

National Association of Community Action Agencies

Survey of Community Action and Faith-Based Organizations

Preliminary Findings

May 1, 2001

Community Action Agencies (CAAs) have a long and productive history of relationships with faith-based organizations (FBOs). To be ready to address the issues and seize the opportunities presented by the new federal Faith Based and Community Initiative, the National Association of Community Action Agencies (NACAA) developed its FBO survey and distributed it to more than 900 Community Action Agencies.

These initial findings describe the scope of FBO relationships among the 285 CAAs that responded to the survey—a return rate of approximately 30 percent. When completed, the report we develop from this survey information will paint a national picture of the relationships between CAAs and FBOs.

FBOs Are Involved in CAA Governance and Planning

- Among survey respondents, 21.9 percent have seats on their boards of directors reserved for FBOs under their agency bylaws.
- 68.4 percent have FBO representation on their agency board of directors.
- Among CAAs with FBO board representation, the average number of board members with FBO affiliation is 3.1.

CAAs Report Relationships with Various Types of FBOs

- 87 percent of respondents work with nonprofit, faith-based affiliate organizations.
- 73.7 percent work with individual houses of worship (e.g., churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples).
- 64.2 percent work with interfaith alliances and/or ministerial associations.

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FBOs Provide Resources for CAA Programs and Services

- 63 percent of CAAs report that they utilize volunteers from FBOs.
- On average, each of these CAAs obtains volunteers from 14.7 FBOs, and these FBOs provide 2,442 volunteer hours per year (more than the equivalent of a full-time person).
- The most common CAA services provided with assistance from FBO volunteers involve short term interventions to meet an immediate need—e.g., food, clothing, shelter, utility payments, services to the homeless, and holiday donations.
- 52.5 percent of respondents receive cash contributions from FBOs.
- 47.2 percent house programs in or provide services from space donated by FBOs.

CAAs and FBOs Work Together to Serve Low-Income Americans

- 40.4 percent of CAAs contract with FBOs to deliver services.
- 43.2 percent partner with FBOs on jointly operated projects.
- More than 97 percent of agencies report cross-referral of clients. CAAs refer clients to FBOs for services, and FBOs refer clients to CAAs for services.

Community Action & Faith-Based Organizations

- CAAs have a long and productive history of relationships with churches, synagogues, religiously affiliated charities, and other religious organizations. Community Action over the past 36 years has demonstrated a model for these organizations to work together to deliver services in their communities.
 - ◆ Individual churches and interfaith alliances were involved in the creation of CAAs and have continued to support them over the years.
- The CAA model is locally based and inclusive, is governed by a board of directors comprised of community volunteers, and meets local needs identified by the community.
 - ◆ The relationships between CAAs and local religious institutions have developed from a common interest in solving local problems.
 - ◆ They enable organizations representing many sects and denominations to work together to build community and at the same time carry out their own social mission.
- The CAA model has grown since 1964 to create a comprehensive program that integrates services, mobilizes resources, and fosters collaboration and coordination.
 - ◆ Individual faith-based organizations and other community partners collaborate based upon their interests, commitment, and capacity.
 - ◆ CAAs use the stability and flexibility of Community Services Block Grant funding to provide technical assistance, management structure, and accountability.
- Government policies addressing FBOs should encourage and support collaboration and community building rather than competition and divisiveness.
 - ◆ FBOs should be held to the same program guidelines and standards of accountability as secular grantees.
 - ◆ New programs should not create fragmentation and duplication of services (i.e., FBO-based services with secular alternatives).
 - ◆ Government should redirect its efforts to increase overall funding for human services programs, rather than encourage a redesign of the service delivery system, so both existing and potential service providers will have sufficient funding to meet the needs of low-income Americans.



The National Association of
Community Action Agencies (NACAA)

"Helping People Help Themselves"

NEWS RELEASE

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NACAA RELEASES INITIAL RESULTS FROM SURVEY ON FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Results indicate strong partnerships between FBOs and Community Action Agencies

WASHINGTON, DC – Community Action Agencies (CAAs) partner with churches, synagogues, religiously affiliated charities, and other religious organizations in a variety of ways that address a range of community needs, according to a national survey. Preliminary findings from the *Community Action & Faith-Based Organizations* survey, conducted by the National Association of Community Action Agencies (NACAA), will be released today during NACAA's annual Policy Forum at the Washington Court Hotel.

The survey indicates that the nature of partnerships between CAAs and faith-based organizations (FBOs) varies. More than 97 percent of responding CAAs report cross-referral of clients with FBOs. Forty percent contract with FBOs to deliver services, and 43.2 percent operate projects jointly with FBOs. Sixty-three percent of CAAs get volunteers from FBOs, and the majority of these volunteers assist with immediate needs such as food, clothing, shelter, utility payments, and holiday donations. Survey findings also illustrate that CAAs have relationships with various types of FBOs. Eighty-seven percent work with non-profit, faith-based affiliated organizations; 73.7 percent work with places of worship; and 64.2 percent work with interfaith alliances or ministerial associations.

Responding CAAs believe that government policies addressing FBOs should encourage collaboration and community building rather than competition and divisiveness. Specific recommendations include:

- FBOs should be held to the same program guidelines and standards of accountability as secular grantees.
- New programs should not create fragmentation and duplication of services.
- Government should redirect its efforts to increasing overall funding for human services programs to include new providers, rather than encourage a redesign of the service delivery system.

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The survey results represent responses from 285 CAAs, about a 30 percent return rate. “We wanted to illustrate the successful collaborations CAAs have had with religious organizations in their communities for 36 years,” said NACAA Executive Director John Buckstead. “The survey results will help us respond to the issues and opportunities presented by the new Faith-Based Initiative.”

Today’s Policy Forum features the release of the survey data during a panel on relationships between CAAs and FBOs. The panel will educate participants on the Faith-Based Initiative and ways in which CAAs already partner with FBOs. Once completed, NACAA will use the survey report to educate policy makers and the general public about the long-standing and productive collaboration of CAAs and FBOs in serving low-income people and solving community problems.

Based in Washington, DC, NACAA is the national association representing the interests of the 1,000 Community Action Agencies (CAAs) organized to fight poverty at the local level. CAAs comprise the premiere network in community building, service delivery, and low-income advocacy in this country. For more information on NACAA and CAAs, visit the association's Web site at www.nacaa.org.

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