

Garrett County Community Action To Participate In Rural IMPACT Project

Garrett County Community Action is one of 11 agencies in rural/tribal communities from across the nation selected to participate in the Rural Integration Models for Parents and Children to Thrive (IMPACT) Demonstration Project, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced on Monday.

In April, recognizing that every child, no matter where she/he is born, should have an opportunity to succeed, the White House Rural Council launched "Rural IMPACT," a cross-agency effort to combat poverty and improve upward mobility in rural and tribal places.

In August, HHS announced a new demonstration project, Rural IMPACT, to help communities adopt a two-generation approach to addressing the needs of both vulnerable children and their parents, with the goal of increasing parents' employment and education and improving the health and well-being of their children and families.

"Often, programs are structured to serve either adults or children, rather than focusing on the entire family to improve outcomes," a project spokesperson said. "The Rural IMPACT Demonstration will help communities adopt a comprehensive, whole-family framework for addressing child poverty, such as through facilitating physical colocation of services, universal 'no wrong door' intake, referral networks, shared measurement systems, and use of technology to deliver services."

Demonstration communities will receive the following:

- A six-month planning period with targeted technical assistance (TA) to help communities link programs and services.

- At least six months of additional TA to begin the implementation period, during which sites will work to address system, policy, and program changes targeting alleviation of child poverty.

- Partnership with CNCS to develop projects to place AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, helping local partners develop new or enhance existing antipoverty programming, map community assets, and help build local community capacity.

- Participation in a peer learning network to facilitate the sharing of best practices among sites facing similar opportunities and challenges.

- Support from a federal interagency team to identify and address barriers to cross-programmatic work.

The project will be administered by HHS with support from the Community Action Partnership and the American Academy of Pediatrics and implemented in collaboration with the U.S. departments of Agriculture, Education, and Labor, the Appalachian Regional Commission, Delta Regional Authority, and the CNCS.

"Over 6 million Americans in rural areas live in poverty, including about 1.5 million children," the spokesperson said. "And in many of these communities, high rates of poverty have persisted for generations: Over 300 rural counties have had poverty rates of over 20 percent in every census since 1980. As

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President Obama has stated, 'A child's course in life should be determined not by the ZIP code she's born in, but by the strength of her work ethic and the scope of her dreams.' In many rural places, that ZIP code equates to decreased access to critical services, fewer educational opportunities, and limited job choices."