Overview

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. is referred to as COI throughout this document, is a not-for-profit, community-based organization classified as a Community Action Agency. Incorporated in 1965 under the auspices of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the agency has a broad mandate to design and implement programs addressing and/or ameliorating local needs and conditions which foster poverty. COI holds a number of other designations, which include:

- A registered New York State charity
- NYS designated Rural Preservation Company
- Community Development Corp.
- A United Way Agency
- Empire Zone Coordinator
- Key participant in the activities of the Champion Community
- Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8)
- Member of Rural Housing Advocates
- Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO)
- WIC and Head Start provider
- NYS designated family day care training and certification agency
- Licensed day care center and home care provider
- Certified Family Development Trainer
- State funded resource and referral program for child care
- Licensed runaway and homeless shelter provider

All COI programs provide services that strengthen and empower individuals and families toward the goal of self-sufficiency.

As mandated by federal legislation, a tripartite board of directors governs COI. Its fifteen members represent the target sector (low-income), private sector and public sector.

COI has a well-established presence among the network of service providers in the region. With an annual budget of over $13,500,000 and a staff of 200 full-time and 200 part time employees, its programs are funded by federal, state, and local grants, as well as private contracts.

COI operates over 65 programs through an integrated and coordinated services delivery system and economic opportunity network. Current areas of program concentration include: Youth, Early Child Care and Education, Housing and Community Services, Health and Homecare Services, and Economic Development.
The economic development programs operated by COI have been transferred to an affiliate corporation, Chautauqua Opportunities for Development Inc. (CODI). This corporation has recently been designated a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) by the US Department of Treasury.

A number of partnerships with other not for profit corporations have been established by COI including: New Enterprises (NEI), which facilitates economic development and real estate projects; and Chautauqua Connections, a partnership between COI and the Resource Center that focuses on early intervention for children and families. COI has established linkages with local service providers, municipalities and financial institutions to provide enhanced, unduplicated services to its customers, as well as opportunities to participate in local planning efforts.

COI recently linked with the National Community Action Partnership (NCAP), which represents one thousand community action agencies across the United States. The NCAP logo is a symbol recognized by individuals and families across the country, that agencies displaying the logo provide supportive services and a helping hand out of poverty.

For easy access to services throughout the county, COI maintains several office locations. Programs operate in the north county at the Community Action Center North, Connections North and the Early Childhood Community Center. In the south county, services are provided at Laughlin Community Action Agency, the Westgate Building, and Connections South and at the Youth Safe House. The agency also offers services to outlying rural areas of the county.

The following areas are assessed:

Volunteerism
Public Safety
Transportation
Technology & Communication
Economic Development
Welfare to Work
Housing
Health, Mental Health, and Dental
Early Childhood Services
Youth

Acknowledgements

The chapter entitled Health, Mental Health, and Dental arrives at the following recommendations:

- Advocate for higher Medicaid reimbursement rates to increase number of providers.
- Mandate co-pays for public health insurance users to prevent misuse.
- Increase numbers of non-emergency care clinics for easier access and less costly medical care.
- Restructure services in a centralized location to provide family based care via a consortium of partnerships.
• Advocate for increased medical, dental and mental health providers' acceptance of public health patients.
• Increase number of bi-lingual health professionals.
• Improve pre-pregnancy health education and case management services to promote healthy birth outcomes.
• Screen and educate pregnant women on the dangers of lead poisoning and encourage follow-up by pediatricians.
• Link with other agencies to provide a consistent approach that is culturally and economically sensitive to target populations in providing health information and promoting the benefits of prevention and early detection.
• Provide incentives for healthy lifestyles.
• Link with other agencies to provide a consistent approach and message.
• Advocate for the attachment of free or low cost physical fitness programs to Medicaid managed-care programs.
• Promote nutritious school menus and decrease access to "junk" foods sold in schools.
• Expand programs that provide nutritional meals and education to the elderly.
• Encourage employers and educational settings to provide opportunities for physical activities, health education and screenings.
• Advocate for the enactment of legislation that provides for parity of mental health and chemical dependency in health insurance plans.
• Advocate for recruitment of additional mental health providers for children and adolescents.