

The OCS Grantees' Meeting for State Community Action Agency Associations

by Jovita Tolbert

The OCS grantees' meeting for State Community Action Agency Associations was held March 6-8, 2005. The meeting featured a number of engaging speakers and sessions. The day of the 6th served as an orientation for new Executive Directors of Community Action Agency Associations while the 7th was dedicated to a "Media and Message Training", led by trainers from *douglas gould & company*. The Media and Message Training session provided valuable insight into how we can make a positive impact communicating our message through the media.

On the 8th, the day began with a brief talk from Margaret Washnitzer, Director of the Division of State Assistance, who encouraged participants to talk more about the community development that happens as a result of the work of Community Action. Following Dr. Washnitzer was The Future of Community Action: Session I. During this session, participants had the chance to discuss the role that state associations play in helping their states reduce poverty and strengthen communities. Then, in the second round of The Future of Community Action, there were several breakout sessions which included *Community Mobilization and Revitalization, Leadership and Governance, Family Economic Security and Asset Building, and Financial Management and Integrity*. The breakout sessions gave participants an opportunity to discuss how their states were addressing the aforementioned and what tools are needed to carry out these efforts.

Notably, the next session was dedicated to informing participants about new initiatives. The first initiative mentioned was *United We Ride: Coordinating Human Service Transportation*. Under this program, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, and partners at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Labor, and Education, support a range of technical assistance initiatives for coordinating human service transportation to enhance the mobility and transportation options for all citizens. More information can be found at: <http://www.unitedweride.gov/>. The other initiative mentioned was presented by Dan Evans, Health Insurance Specialist from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Mr. Evans talked about partnering with Community Action Agencies to help seniors take advantage of the \$600 tax credit and to inform all of their constituents about the new outpatient prescription drug coverage. For more information you may refer to Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Partnership Information Memorandum 83 or contact Dan Evans at devans3@cms.hhs.gov.

Subsequently, there was a session entitled OCS and State Associations. During this session Margaret Washnitzer explained that the FY 2005 budget will probably be announced to states and state associations soon. Moreover, she talked briefly about the Administration for Children and Families Logic Model and explained that Mid-Iowa Community Action is one of many training/technical assistance vendors available to the network. Next, during a session on Making Good Technology Decisions, the participants were encouraged to view technology as a strategic advantage, be able to understand the data outcomes, institute an Information Technology task force, and allow technology to be available to all levels of staff. A session on Domestic Violence and Community Action closed out the event. Noting that, in many cases, domestic violence is connected to poverty, this session promoted a partnership between the efforts of domestic violence

programs and community action agencies. For more information contact, Andrea C. Farney, Policy Analyst with the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, at acf@pcadv.org.