Community Action Plan (CAP) 2025

Will County Center for Community Concerns

2455 Glenwood Avenue

Joliet, IL 60435

To assist and enable low- and moderate-income individuals to obtain the opportunities needed to prepare themselves for self-sufficiency.

1 Community Action Plan Certification 2
2 Community Action Plan Summary: 3
3 Service Delivery System 5
4 Linkages and Funding Coordination 7
5 Youth Initiatives: 9
6 Innovative Community and Neighborhood-Based Initiatives 10
7 Disaster Preparedness 11
8 Appendices 12

COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT (CSBG)

1 Community Action Plan Certification

Agency Name	Will County Center for Community Concerns
Name of CAP Contact	Belithia Johnson
Title	Community Service Director
Phone	(815) 722-0722
Email	bjohnson@wcccc.net
***CAP Board Approved MM/DD/YYYY:**	Click to type Date the Agency's Board approved the CAP. 09/11/2024
CSBG Year (YYYY):	2025

Attach board minutes from the meeting where the CAP was approved, note in appendices.

Board and Agency Certification

The undersigned hereby certifies that this agency complies with the Federal CSBG Programmatic and State Assurances as outlined in the CSBG Act. The undersigned further certifies the information in this Community Needs Assessment and the Community Action Plan is correct and has been authorized by the governing body of this organization.

Kris White	Kris White	Click or tap to enter a date. 9-11-24
Executive Director (printed name)	**Executive Director (signature)**	**Date**
Linde Pote	Linda J Pote	Click or tap to enter a date. 9-11-24
Board Chair (printed name)	**Board Chair (signature)**	**Date**

Certification of ROMA Trainer/Implementer

The undersigned hereby certifies that this agency's Community Action Plan and strategic plan documents the continuous use of the Results Oriented Management and Accountability (ROMA) system (assessment, planning, implementation, achievement of results, and evaluation).(Organizational Standards)

Belithia Johnson	Belithia Johnson	9/13/2024
NCRT/NCRI (printed name)	**NCRT/NCRI (signature)**	**Date**

2 Community Action Plan Summary:

2.1 Provide a brief summary of how funds are used to support the overall operations of the agency. (CSBG Act)

This summary should go beyond the specific programs provided by the agency.

The Will County Center for Community Concerns' mission is to assist and enable low-and moderate-income individuals to obtain the opportunities needed to prepare themselves for self-sufficiency. As the Community Action Agency serving Will County, and through the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) versatility, we strive to coordinate efforts and network with other social service entities to accommodate those in need better.

CSBG funding enables Will County Center for Community Concerns to collaborate with other agencies for referral of services, coordinate case management for homeless and at-risk clients, provide HUD-certified housing counseling services, weatherization, and home rehab/repair, LIHEAP, assist financially with emergency assistance, employment support services, homeless services, and provide education on landlord/tenant relationships. CSBG funding includes school supplies, financial literacy classes, food baskets, scholarships, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), and family support such as but not limited to rental and mortgage assistance. The CSBG funding also supports the job-readiness program, and Riverwalk Homes Food Pantry.

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) makes this responsive planning process possible. To our knowledge, CSBG is the only government grant that offers the flexibility of local planning. CSBG contributes a substantial amount to the operational costs of the Agency, enabling us to administer over $15,636,804.00 in federal, state, and private program funds in 2023. CSBG also drives the outreach and networking efforts for the entire Agency.
The Agency's Board of Directors, management, and staff continuously evaluate agency programs and assess client needs to seek new and innovative ways to address Will County's poverty problems. We determine customers' needs by accepting comments, suggestions, and surveys from clients, board members, and other entities throughout the year. Customers complete a Needs Assessment Survey at the intake point, and responses are collected and evaluated throughout the year. In addition to paper surveys, the Agency hosts focus groups to gain perspective on the needs of specific demographic groups; senior citizens, veterans, parents of young children, and people experiencing homelessness. The Agency favors this largely client-driven planning process because it allows for flexibility in programmatic planning. We identified needs from over 400 customer surveys. Some of those included: Budgeting/Money Management; Financial Assistance with Utilities; Finding Permanent Employment; Getting Food; Finding Affordable Housing; Obtaining a High School/GED and Setting Goals for their Family.

Through the coordination of the Will County Center for Community Concern's Board of Directors, involvement with the Will County Continuum of Care, local social services agencies, municipalities, educational institutions, and churches, the needs of the Community are constantly evaluated to design programs that address needs specific to Will County. The significance of coordinating services within the county enables Will County Center for Community Concerns to determine appropriate programs that will offer quality services to Will County residents.

2.2 Please explain how the Board of Directors was involved in the planning process to create the CAP. (IL Economic Opportunity Act)

The Agency's Board of Directors continuously evaluates agency programs and assess client needs to seek new and innovative ways to address Will County's poverty problems. The board completes community needs surveys annually. The board is given all program reports at every board meeting to analyze and discuss whether they feel programs are successful or need to be modified or abandoned. The board also reviews the progress of the agency's strategic plan twice a year.

2.3 How was the client population involved in this process? (IL Economic Opportunity Act)

Customers complete a Needs Assessment Survey at the intake point, and responses are collected and evaluated throughout the year. In addition to paper surveys, the Agency hosts focus groups to gain perspective on the needs of specific demographic groups; senior citizens, veterans, parents of young children, and people experiencing homelessness. The agency welcomes this client-driven planning process because it allows for flexibility in programmatic planning. We identified needs from over 400 customer surveys. The agency also collects and analyzes customer satisfaction surveys for client involvement in this process.

2.4 How was the community involved in this process? (IL Economic Opportunity Act)

Surveys are mailed to local social services agencies, municipalities, educational institutions, churches, and a QR Code for the surveys is also posted on our Facebook page. The surveys from the community are evaluated to design programs that address needs specific to Will County. The significance of distributing surveys within the county enables Will County Center for Community Concerns to determine appropriate programs that will offer quality services to Will County residents.

2.5 How will your Agency leadership team and Board of Directors monitor and document the success of the plan, including comparing targeted outcomes to actual results during the program year? (Organizational Standards)

The agency leadership team meet regularly (at least once a month) to discuss the services, outcomes, and financial status of all programs the agency has to offer. Each manager/director on the leadership team reports out the status of the programs they administer. The fiscal team reports on the spending activities. The Executive Director analyzes all information that is reported and determines if the programs are working as planned, and if targets are going to be met. A more in-depth discussion takes place with strategic plan updates that happen twice a year. The Board of Directors receives all program reports, all fiscal reports at all four quarterly board meetings. The board also receives strategic plan updates twice a year. In addition, the board also receives the Annual Report. All of the reports and information are distributed to the board in a complete packet before the meeting so that they have a chance to analyze and prepare any comments, questions or concerns that need to be addressed in the scheduled board meeting.

3 Service Delivery System

3.1 Describe your agency's service delivery system. Include a description of your client intake process or system and specify whether services are delivered via direct services or subcontractors, or a combination of both. (CSBG Act)

To better serve our clients, we have implemented a centralized intake model. We have fully trained all staff to take all CSBG programs, homeless services, LIHEAP, and Weatherization applications. We have found this successful because clients can apply for all services with only one visit to our agency.

More than 50% of our Customer Service Representatives are trained as Family and Community Development Specialists. The remainder of the CSRs will receive Family and Community Development training when training becomes available. We have two certified ROMA implementers and one trainer on staff. All WCCCC managers and staff receive ROMA training.

To fulfill services in outlying areas of the county, WCCCC has set up specific days for outreach. The outreaches are hosted in University Park, Bolingbrook, Braidwood, Wilmington, Frankfort, New Lenox, Plainfield, Lockport, Monee, and Crete Townships for at least one day a week.

The agency accepts both walk-in and scheduled appointments at the main office in Joliet. Intake also takes place at outreach locations. When a customer comes in they complete a Community Needs Assessment prior to meeting with the WCCCC intake worker. The intake worker then begins a conversation with the customer to talk about their needs. Then the intake worker will begin the application(s). The intake worker reviews all the documents brought in by the customer and uploads them into the data system. If additional documents are needed the customer is given a list of the needed items and the ways to submit them. Once the file is complete, a verifier reviews the file to determine if the file is approved or denied. The customer is notified if the file is approved or denied. If the customer needs services that WCCCC doesn't offer the customer will be referred to another agency.

3.2 Identify all underserved rural or metro communities in your geographical service area and steps you will take *(or have taken)* to improve your service provision to these areas.

Part of Joliet is accessible by public transportation; however, the public transportation system is scant throughout Will County, and most people get services through a private car or cab. We advise those who do not live near the Agency (Northern, Eastern, and Southern Will County) to visit various outreach sites where the WCCCC is regularly. Information about scheduled outreach dates is made known to the public via our website, and when a customer calls and inquires. To fulfill services in outlying areas of the county, WCCCC has set up specific days for outreach. The outreaches are hosted in University Park, Bolingbrook, Braidwood, Wilmington, Frankfort, New Lenox, Plainfield, Lockport, Monee, and Crete Townships for at least one day, in some cases, twice a week during the LIHEAP program year. At these outreach sites intake workers can take application for the services we offer.

The agency also offers other ways to apply such as email and US mail for those customers with transportation and/or mobility issues.

A study was completed that showed our agency has areas that are underserved in parts of Will County. The agency will be taking steps to improve service in those areas by entering a partnership with a marketing firm that will conduct major marketing activities such as but limited to live stream ads, YouTube, and every day direct mail.

United Way operates the new 211 system and WCCCC receives many referrals from them. Most people are calling for housing or utility assistance.

3.3 How do the services proposed remove obstacles and solve problems that block the achievement of self-sufficiency? (CSBG Act)

Because the agency does case management with clients that look at the entire household and evaluates on areas such as but not limited to housing, childcare, education, budgeting, health care, employment and nutrition this approach help address additional areas that could be an obstacles for self-sufficiency. These obstacles could be addressed within or outside of the agency services/programs.

3.4 Describe the process you used to prioritize the needs identified in your needs assessment to select your proposed work program. Be sure to identify how the proposed program addresses a priority need. (CSBG Act)(IL Economic Opportunity Act)

The agency analyzed the data from multiple sources, including Community Needs Surveys, Focus Groups, and Community Needs Surveys from Stakeholder. The data was ranked according to the top needs and then prioritized based on the lack of resources in the community, the highest demand, and other available resources. The work programs we are purposing have either a high demand and multiple resources are needed to support the demand, or there are limited resources for the service.

3.5 Complete the chart below to demonstrate how the Agency developed work programs based on your community needs assessment and planning process. Consult with a ROMA professional to complete this chart and assure the need meets the intended outcome. (Organizational Standards)

Need Statement	Work Program Name
Families with low-income can't afford school supplies.	2.021 School Supplies
Individuals with low-income need funding for higher education.	2.061 Educational Financial Aid Assistance
Individuals/families have limited financial literacy.	3.011 Training and Counseling Services
Individuals and families with low-income lack resources for tax preparation.	3.031 Asset Building
Individuals and families with low-income are at risk of eviction/foreclosure.	4.011 Housing Payment Assistance & 7.011 Case Management
Individuals and families with low-income lack access to affordable food.	5.071 & 5.072 Nutrition and Food/Meals

Individuals/families don't have access to reliable transportation.	7.011 Case Management
Individuals/families need access to reliable community resources.	7.031 Referrals
Individuals lack employment up to a living wage.	7.011 Case Management
Individuals/families need help with disaster relief	10.01 Disaster Relief

4 Linkages and Funding Coordination

4.1 How do you develop linkages to fill identified gaps in your service area through the provision of information, referral, case management, and follow-up? Please provide at least one example of how you developed linkages with another organization or organizations to address an identified gap in the past year. (CSBG Act)
The agency has a linkage with Will County's foreclosure court system and a team of attorneys to assist clients with avoiding foreclosure. In this linkage the agency has HUD Certified Housing Counselors on staff who work with the court system, the attorney and the clients to advocate for the client with the lenders to come to an affordable solution. This process is done through referrals from attorney's and/or court system, the housing counselor then completes case management with the client, once the process is complete the counselor will follow up with the client to ensure they are maintaining their housing. The intended outcome is to avoid homelessness in our community.
4.2 How do you coordinate the use of CSBG funding with other public and private resources? How do local and other resources work together with CSBG funding to meet needs in your area? (CSBG Act)
The agency has coordination with Will County Land Use that offers funding for several services such as, but not limited to, housing counseling activities, Down Payment Assistance Program, Tenant Based Rental Program, homeless services. One way this coordination works with CSBG funds is to assist with staffing needs, such as wages. The staff that case manage and/or counsels the client also work under CSBG to offer services to assistance clients on a more holistic approach to their needs. Another way CSBG funds coordinate with Will County Land Use is to meet the client financial assistance needs with things such as, but not limited to, housing, utilities, financial literacy, food and clothing.

4.3 Describe how you collaborate with other social service providers in your area, including religious organizations and charitable groups, to maximize resources, avoid duplication, and coordinate activities? (CSBG Act)
The agency has agreements with all the township offices in Will County, some of the senior buildings, and other social service agencies to do outreach at their locations to offer services not available within their organizations. The agency also has an Outreach Coordinator who is responsible for keeping the agency's resource guide up to date to avoid duplication of services and to educate staff of available services at other providers.

4.4 Describe how the Agency coordinates employment and training activities, including at a minimum, how the Agency coordinates with WIOA."? (CSBG Act)
Please attach your WIOA agreement in the Appendices (Instructions can be found in the *CAP Template Guide)* in addition to describing coordination of other employment and training services provided.
The agency has an Employment Coordinator on staff who works directly with WIOA through a referral system called Prime. This system allows WIOA and WCCCC to refer clients to each other depending on the client needs. The system requires a response from the party that receives the referral and follow-up is completed to ensure clients' needs have been addressed. The Employment Coordinator also assists clients in house with job readiness activities and coordinates with WIOA on possible opportunities for clients to enroll in programs such as, but not limited to, forklift training, CDL training, and CNA training. The agency also participates in the One-Stop with WIOA via skype when necessary. See attached WIOA agreement.

4.5 How does your Agency ensure people have access to nutritious food on an emergency basis? (CSBG Act)
Holsten Human Capital Development is a subgrantee of WCCCC. This subgrantee operates a food pantry and garden at Riverwalk Homes in Will County that is open twice a week. The available items include but are not limited to fruit, vegetables, bread, meat, dairy, and eggs. If there is ever a client that needs emergency assistance for food even if it's not on the day the pantry is open our agency can contact management staff at Riverwalk Home to open the pantry to allow client(s) to shop for their nutritious needs. The agency also has events throughout the year for that we distribute food boxes.

5 Youth Initiatives:

5.1 Describe how your agency will promote increased community coordination and collaboration in meeting the needs of youth, and support development and expansion of innovative community- based youth development programs such as the establishment of violence-free zones, youth mediation, youth mentoring, life skills training, job creation, entrepreneurship programs, after-school child care. (CSBG Act)
WCCCC participates and partners with the Joliet Fire Department's Community Care Response group. This group meets twice a month and has many community partners including Peace Over Violence, and The Living Room Mobile Crisis Response Team. Both organizations are promoting minimizing violence among youth and giving youth someone to call when they are having a crisis. The crisis response team usually responds to the referral within an hour. WCCCC and the others in the group can refer people to the case workers in these groups and help them to get the services they need.
5.2 Describe how your agency will use funds to support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives, which may include fatherhood and other initiatives, with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting. (CSBG Act)
The agency uses funds for staff to participate in these groups and refer families to these programs to strengthen the family. The agency also hosts an annual Healthy Homes, Healthy Families event. At the Healthy Homes, Healthy Families event families receive valuable community resources that are helpful to families. Last year over 700 people and 50 vendors were at the event.

6 Innovative Community and Neighborhood-Based Initiatives

6.1 Describe at least one innovative initiative or approach your Agency developed or implemented in the past year, or plans to develop in the coming year. (CSBG Act)
The agency implemented a paperless application process for LIHEAP application. In this process the clients can check themselves in from a QR code posted outside our office and then be added to the waitlist to be seen. When the client is seen by intake their information is directly uploaded to the LIHEAP system at time of intake. If the application is incomplete the customer is also given the website, they can use to upload documents to their application. The verification for LIHEAP is also paperless, the verifier's workstation is equipped with double monitors that allow them to have the LIHEAP system on one and the documents pulled up on the other. The process has decreased the time for verification tremendously, which allows the client benefits to be credit to the utility companies quicker, this is important when it comes to clients that are in danger of being disconnected or client that need their service reconnected. The paperless process has removed the burden of manually filing over 9,000 applications. Another recent initiative is a partnership with the Victim Services Courts. WCCCC receives referrals from the Victim Services Courts for customers who need to relocate to a new home due to being a victim of a crime. The Victim Services Courts refer clients to our TBRA Program. The customers meet monthly with a case manager and WCCCC helps with their rent for up to two years or once the customer can afford the rent on their own. This partnership is just beginning but is helping customer who are needing to move due to being a victim of a crime.

7 Disaster Preparedness

7.1 Does your agency have a written disaster plan in place that includes strategies on how to remain operational and continue providing services to low-income individuals and families during and following a disaster?
☒ Yes ☐ No

7.2 If so, when was the disaster plan last updated?	2023

7.3 Attach a copy of your plan in the appendices 7.4 Check box below that applies to your agency.
☐ Public Agency: Plan can be reviewed at agency ☒ Disaster Preparedness Plan Attached. ☐ Not Applicable

7.5 If your agency does not have a disaster plan, please Identify types of disasters that have occurred in your area that could impact low-income individuals and families.
N/A

7.6 If you do not have a written plan, or if your written plan does not include working with your community to address disasters, who do you partner with when a disaster occurs? *(i.e. Data Security Breach, Flooding, etc.)*	
☐ IEMA ☒ Red Cross ☐ V.O.A.D. (*Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster)* ☐ C.O.A.D. *(Community Organizations Active in Disaster)* ☒ County Offices of Emergency Management ☒ City Offices of Emergency Management ☒ Catholic Charities ☐ Community Foundations ☐ Farm Rescue	☐ IL Dept. of Public Health ☒ Health Departments ☒ FEMA ☐ Local Religious Charities ☒ Salvation Army ☒ United Way ☐ ICNA ☒ IT Security Firm ☐ Other *In the CAP Template Guide you can find additional potential resources and methods of contact.*
If 'Other' was marked above please list the partnerships below.	

8 Appendices

Please complete the table below by entering the title of the document and its assigned appendix letter.

Document Title	Appendix Item
Board Minutes from CAP Approval Board Meeting	A
WIOA Agreement	B
Disaster Preparedness Plan	C