



*Helping  
people.  
Changing  
lives.*



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

# Letter from the Executive Director

We navigated a turbulent year, which began and ended with threats to our funding. Throughout, we have continued to deliver quality services to clients in Jackson, George and Harrison Counties. More people accessed our food pantry as food insecurity increased. Thank you to our many partners, such as Ingalls Shipbuilding, for donating to the food pantry in anticipation of increased demand. Thank you to our steadfast employees for remaining focused on the mission. I am beyond grateful for your commitment. Thank you to the Board and Policy Council for providing leadership and critical guidance to the management team. Most importantly, thank you to the community for allowing us to serve you. For trusting us to bring you timely information and resources to improve your standard of living. Community Action will continue to forge ahead in the coming year.

Sincerely,  
Vanessa Gibson  
Executive Director



**Vanessa Gibson**  
Executive Director



**Lee Ann Kendrick**  
Adult Services Director



**Tiffany Bradley**  
Finance Director



**Tayonka Thomas**  
Children's Services Director



**Kelli Green**  
Human Resources Manager

## Board of Directors



**Donna Stewart**  
Vice Chairman



**Nancy Jo Maples**

**Not Pictured:**

**Lauren Kelley**  
Chairman

**Rhonda Odom**  
**Yolanda Flint**

## Mission

It is our mission to provide quality services that empower the community and foster independence.

## Vision

Our vision is to be the standard of excellence in developing and delivering quality, responsive services.

## Independent Auditors Report

In addition to regular reviews and self-assessments, an independent audit is performed annually.

Areas of review include internal control over financial reporting and tests of compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, grants and other matters.

## Opinion on Each Major Federal Program

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Community Action of South Mississippi, Inc. (a nonprofit organization, which comprises the statement of financial position as of September 30, 2024, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Community Action of South Mississippi, Inc. as of September 30, 2024, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.



**Dr. Regina Watts**  
Secretary



**Kimberly Weary**



**Christian Hartley**  
Finance Chair



**Myra Cunningham**



**Carlos Moulds**  
Personnel Chair



**Lisa Hudgins**



**Letha Bolton**  
Planning Chair

## Policy Council Purpose

The CASOMS Head Start Policy Council is a vital governance body responsible for ensuring that the program meets the needs of children and families through shared decision-making and oversight. CASOMS Policy Council provides parents with a voice in program planning, policies, and operations, fostering family engagement and community collaboration. It plays a crucial role in approving budgets, policies, and program plans, ensuring compliance with Head Start Performance Standards and federal regulations. The council is composed of eight (8) parent representatives and five (5) community leaders, ensuring a balanced representation of both enrolled families and external expertise.

## Composition

Parent Representatives (8): Elected from each program site, with higher representation from Moss Point and Pascagoula due to larger enrollment. One representative advocates for the Early Head Start (EHS) program, representing parents and expectant families.

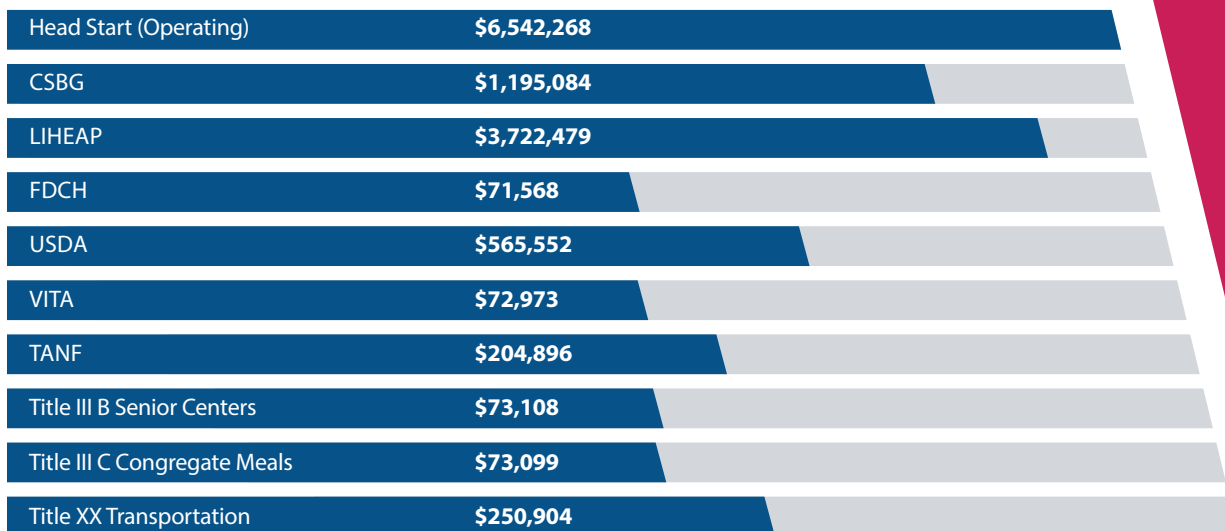
Community Leaders (5): Selected based on expertise in education, healthcare, social services and child development. Current representatives include:

- A librarian, supporting early literacy initiatives
- A doctor, providing insight on child health and wellness
- Teachers, offering expertise in early childhood education
- Former Head Start parents, ensuring continued advocacy for families

This collaborative structure strengthens program decision-making, enhances services, and ensures community and parental input guide CASOMS Head Start's success.

## Federal Programs

### REVENUE FOR FY2024



## Policy Council

### COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Dr. LaToya Worthen,  
Arlington Elementary, Principal

Dr. Chiazio Nnawuchi,  
Pediatric Care Physician

Lisa Hudgins,  
MGCCC, Early Childhood  
Education Instructor

Elizabeth Murphy,  
Ina Thompson Moss Point Library,  
Branch Manager

### PARENT REPRESENTATIVES

#### MOSS POINT

Hannah McNair

Jason Ray

Makayla Lodrigue

Katlin Woods (ALT)

#### PASCAGOULA

Krista Stallworth

Alexis Keys (ALT)

April Hickman (ALT)

#### GAUTIER

Terrance Trussell

Lyn Le Trussell

#### OCEAN SPRINGS

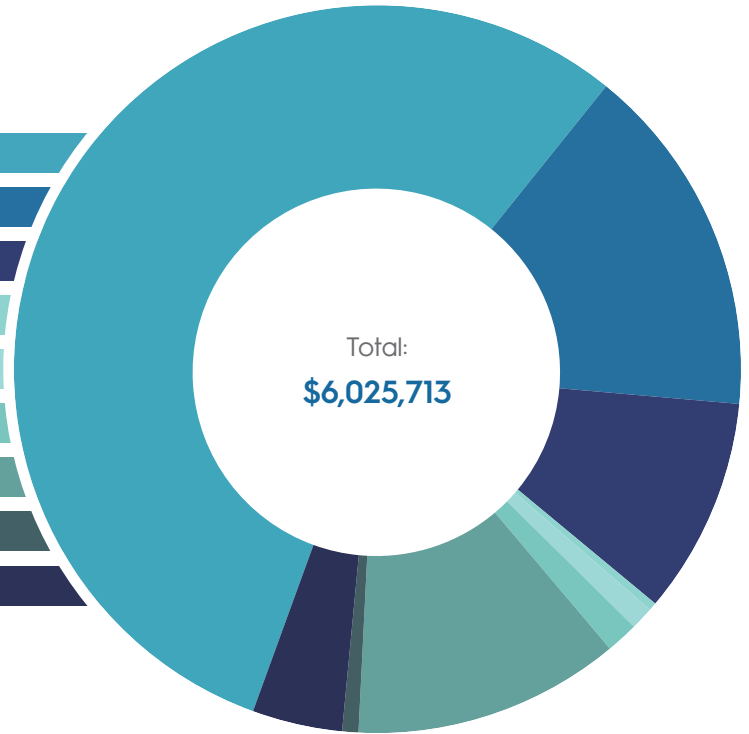
Aundra Bishop,  
Policy Council Chair

Destiny Arrington (ALT)

# Head Start Budget

## HEAD START / EHS EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024 (7/1/2024 - 4/30/2025)

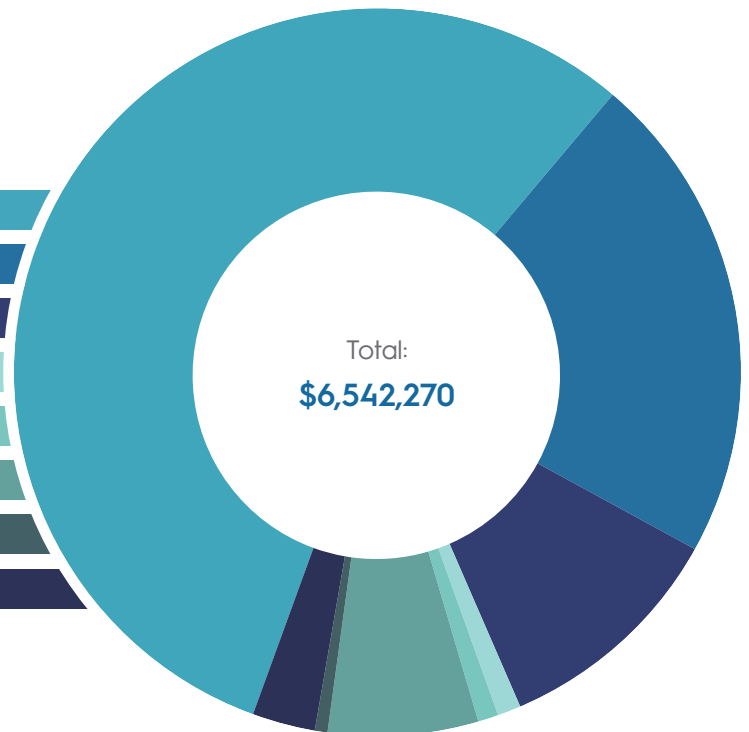
|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Personnel         | \$3,327,116 |
| Fringe Benefits   | \$940,830   |
| Indirect Costs    | \$580,441   |
| Equipment         | \$21,846    |
| Travel & Training | \$61,307    |
| Supplies          | \$86,420    |
| Contractual       | \$720,515   |
| Other*            | \$43,851    |
| Miscellaneous**   | \$243,387   |



# Head Start Budget

## HEAD START / EHS EXPENDITURES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 (7/1/2025 - 4/30/2026)

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Personnel         | \$3,636,759 |
| Fringe Benefits   | \$1,426,620 |
| Indirect Costs    | \$688,647   |
| Travel & Training | \$68,432    |
| Supplies          | \$59,850    |
| Contractual       | \$440,202   |
| Other*            | \$37,140    |
| Miscellaneous**   | \$184,620   |



\* Expenses listed under Other include: food-other, medical and dental services, field trips, parent activity, fuel, and awards/incentives.

\*\* Expenses listed under Misc include: utilities, lease payments, repairs, maintenance, facility maintenance and telephone.

# Head Start Enrollment

## FUNDED ENROLLMENT

436

## CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT

478

# Head Start Eligibility

## INCOME AT OR BELOW 100%

132

## DISABILITY / SPECIAL NEEDS

17

## PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

261

## OVER INCOME

23

## FOSTER CARE

7

## PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED

95.18%

## HOMELESS

38

# Head Start Primary Language

English

439

Spanish

36

East Asian

2

Dual Language

42

American Sign Language

1

# Head Start Demographics

## AMERICAN INDIAN

2 Hispanic/Latino

0 Non Hispanic

## ASIAN

2 Hispanic/Latino

2 Non Hispanic

## BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN

9 Hispanic/Latino

305 Non Hispanic

## NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER

0 Hispanic/Latino

0 Non Hispanic

## WHITE

46 Hispanic/Latino

72 Non Hispanic

## BIRACIAL OR MULTI-RACIAL

10 Hispanic/Latino

30 Non Hispanic



# Head Start Physical Health

## HEAD START CHILDREN AT ENROLLMENT

### CHILDREN WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

437

### ENROLLED IN MEDICAID / CHIP

421

### CHILDREN WITH ONGOING SOURCE OF CONTINUOUS, ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

321

### HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BY A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL TO BE UP-TO-DATE ON ALL IMMUNIZATIONS

140

## HEAD START CHILDREN AT END OF ENROLLMENT

### CHILDREN WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

418

### ENROLLED IN MEDICAID / CHIP

404

### CHILDREN WITH ONGOING SOURCE OF CONTINUOUS, ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

416

### HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BY A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL TO BE UP-TO-DATE ON ALL IMMUNIZATIONS

293

### CHILDREN WHO ARE UP-TO-DATE ON A SCHEDULE OF AGE-APPROPRIATE PREVENTATIVE AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, ACCORDING TO THE RELEVANT STATE'S EPSDT SCHEDULE FOR WELL CHILD CARE

409

### CHILDREN WHO HAVE RECEIVED TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC CONDITIONS

12

## Head Start BodyMass Index

### UNDERWEIGHT

16

### HEALTHY WEIGHT

255

### OVERWEIGHT

53

### OBESE

116

The agency has implemented the following programs to combat childhood obesity; The Organwise Guys, which empowers kids to be healthy and smart from the inside out! Color Me Healthy will get children excited about eating smart and moving more. The 5210 programs to educate children and families on good nutrition and exercise (Aim for five fruits and vegetables every day, keep recreational screen time to 2 hours or less every day, include at least 1 hour or more of active play every day, and skip sugar-sweetened beverages, drink more water every day.)

## Head Start Dental Health

**CHILDREN WITH A DENTIST AT ENROLLMENT**

293

**CHILDREN WITH A DENTIST AT END OF ENROLLMENT**

414

**NEEDED TREATMENT**

42

**RECEIVED TREATMENT**

14

## Head Start Disabilities Services

**ENROLLED WITH IEP**

32

**EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE**

0

**DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY**

11

**AUTISMS SPECTRUM DISORDER**

5

**SPEECH OR LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT**

20



# Early Head Start Physical Health

## EARLY HEAD START CHILDREN AT ENROLLMENT

### CHILDREN WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

104

### ENROLLED IN MEDICAID / CHIP

98

### CHILDREN WITH ONGOING SOURCE OF CONTINUOUS, ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

86

## EARLY HEAD START CHILDREN AT END OF ENROLLMENT

### CHILDREN WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

98

### ENROLLED IN MEDICAID / CHIP

92

### CHILDREN WITH ONGOING SOURCE OF CONTINUOUS, ACCESSIBLE HEALTH CARE

98

### HAVE BEEN DETERMINED BY A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL TO BE UP-TO-DATE ON ALL IMMUNIZATIONS

96

### CHILDREN WHO ARE UP-TO-DATE ON A SCHEDULE OF AGE-APPROPRIATE PREVENTATIVE AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, ACCORDING TO THE RELEVANT STATE'S EPSDT SCHEDULE FOR WELL CHILD CARE

67

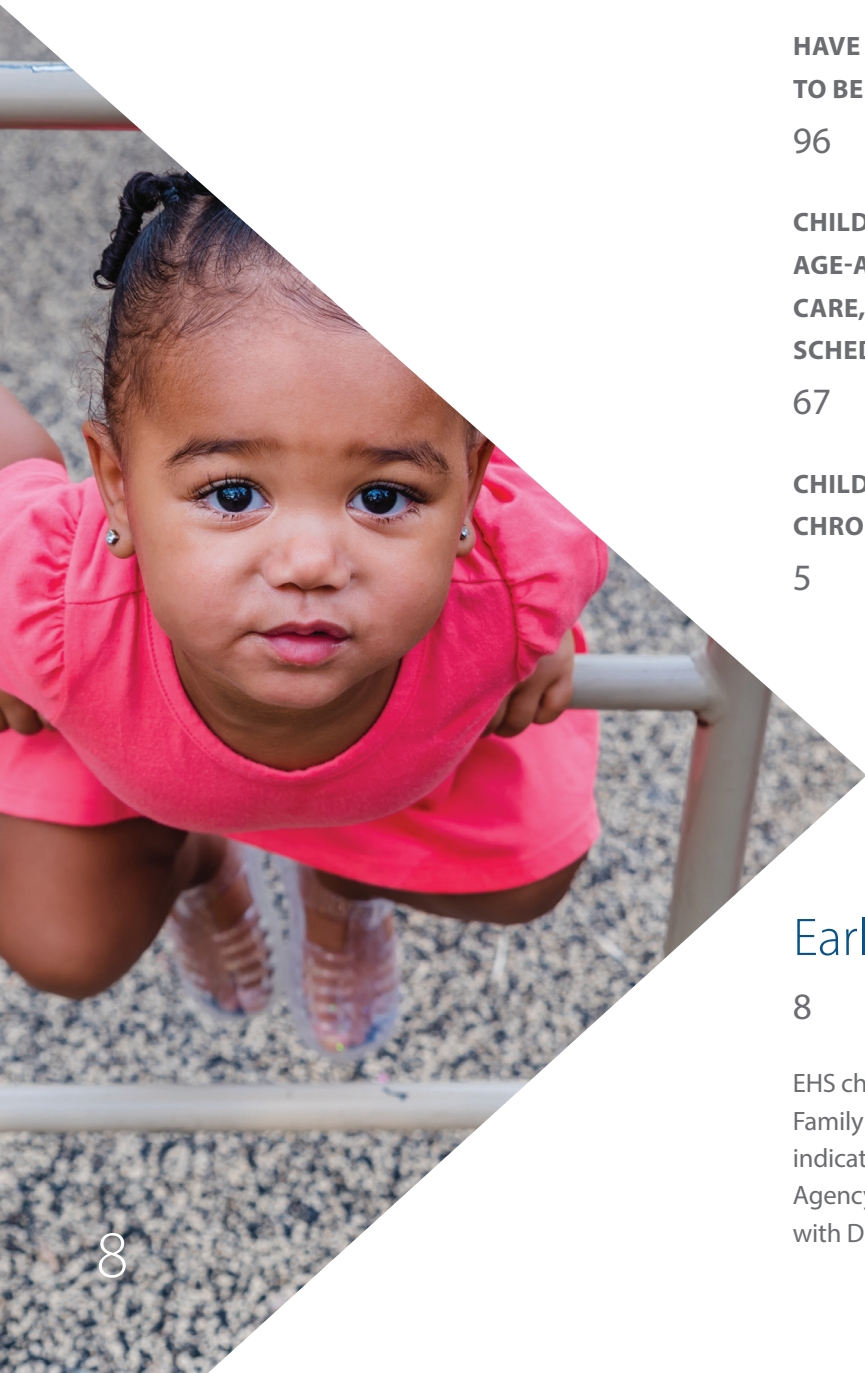
### CHILDREN WHO HAVE RECEIVED TREATMENT FOR CHRONIC CONDITIONS

5

# Early Head Start Disability Services

8

EHS children enrolled in the program who had an individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) at any time during the program year indicating they have been determined eligible by the Part C Agency to receive early intervention services under the individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA)



# Early Head Start Enrollment

## FUNDED ENROLLMENT

98

## CUMULATIVE ENROLLMENT

111

# Early Head Start Eligibility

## INCOME AT OR BELOW 100%

42

## PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

68

## FOSTER CARE

2

## HOMELESS

9

## DISABILITY / SPECIAL NEEDS

3

## OVER INCOME

6

## PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN SERVED

94.59%

# Early Head Start Primary Language

English

123

Spanish

6

Dual Language

9

American Sign Language

0



# Early Head Start Demographics

## AMERICAN INDIAN

0 Hispanic/Latino

0 Non Hispanic

## ASIAN

0 Hispanic/Latino

0 Non Hispanic

## BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN

1 Hispanic/Latino

94 Non Hispanic

## NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER

0 Hispanic/Latino

0 Non Hispanic

## WHITE

5 Hispanic/Latino

19 Non Hispanic

## BIRACIAL OR MULTI-RACIAL

5 Hispanic/Latino

6 Non Hispanic

# School Readiness

To collect school readiness data our program used The Teaching Strategies GOLD online assessment instrument. The system measures the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are most predictive of school success. The tool has 38 objectives, including 2 objectives related to English language acquisition. Thirty-six objectives are organized into nine areas of development and learning. The first four are major areas of child development: social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive. The content learning that identified in early learning standards is organized into the following five areas: literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and the arts. The objectives in English language acquisition, help teachers follow a child’s progress in acquiring receptive and expressive skills in English.

Teachers used the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment tool quarterly to collect the data needed to plan activities for individual children. Through the observations, children’s work samplings and parental input teachers leveled children in each objective area. At the end of each observation cycle and staff has finalized children’s checkpoints, Teaching Strategies GOLD reports are generated to show which children are meeting, exceeding or below an area of development and learning.

## Spring 2024 - 2025

### CHILDREN TRANSITIONING TO KINDERGARTEN

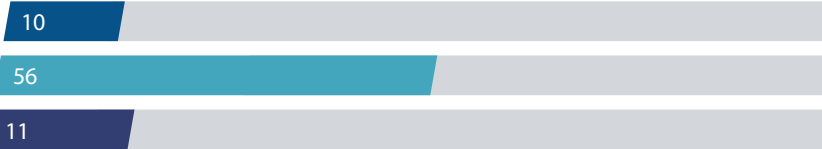
#### SOCIAL / EMOTIONAL



#### PHYSICAL



#### LANGUAGE



#### COGNITIVE



#### LITERACY



#### MATHEMATICS



#### SPANISH LANGUAGE



#### SPANISH LITERACY



Below Expectations

Meets Expectations

Exceeds Expectations

# National Community Action Network Theory of Change Goals

## GOAL 1

Individuals and families with low incomes are stable and achieve economic security.

## GOAL 2

Communities where people with low income live are healthy and offer economic opportunity.

## GOAL 3

People with low incomes are engaged and active in building opportunities in communities.



## Services

EMPLOYMENT

EDUCATION &  
COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

INCOME, INFRASTRUCTURE  
& ASSETS BUILDING

HEALTH/SOCIAL  
BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT &  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



# Community Action of South Mississippi Community Service Block Grant (CSBG)

Community Action of South Mississippi engages in programming to assist clients become self-sufficient. CSBG clients are encouraged to participate with the case management program to assist with meeting their goals in the areas of Employment, Education, Income & Asset Building, Housing, Health & Social Behavior and Civic Engagement. Based on our annual community needs assessment we target efforts in areas that our identified by the community, for the community. Employment, Housing and education have been our top three priority issues this year.

## Snapshot of Highlights for 2025

### EMPLOYMENT

Community Action of South Mississippi has provided assistance for **204 Mississippians** that led to full time employment, increased salary and benefits, and increased skills within the workplace.

### HOUSING

Community Action of South Mississippi assisted **770 households** with housing assistance funding in the amount of **\$420,169**. These funds were used to eliminate homelessness, ensure families were not displaced and to prevent evictions and foreclosures.

### EDUCATION

This year we have assisted **50 clients** in their pursuit of higher education. These clients have completed a recognized credential, certificate or degree achievement in the field of their choice.

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Our team has helped **788 clients** increase their nutrition skills to include cooking, shopping and budgeting for healthy meals.

In 2025, our team helped **1994 senior citizens** maintain an independent lifestyle ensuring that seniors can remain in their home and avoid the need for assisted living.

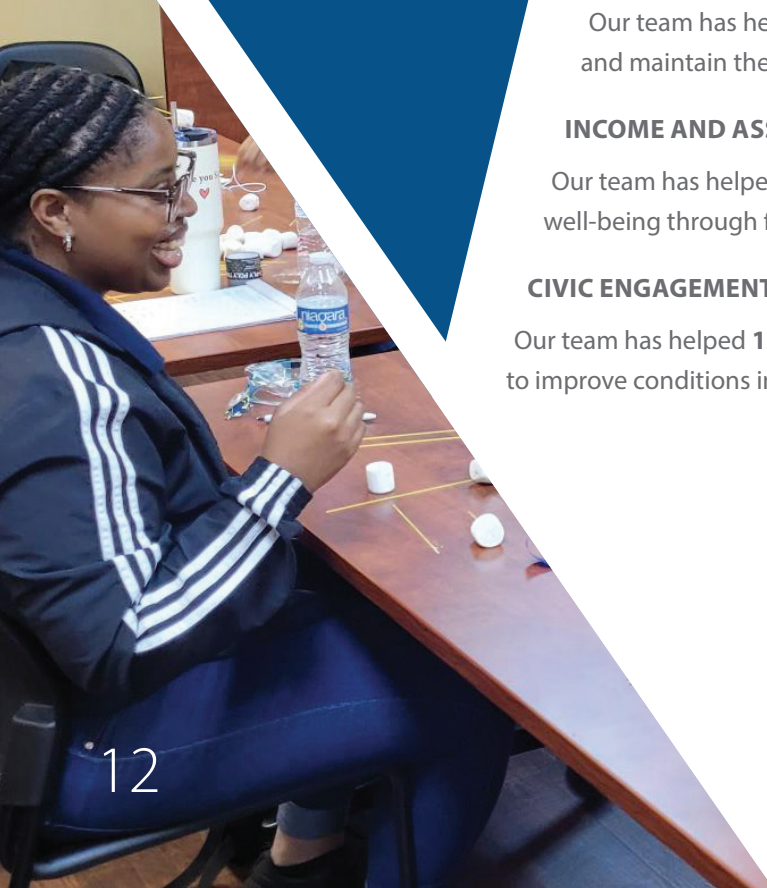
Our team has helped **1664 Mississippians** with disabilities stay in their home and maintain their independent lifestyle.

### INCOME AND ASSET BUILDING

Our team has helped **178 individuals** improve their overall long-term financial well-being through financial education and skill development.

### CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Our team has helped **152 Mississippians** build skills, knowledge, and the ability to improve conditions in the community through civic engagement.



# Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Community Action of South Mississippi provides Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) services for George, Harrison and Jackson Counties in South Mississippi. LIHEAP provides federally funded assistance to reduce the costs associated with home energy bills, energy crisis, weatherization, and minor energy-related home repairs.

LIHEAP helps families stay warm in the winter and cool in the summer through programs that reduce the risk of health and safety problems that arise from unsafe heating and cooling situations and practices.

LIHEAP benefits target households with low incomes, particularly those that have a high home energy burden (percentage of income that goes to heating and cooling bills), have members who are elderly, disabled, or have young children.

Families do not receive funds from the LIHEAP program; all funds are paid directly to the utility companies on behalf of the eligible family.

LIHEAP funds are also used to ensure that Mississippi homes have adequate heat/air systems. As we all know living in Mississippi means an air conditioner is a must, not a luxury. Community Action of South Mississippi partnered with vendors across the area to repair and in many cases replace air conditioning and heating systems to ensure families are able to remain safe in their home.

## LIHEAP Funds Paid to Largest Vendors in 2025

### COAST EPA

\$305,190

### MISSISSIPPI POWER

\$991,339

### SINGING RIVER EPA

\$656,515

## Stats

### HOUSEHOLDS ASSISTED

3,041

### INDIVIDUALS ASSISTED

6,513

Other vendors across Mississippi who received LIHEAP funds to repair or replace heat/air equipment in 2025  
\$223,204

## Parenting Initiative

With grant funding from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) CASOMS provides parenting classes for parents in Harrison and Jackson counties.

We use two curricula for the classes – Active Parenting and Within My Reach.

Active Parenting offers workshops for families with children 0-5 and 6 & up. These free classes are offered for parents during the day, weekends, and evenings as requested.

Through our pre/post testing and annual follow up we are pleased to share that 100% of families who participated in the Active Parenting classes report that they are still using the tools they learned from the instructor and Active Parenting curriculum materials.

The Within My Reach curriculum is designed to strengthen the adult partnership in order to allow parents to provide a health family environment for their children.

The Within My Reach curriculum provides adults with tools designed to strengthen their relationship skills. Research shows that when adults have strong, healthy relationships, children are given a better chance at growing up in a healthy, loving environment.

### STATS

**141 Parents** in Harrison & Jackson counties were provided Active Parenting in 2025

**47 Adults** were provided Within My Reach relationship workshops in 2025



## Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) grant program is an IRS initiative designed to support free tax preparation service for the underserved through various partner organizations. This service helps low- to moderate-income individuals, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and limited English speakers file their taxes each year. The VITA Coalition is comprised of Community Action of South Mississippi and Mercy Housing. We offer tax preparation services at five locations across the coast for eligible taxpayers. The coalition has provided tax assistance for 20+ years to individuals who make under \$70,000 per year.

### 2025 Vita Highlights

**AVERAGE FAMILY SAVINGS ON A SIMPLE 1040 OR MORE IF TAX PREPARATION INVOLVES ITEMIZING OR ADDITIONAL SCHEDULES/FORMS**

\$220

**FEDERAL RETURNS COMPLETED**

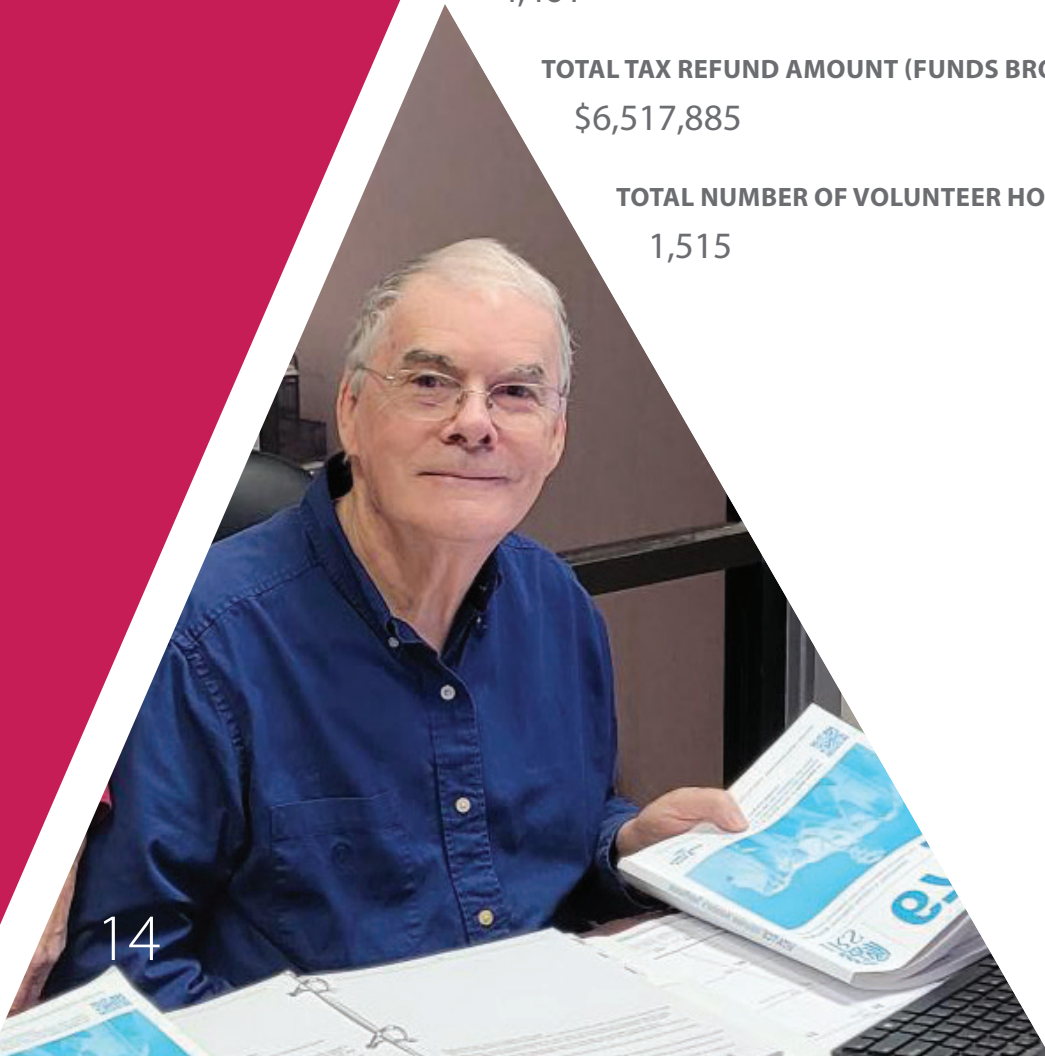
4,461

**TOTAL TAX REFUND AMOUNT (FUNDS BROUGHT BACK INTO OUR COMMUNITY)**

\$6,517,885

**TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER HOURS**

1,515



# Food Pantry

Food insecurity is a problem throughout our service area. Community Service Block Grant Funds are used to purchase food for our food pantries in George & Jackson Counties. Community Action of South Mississippi has operated a food pantry in Jackson County for many years through our partnership with Catholic Charities. Food baskets are distributed on Fridays or daily on an emergency basis as needed. The baskets include meat, fish, dairy, eggs, fresh fruits and vegetables and canned goods. The selection varies monthly but always provides high quality nutritious food for families in need.

CASOMS offers a food pantry in George County in partnership with Sisters in Christ and Feeding America. CSBG funds support this food pantry..

## Boxes Provided in Jackson & George Counties

**ADULTS**

820

**CHILDREN**

415

**SENIOR CITIZENS**

987

**TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS**

1,993

**TOTAL INDIVIDUALS**

2,567





# Community Engagement

- Health Advisory Committee
- Chevron Refinery Little Libraries
- Pascagoula Audubon Center
- Policy Council and Board of Directors
- Partnerships with Public Schools
- Excel by 5
- Pascagoula-Gautier School District
- Jackson George Regional Library
- American Heart Association Heart Walk
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Coastal Family Health Center (Mobile Unit)
- South MS Smiles
- Vision Center
- Turkey Boxes = Food Pantry Donations
- Vancleave Volunteer Fire Department
- Let's Go Gulf Coast
- BAZ Family Medical Clinic

## 60+ Programs

Healthy bodies, alert minds, energized spirits — that is what Community Action of South Mississippi Seniors Program offers adults age 60+. CASOMS Senior Program is year-round and offers diverse activities to support independence and enhance quality of life.

The senior center is a focal point in the community where persons, individually or as a group, come together for a broad spectrum of services, educational and recreational programs and activities. These facilities enable individuals 60 years of age and older to socialize, develop skills, engage in activities, learn new roles that enhance their dignity, support their independence and encourage their involvement within the community.

Services offered include transportation, congregate meals, and a variety of activities geared toward adults 60+.

### TRANSPORTATION

24,355

### SENIOR CENTER

16,800

### CONGREGATE MEALS

14,810



CASOMS.ORG

### **Administration Office**

Jackson County  
5343 Jefferson Avenue  
Moss Point, MS 39563

### **Senior Centers**

Ocean Springs Senior Center  
514 Washington Avenue  
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

Moss Point Senior Center  
5343 Jefferson Avenue  
Moss Point, MS 39563

### **Childcare Center**

First Step Childcare Center  
5343 Jefferson Avenue  
Moss Point, MS 39563

### **Head Start Centers**

Gautier Head Start Center  
1017 Highway 90  
Gautier, MS 39553

Jackson Elementary  
Head Start Center  
3203 Lanier Avenue  
Pascagoula, MS 39581

Jefferson Head Start Center  
5343 Jefferson Avenue  
Moss Point, MS 39563

Kreole Head Start  
(Kreole Primary School)  
6312 Martin Luther King Boulevard  
Moss Point, MS 39563

Martin Bluff Head Start  
(Martin Bluff Elementary)  
1306 Roys Road  
Gautier, MS 39553

Pascagoula Head Start  
3301 Spruce Street  
Pascagoula, MS 39581

Taconi Head Start  
711 Magnolia Street  
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

### **CSBG LIHEAP Centers**

George County  
11 Holmes Street  
Lucedale, MS 39453

Harrison County  
500 24th Street  
Gulfport, MS 39507

Jackson County  
5343 Jefferson Avenue  
Moss Point, MS 39563