



# Community Action Organization of Scioto County’s Employment and Workforce Development Interventions

## Summary

Community Action Organization (CAO) of Scioto County is a community hub that offers a variety of services to adults and youth from households with low incomes. CAO offers services in five main divisions: employment and workforce development, early childhood development, social services, energy conservation, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). This case study focuses on the employment and workforce development division’s intervention as of 2020. In this intervention, adults and youth who express interest in workforce development services discuss their goals and identify next steps with a career specialist. The intervention offers a variety of programs and services, including work experience, adult education, training, and job skills assessments. Participants also have access to behavioral health counselors and navigators to help support other needs. Youth ages 14 to 24 who are either in school or out of school with barriers to employment have access to the Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program (CCMEP). CCMEP provides employment, training, and education services to eligible youth and aims to improve their education and employment outcomes.

## Funding source



CAO’s annual budget is \$18 million; one-quarter of this goes toward the employment and workforce development division. CAO’s employment and workforce development services are funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other grants from the U.S. Department of Labor and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Behavioral health and substance use disorder counseling is funded through a fee-for-service model that is billed to Medicaid or private insurance.

## Services provided



Case management;  
Financial incentives;  
Health services (*Substance use disorder treatment and mental health services*); Work and work-based learning (*Work experience*);  
Work readiness activities (*Job search assistance*)

## Populations served

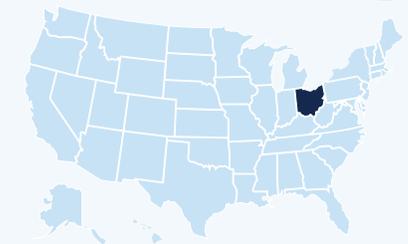


CAO’s employment and workforce development intervention focuses on serving individuals and families in Scioto County with low incomes, many of whom have barriers to employment. CCMEP serves youth ages 14 to 24 in Scioto County who are either in school or out of school, have low incomes, and have barriers to employment.

## Setting



Scioto County, OH.



## Year first implemented

1965 (ongoing at the time of data collection)

## What are case studies?

Case studies provide practitioners with information about innovative interventions that states, counties, community-based organizations, or other entities are undertaking to improve employment outcomes for TANF participants and other individuals with low incomes, especially public assistance recipients. **Case studies cover interventions not included elsewhere in the Clearinghouse because they have not yet been rigorously evaluated.**

CAO's CCMEP integrates funding from the WIOA Title I youth program and the state's TANF block grant. In general, youth who are in school are funded through TANF, and youth who are out of school and youth follow-up activities are funded through WIOA.

## Intervention description



CAO is a multiservice community hub that offers a variety of services to adults and youth from households with low incomes in Scioto County. The goal of CAO is to support community members in advancing their education and job skills, attaining employment, developing life skills, and improving their behavioral health and well-being. CAO is one of the few community action agencies in Ohio that provides workforce services; it has expanded these services to include a behavioral health unit to better serve community members as the county faces continued high rates of prescription painkiller and opioid misuse. CAO's employment and workforce division administers WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker and Youth programs and CCMEP, and it operates the OhioMeansJobs American Job Center.

At CAO, adults and youth who are seeking workforce development services complete an intake form with information on employment, education, any barriers they face, and their service interests. Participants then have an initial intake meeting with a youth or adult career specialist. At this meeting, they discuss their goals and identify next steps. The participant next meets with a career specialist for an eligibility meeting. Once eligibility is determined, clients might then be referred to training, jobs, work experience, adult education, or CCMEP, depending on their eligibility and interests. CAO's key services and programs are as follows:

- **Employment services.** Participants can engage in education and training services to help them prepare for work, and they can access WIOA and other employment services through the American Job Center. The American Job Center hosts workshops to help participants with job searches, résumé writing, and interview skills. Participants also have access to career specialists who provide case management to support them as they access services. Senior career specialists supervise the specialists who provide case management, and the

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specialists receive ongoing training to support service delivery, such as training on motivational interviewing and helping participants set goals.

As part of the employment services, participants have access to behavioral health services. Many families in the region face barriers to work that are related to substance use disorders and poverty. CAO decided to offer behavioral health services within the workforce development division to meet the needs of the community, with the understanding that employment services alone would not be sufficient. At the time of data collection, the behavioral health unit offered a clinical supervisor, two family navigators, and three licensed counselors who provided intensive case management; trauma-informed counseling; referrals to partners, including substance use and behavioral health specialists; and other treatment services. All three CAO counselors were licensed social workers and had caseloads of 40 to 55 participants. The clinical supervisor was a licensed counselor with an early childhood mental health credential who also maintained a similar-sized caseload. Both family navigators were mental health specialists. The family navigator role was a new position at CAO, so they maintained smaller caseloads of three or four participants each.

- **CCMEP.** CCMEP is an innovative, statewide program that integrates funding from WIOA and TANF. It provides youth who are either in school or out of school with a variety of services with the goal of helping them improve their educational and employment outcomes and find a way out of poverty. These services include career counseling, work experience, and financial incentives. At intake, youth career specialists assess youth to understand their math and reading levels, interests, mental health and substance use, and service needs. The specialists also work to understand youth's goals and make referrals to family navigators, counselors, or other

outside services, as needed. Youth can participate in up to 750 hours of paid work experience at any work site. Youth are also eligible to receive financial incentives. These incentives range from about \$20 to \$100 and are provided to youth who complete goals related to school attendance, degree completion, grade point averages, workshop completion, and work participation. Youth can exit the program through multiple avenues—such as enrolling in a postsecondary or military institution, receiving Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income, applying for services with the Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, failing to engage in CCMEP services, or becoming ineligible for TANF or WIOA funding.

CAO is well known within the community, so many people learn about its services through word of mouth. CAO also works closely with partner organizations to receive new referrals, to refer CAO participants to outside services, and to avoid duplication of services. Key partners include county courts and criminal justice agencies, public mental health providers, addiction treatment and recovery system administrators, education providers, and local businesses and employers. For example, CAO has partnerships with local colleges and universities such as Shawnee State University and Scioto County Career Technical Center.

As of 2020, CAO planned to continue improving its services. The organization intended to continue to collaborate with partners to more effectively provide services and avoid duplication of services. It also wanted to hire a peer support specialist for the behavioral health unit to help participants with substance use disorders. In addition, CAO planned to strengthen services for youth to prevent their involvement in the criminal justice system.

## Research on intervention to date



***This intervention has not been rigorously evaluated for effectiveness.*** There have not been any evaluations of the effects of CAO’s employment and workforce development services. However, CAO tracks data on participant education, training, employment, median earnings, measurable skill gains, and credential attainment outcomes.

The intervention was selected as one of nine innovative interventions supporting the employment of people with low incomes in the State TANF Case Studies project, funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. These nine interventions are described in a series of in-depth, descriptive case studies. The CAO case study documented information on the interventions CAO offers, including populations served; funding; measurements of participant progress; and promising practices, challenges, and lessons learned. The case study team obtained this information through a site visit, including observations of program activities and interviews with participants, staff, and leaders; document reviews; and a follow-up telephone call about how the program responded to the COVID-19 public health emergency (Ochoa and Holcomb 2021).

## Case study information sources

The primary source of information for this case study was the State TANF Case Studies report described earlier, which collected information via a site visit in February 2020 and a telephone call in August 2020, as well as document reviews. The Pathways Clearinghouse shared a draft of this case study with CAO and incorporated revisions for accuracy and completeness. For more information about the methods for selecting and developing the case studies, please see the [Protocol for Pathways Clearinghouse Case Studies on the Pathways Clearinghouse project page](#).

## More information



More information on this intervention is available at <http://www.caosciotocounty.org>.

Community Action Organization of Scioto County (2015). *2015–2017 needs assessment*, Portsmouth, OH: Community Action Organization of Scioto County. Available at <http://www.caosciotocounty.org/15.17.Needs.Assessment.pdf>.

Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (2019). *Ohio economic profile: Scioto County*, Ohio: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Ochoa, L., and P. Holcomb (2021). *Case study of an employment program for youth and services for families: Community Action Organization of Scioto County*, OPRE Report #2021-72, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/case-study-employment-program-youth-and-services-families-community-action-organization>.

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