

CAASTLC Begins Strategic Planning Process!

By: Doug Eller

Every three years CAASTLC is required to re-evaluate our programming to determine whether our services have effectively addressed our mission of empowering low-income people to become self-sufficient. CAASTLC is currently in the process of developing our strategic plan, which describes how we will move forward over the next three year period to work towards that goal. A comprehensive community needs assessment will help provide vision in the planning process for such development by providing important information about where gaps or overlap in community services lie. Community needs assessments help agencies in the planning process by providing the foundation for strategic operational planning, assessing if the agency is meeting the needs of the community, and determining which programs or projects may have become obsolete and which others may provide opportunities for growth. Then, CAASTLC can begin to create change by setting a framework for programs and plans that work toward ending poverty or stabilizing families.

Information from the 2014 needs assessment is still being collected and entered from surveys completed by clients, community members, and stakeholders, as well as from four mini-focus groups conducted in the service region. Thus far, CAASTLC has completed 216 surveys and statistically analyzed the responses to identify the gaps in services as well as the most critical needs of the community. The preliminary survey information identifies the five top critical needs as:

1. access to jobs and job fairs
2. energy assistance
3. affordable housing
4. job readiness education
5. food assistance

The top five critical needs identified by the focus groups differ slightly. They are:

1. affordable housing
2. transportation
3. burial assistance
4. employment
5. affordable health care.

Respondents identified community strengths in the number of resources and programs offered in the community, community awareness and support, and caring service professionals and schools. Committees of Board members will use this information during the review process to craft a new perspective that will guide CAASTLC to tailor, revise, or refine our programs to better serve our clients.

The strategic planning process is just getting underway. The Board Retreat was held over the last weekend in May, and the Board members have formed committees focusing on programs in eight different areas, including health, education, employment, housing, family support, support of basic needs, community collaborations, and politics. Among other things, program priorities include increasing mental health resources; promoting economic opportunities; providing better access to education and jobs with a living wage; developing safe and affordable housing; and continuing to provide services to support basic individual, family, and community needs. All of these services are offered to provide a path towards success for our clients, and CAASTLC looks forward to empowering people to change their lives and for all of us to walk together towards ending poverty.