working towards improving their behavioral health as well as their physical health. We see some activity for people with disabilities maintaining their independent living.

For the Education and Cognitive domain, we see good activity of adults working towards obtaining a recognized credential or high school diploma with some activity for those working towards an associates or bachelors. The data also shows some children under the whole family approach working towards a basic grade level at 1st-8th or 9th-12th.

Under the Housing domain, the data shows good activity of those working towards and achieving safe and affordable housing, good activity for those working towards maintaining safe and affordable housing, and close to target for those working towards improved energy efficiency.

For Civic Engagement, the data shows low activity here, but we continue to include this as it is expected under our Organizational Standards. Data was also reviewed for outcomes across multiple domains.

Data is reviewed for self-sufficiency and employment assistance for those served under a whole family approach, with the 66 households with more than one person, 46 households having at least one outcome other than the primary client.

Information for the Allegheny County FEC is reviewed for the number of persons served, as well as characteristics showing mostly female, slightly more black people than white people, almost half as households with children, with a good amount of people employed full time, part time, or self-employed, and slightly over a quarter are people with disabilities. The FEC locations are reviewed with an update that the Wilkesburg EARN center location is closing and another location will be identified.

Closing notes for the report are reviewed including updates on the CSBG annual report submitted in February of 2025, onboarding for a new NHCO Millvale staff member and Allison Park TAP staff member. Also, that provider data reviews were provided with community partners, and ACDHS reviewed a risk assessment score as low risk from DCED.

Community Services Block Grant

As stated in our report review, we have received from DCED the final funding award for 2025 CSBG funding. There was a period of delay from HHS to release the 3rd and 4th CSBG funds, and the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF) was very active in their follow-up to ensure this funding was released. As you know, the President's budget request for 2026 includes the elimination or deep cuts to a multitude of programs and service areas, CSBG included in the elimination list for 2026. As are many other critical impact programs areas (Medicaid, SNAP, housing support programs) we are in a "wait and see" on CSBG funding for 2026. We know the House passed the budget and it sits with the Senate, at this time in appropriations committees and subcommittees are holding hearings to discuss the budget before final cuts or eliminations would be made. NCAF has been strategizing in their efforts to address this for support for CSBG and core community action program areas like Head Start, LIHEAP, and Weatherization. Our state association, CAAP, is positioning itself in advocacy efforts as well working on a number of items that will be finalizing with their advocacy committee by the end of the month and will be sharing that information with the network. One item to mention is that CAAP has been active in is working on getting support for Community Action as a line item in the state budget, requested \$500k, so while this is a start for additional funding to support the work of community action agencies, this would not support the totality of CA services across the commonwealth, but the idea is that it's a start. Another item CAAP is working on is preparing a one pager impact packet essentially on all 42 Community Action Agencies across PA to be utilized in advocacy efforts with elected officials. CAAP and all state associations have been urged to follow strategy laid out by NCAF. Locally, DHS leadership is aware of the CSBG funding status and among other funding items of concern for DHS and those impacted by our human services, this is on the radar with Allegheny County Executive leadership, and they have confirmed active engagement with officials on funding concerns. I

appreciate DHS and Allegheny County Executive leadership embracing an approach to many of these funding items in a way where there is not panic but a position of preparation and creative thinking on how to wrap services around people in our communities where there are service cuts or may be service cuts in the future.

HR 3131 Community Services Block Grant Improvement Act

The Community Services Block Grant Improvement Act of 2025 has been introduced- this information was shared in meeting materials. This bill will reauthorize the program for ten years and make updates to the Community Services Block Grant program. The bill will reauthorize the CSBG Act for 7 years and increases the resources available to CAA's to fulfill the program's mission. Information about the bill is reviewed and included that it will also permanently raise the income eligibility for participation in the CSBG program to 200 percent of the poverty line.

Message from National Community Action Foundation

David Bradley put out a response to the Presidents' 2026 Budget Request shared in meeting materials outlining the surprise to see the budget eliminate the Community Services Block Grant.

NCAF is organizing what they are calling a Community in Action Together campaign and our state association CAAP and national community action network are awaiting more details on this. I have worked with CAAP to ensure all of our community partners leadership are plugged into information coming in from NCAF and CAAP. There is a meeting scheduled for community partner leadership to connect directly to CAAP in the next few weeks. Dave Coplan with HSCMV has offered to take a lead role sharing on advocacy items rolled out by NCAF. As I become aware of concrete information impacting 2026 CSBG funding, and further developments, I will let you know.

Other: No other comments were provided.

Next Meeting: Lynn Tatala reminded the council that the next meeting will be held Monday, September 8th, 2025.

Adjournment: Lynn Tatala asked if there is any other business/comments- hearing none she asked for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Rico Carter provided a motion. Elayne Masters provided a second.

The vote was unanimous, and motion passed: Lynn Tatala, Stephanie Eson, Aweys Mwaliya, Curt Conrad, Sally Ellwein, Andrea Horton-Mericli, Laura Zinski, Autumn Monaghan, Monique Yost, Rico Carter, Dee Lenier, Elayne Masters. Meeting Adjourned at 1:08 pm.