Whole-Family approach earns ACAP prestigious national designation

PRESQUE ISLE – Community Action Partnership, a national network of community action agencies, has welcomed Aroostook County Action Program, Inc., along with only ten CAP agencies nationwide, as a member of their Whole Family Approaches to Economic Mobility From Poverty Community of Practice – a designation that will propel forward ACAP’s holistic approach to moving families and individuals out of poverty.

ACAP views transformation to a whole-family (Two-Generation) approach as a pivotal factor in making an impact on poverty rates in the region. In Aroostook County, 23.4 percent of families with children under age 18 and 34.5 percent of children under age five live in poverty (2015 American Community Survey). The number of families with young children living in poverty has increased by 56 percent in five years. In response to this alarming data, ACAP leadership has engaged in nearly three years of researching and developing a service delivery model that considers a family’s situation as a whole, meeting the needs of both children and parents simultaneously, in an effort to lift families out of poverty.

“We are honored and humbled to have been selected for this designation through a competitive national process that invited only one percent of Community Action Agencies across the country. It is to the great credit of ACAP’s staff that we are celebrating our selection as a Community of Practice. Our team has worked hard to pioneer and advance the Whole Family Approach, also referred to as the Two-Generation Approach, to the extent that our efforts have been recognized nationally,” said ACAP Executive Director/CEO Jason Parent. “The training, technical assistance and support for staff that comes with this designation will directly benefit families across Aroostook County. It will allow us to expand our work to serve more individuals and families and, most importantly, help move them toward greater economic security.”

A two-generation approach that focuses on meeting the needs of parents (or caregivers) and children at the same time is a common-sense concept that has gained national momentum since the Obama Administration’s Rural IMPACT demonstration was implemented in 2015. As part of that initiative, ten demonstration sites across the country were chosen to develop two-generation models designed to reduce poverty in rural areas. Several private foundations adopted this idea of a multi-generation approach as a tool to successfully combat poverty. Among those private foundation leaders is the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which recently awarded a grant of $250,000 to the Community Action Partnership to design and implement the Community Action Economic Mobility Initiative. The funding supported design of a multi-tiered system of support for community action agencies pursuing multi-generation approaches to help families achieve mobility from poverty.

ACAP provides equal opportunity in employment and services
Community Action Partnership invited community action agencies nationwide to be part of this multi-tiered system of support at different levels. More than 150 agencies responded to the invitation. As part of the Community Action Economic Mobility Initiative, these agencies will receive training, technical assistance, peer support, networking opportunities and more depending on their varying levels of readiness to pursue integrated services and a whole family approach.

ACAP was welcomed into the Community of Practice tier of support along with ten other agencies from Maine to California. This top-level tier focuses on a whole family approach to economic mobility from poverty, and engages agencies who are ready, or have already taken decisive steps forward to shift to a whole family approach on a larger scale. Already, just weeks into the designation, a group of ACAP staff have engaged in opportunities to meet the other Community of Practice members to learn about where other agencies are in the process of adopting a whole family approach.

Aroostook County has resources, and ACAP stands ready to connect families to those resources. This designation will offer ACAP a tremendous opportunity to connect with other agencies for guidance and support through the process of implementing this new approach agency-wide. Ultimately, it is the people ACAP serves who will benefit most from ACAP’s designation as a Community of Practice, as ACAP incorporates what it learns into its service delivery.

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ACAP is celebrating 45 Years of Making Life Better in Aroostook County! ACAP provides the people of Aroostook County with services and resources that help individuals and families achieve greater economic independence. As a leader, or in partnership with others, ACAP provides guidance to the community in responding to emerging human needs in the areas of community health, early care and education, energy and housing, and workforce development services. For more information on ACAP, or to make a tax-deductible contribution, please contact the agency at 771 Main Street, on the web at www.acap-me.org, or by calling 764-3721.