

OACAA Members Receive Housing Assistance Grants

Seven Community Action Agencies in Ohio will receive just over \$1 million to help improve low-income families' living conditions, thanks to a program funded by the Ohio Housing Trust Fund.

The seven agencies will receive Housing Assistance Grants from the Ohio Department of Development's Office of Housing and Community Partnerships, announced by ODOD March 14. In all, \$6 million was awarded to 27 nonprofits touching 62 Ohio counties for home repair and down payment assistance.

According to the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies' *2010 State of Poverty in Ohio* report, safe and affordable housing provides stability for families to enable them to maintain employment, stay in school, or pursue other activities that can help them move out of poverty.

Housing costs typically represent the largest share of a family's budget, and a family paying more than 30% of their income for housing (rent or mortgage and utilities) is considered "housing cost burdened." Many low-income households are housing cost-burdened and must choose between paying for housing and other essential costs such as food, transportation, and child care.

Providing affordable housing options is a key strategy for moving people out of poverty. In addition, affordable and fiscally sound home purchase strategies can help families start the process of accumulating assets.

"Organizations around Ohio depend on this support to better serve their communities," said William Graves, Director of the Department's Community Development Division. "These investments ensure that our most vulnerable citizens have adequate living conditions."

The funding will assist more than 5,000 Ohioans and leverage more than \$3.9 million in other public and private investments. Statewide, the grants will assist in the repair of 2,250 homes and 485 households will receive down payment assistance.

Hocking Athens Perry Community Action will use its \$200,000 award to repair 50 homes with health and safety issues, said Executive Director Doug Stanley. The agency has operated the program since 1997 thanks to Housing Assistance Grants.

The Housing Assistance Grant Program provides grants through a competitive application process to eligible nonprofit organizations to promote affordable housing opportunities and improve housing conditions for low-income families and individuals. Activities include emergency home repair, handicapped accessibility modifications, down payment assistance and homebuyer education.

Other Community Action Agencies receiving the grants were:

- Lima-Allen Council on Community Affairs, Allen County, \$100,000
- Erie-Huron Counties Community Action Commission, \$140,000
- Lancaster-Fairfield Community Action, Fairfield County, \$100,000
- Community Action Commission of Fayette County, \$198,000
- Gallia-Meigs Counties Community Action Agency, \$90,000
- Community Action Commission of Portage County, \$200,000