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Commissioner

Christine L. Santaniello
Director

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF ECONOMIC & HOUSING STABILITY

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The Honorable Lucy Weber
Health and Human Services Oversight Committee
33 North State Street
Legislative Office Building, Room 205
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Representative Weber:

The mission of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is to assist communities and families in providing opportunities for citizens to achieve health and independence. The Division of Economic & Housing Stability (DEHS) works to provide support services to assist individuals and families towards reaching economic self-sufficiency. DEHS is one of the four Divisions included in the array of human services and behavioral health programs at DHHS.

DEHS was created in June 2018 to promote a more holistic, multi-generational and integrated approach for individuals, children, and families that may be in need of an array of supports and services, such as child care, housing, nutrition, economic and employment assistance. DEHS was purposely designed to provide supports and services to assist individuals and parents to engage successfully in employment by providing economic stability and work supports, and preventing the need for more intensive and costly interventions further downstream. Our vision for linking, aligning and elevating these program areas is to better target supports and services and promote whole family approaches, ensuring every door is the right door and laying a clearer pathway towards family self-sufficiency and well-being.

A way to look across the array of DEHS programs is through the lens of the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). The SDOH are economic, cultural, and social conditions that can affect a person's overall health. Determinants include where people are born, grow, live, work, learn, and age. Of these where individuals are on the social ladder of society, including economically, influences their well-being and success most. To improve opportunities for individuals' and families' health and self-sufficiency, programs and services should holistically address needs across the SDOH while strengthening protective factors and reducing risks.

It is the intent of DEHS to provide services aimed at eliminating or reducing the harmful effects of poverty on families and children by provide cash assistance and program supports that foster employment opportunities as a means to economic independence. DEHS manages the Community Services Block grant (CSBG) Program.

In accordance with the provisions of the Community Services Block grant (CSBG) Program, Subtitle B-Community Services block Grant Program, the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Economic & Housing Stability is providing the following information and a copy of the most recent status report for the State of New Hampshire CSBG State Plan.

The purpose of the CSBG is to assist States and local communities, working through a network of community action agencies, for the reduction of poverty, the revitalization of low-income communities, and the empowerment of individual's families who are low-income to become fully self-sufficient. By federal statute, the community action agencies (CAAs), as designated eligible entities, are to receive no less than 90% of the federal funds. The state may spend no more than 5% of the federal funds for administrative expenses and the remaining 5% is discretionary funding to support innovative programs and activities conducted by community action agencies to eliminate poverty, promote self-sufficiency, and promote community revitalization.

In total, the community action agencies (CAAs) receive approximately $86 million annually of federal funds to support programs and services to assist individual and families that are low-income, including youth and seniors, to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency. All services are coordinated with the State social service programs to ensure there is no duplication of services, and that the provision of services provided augment the services provided under the State's social service programs. Some examples of statewide services include the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP/FAP), Electrical Assistance Program (EAP), Weatherization Assistance Program, Utilities CORE Program, Home Program, Homeless Prevention, Workforce Investment Act and Head Start. All of the agencies provide assistance with housing.

CSBG funds are allocated to the five New Hampshire CAAs based on a formula that uses poverty demographics from the United States Census. This funding, as set forth in the NH CSBG State Plan, is to be used primarily to provide assistance to individuals and families what are at or below 125% of the poverty income guideline. CSBG funds can be used for administration and/or program support, to support a new grant proposal, to expand services and/or to expand the service area at the local level.

The CAAs submit to the Department of Health and Human Services an annual plan. In addition to governance information, the plan includes goals and objectives to support individuals and communities served.

The CSBG is essential to support the mission of the Department to join with communities and families to increase independence and self-sufficiency.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine L. Santaniello
Director