

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

December
2024



Lisa Bolen was appointed in 2023 by Governor Whitmer to the Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity. This Commission met most recently on November 8 in Highland Park. The meeting included visits to Wayne Metro's Highland Park Head Start site, the State of Michigan's Weatherization Training House (photo 1&2) and concluded with a tour of Avalon Village (photo 3). Avalon Street is in Highland Park, one block off of Woodward Avenue. Fellow Commissioner, Shamayim Harris (Mama Shu) has spent more than 16 years transforming her neighborhood. You can read more about that through this article: www.detroitnews.com & Video: www.cnn.com

Program Impact

Open Enrollment for Medicare Part D Continues Through December 7th and Several Other Big Changes for 2025

Medicare Open Enrollment is underway and with a few surprises. On October 29, Medicare beneficiaries received a letter notifying them that Aetna and Humana Medicare Advantage plans (MA) are no longer accepted by the MyMichigan Hospital network. MyMichigan listed the following MA plans that are accepted: Blue Care Network MA plans; BCBS of Michigan MA plans; Health Alliance MA plans; and Priority Health MA plans.

In addition, several MA plans that have discontinued one or more plans for 2025 may have auto-enrolled beneficiaries into another one of their company's plans – sometimes substituting a Part D drug plan for a Medicare Advantage plan. MMAP counselors are available through each of the Councils/Commissions on Aging throughout Region 9 or beneficiaries can call statewide at 800-803-7174; or call 1-800-Medicare for assistance. Open Enrollment for Part D ends December 7 and Open Enrollment for Advantage Plans begins Jan 1, 2025, and ends March 31.



Healthy Living Webinar Series

Upcoming Healthy Living Webinar Series:
Contact Brooke Mainville at
MainvilleB@nemcsa.org to register.

- December 12, 2024: Introduction of Tai Chi
- January 9, 2025: Protect Yourself from Scams and Fraud
- February 13, 2025: Home Safety and Radon
- March 13, 2025: Medication Safety
- April 10, 2025: What is Normal Aging?

Congrats Tyler!



Tyler Sluck, Services Coordinator, recently achieved ServSafe Certification. This certification will help Tyler in working with the nutrition providers for the home-delivered and congregate meal programs. Tyler is the newest member of the Area Agency on Aging staff.

CAREGIVER FOCUS GROUP

Share your experience to help Region 9 Area Agency on Aging improve our services, and programs for family caregivers in Northeast Michigan (Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Otsego, Oscoda, Presque Isle and Roscommon).

JANUARY 17, 2025

1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

VIA ZOOM

DISCUSSION:

The group discussions will be focused on services, programs, and resources for family caregivers.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

Family Caregivers in our twelve county service area.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER, CONTACT:



989.358.4616



mainvilleb@nemcsa.org



Program Impact



On Friday, November 15th, Agency Staff conducted new member training for the Policy Council and proudly seated the largest council we've had since pre-COVID. They are pleased to share that the council has an active and engaged group of parents, including several who chose to continue serving as Community Representatives even after their children have transitioned to kindergarten. This reflects both their dedication, and the inclusive environment fostered within the Policy Council.

During the training, a panel of experienced parents shared the benefits of participating in Policy Council, including increased confidence, access to information about other NEMCSA services, and the rewarding feeling of contributing to the education of not just their own child, but all children in the ECS Programs.

As the day was wrapping up, staff asked a new member for his thoughts. His response? *"It makes me feel like I'm a big deal, and that you will listen to me."* This sentiment captures the heart of what Policy Council is all about—empowering parents and ensuring their voices are heard.

What is Policy Council?

The Policy Council is a group composed of parents of currently enrolled children and community representatives. It plays an important role in overseeing and guiding program operations, ensuring that the voices of families and the community are heard. This system of program governance is unique to Head Start – there is nothing else like it.

Who Makes Up the Policy Council?

- **Parents:** A majority of the members are parents or guardians of currently enrolled children. This ensures that families directly benefiting from Head Start services have a significant voice in decision-making.
- **Community Representatives:** Members from the community bring in expertise, resources, and insights to enhance the program's operations.
- **Staff:** Staff members may participate in meetings to provide input but do not vote.

What Does the Policy Council Do?

- The Policy Council collaborates with the Head Start management team to:
 - Review and Approve Key Program Actions, such as:
 - Funding applications and budget plans.
 - Program policies, procedures, and initiatives.
- Provide Input on Program Design:
 - Help tailor services to meet the unique needs of the children and families served.
- Advocate for the Program:
 - Represent Head Start in community discussions and build partnerships that benefit the program.



Linsday “Thankful for Families” Event

On Wednesday, November 27th Linsday Head Start programs 250, 251 and 253 held a Thankful for Families event at the building. Families made fall wreaths, family stick puppets and a family handprint project. Over 30 families were able to participate in the fun afternoon.

Program Impact



In October, BOSS Program Staff attended the 1st National Poverty Conference, "Together We Thrive," in Toledo, Ohio, gaining inspiration and strategies to enhance the BOSS Program. Key highlights included:

- **Impactful Stories:** Inspirational narratives from those impacting communities emphasized commitment to meaningful change.
- **Innovative Programs:** Workshops offered proven strategies to break the cycle of poverty and address challenges like the benefits cliff.
- **Keynote by Dr. Ruby Payne:** Her insights provided fresh perspectives on economic disparities.
- **Networking:** Connections with influential figures, including graduates from the Bridges Out of Poverty program.

Key Learnings:

1. Techniques for grant writing and program support to enhance sustainability.
2. Insights on navigating the benefits cliff for individuals transitioning out of poverty.
3. Innovative advocacy methods for promoting economic mobility.

The team is now sharing this knowledge with the Poverty Action Team and integrating it into the BOSS Program to empower participants towards self-sufficiency.

The BOSS Program continues to accept referrals on an ongoing basis.

If you have any questions or need further information about the BOSS Program, feel free to reach out to Amanda Bergeron at Bergerona@nemcsa.org or 989-358-4712.

This project was supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRF4951 awarded to The State of Michigan by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.



Coming in January 2025: Empower & Strengthen – A NEMCSA Podcast!

The CRC Team is excited to announce the launch of Empower & Strengthen, a NEMCSA podcast, coming January 2025! This new platform will share inspiring stories, helpful resources, and impactful insights from our programs and the communities we serve.

The podcast is designed to:

- **Educate:** Highlight the incredible work being done across NEMCSA to empower individuals and strengthen communities.
- **Inspire:** Share stories of resilience and success from our participants, staff, and volunteers.
- **Engage:** Provide listeners with actionable resources to make a positive impact in their lives or the lives of others.

Why a podcast? The Team wanted to create a space to reach a broader audience, beyond the walls of NEMCSA. Through this monthly podcast, we'll connect with our community in a meaningful way, bringing light to the challenges and triumphs of those we serve while inviting others to join our mission. New episodes of Empower & Strengthen will be published monthly on Spotify and shared on our website and social media channels. We can't wait for you to tune in and be part of this exciting journey as we continue to empower lives and strengthen communities together. Stay tuned for our first episode in January, featuring a special interview with NEMCSA CEO, Lisa Bolen!

Get Involved: If you're interested in being a guest on the podcast or have topics, you'd like the team to cover, please reach out to the Community Resource Team at CRC@nemcsa.org!

In November, the Community Resource Team provided impactful assistance to 83 individuals and families across NE Michigan. Key efforts included connecting community members to housing, utility, and food resources, partnering with local organizations, and sharing program materials to enhance awareness.

Program Impact



For the past three years, Lewiston Elementary has been awarded the Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan Community Impact Grant. This grant combined with community member monetary donations has been used to purchase winter gear for students. The project is referred to as the "Ensuring Exploration" program. This program works to ensure every child in Lewiston Elementary School can remain active and explore outside during the winter months. By providing winter coats, snowpants, and winter boots to those in need, kids can stay warm while playing outside during the cold weather months in Michigan. This program reached 78 students in 2022, 72 students in 2023 and 79 students in 2024. This is 50% of the Kindergarten-5th grade students.

-Anne Proctor, School Success Liaison at Lewiston Elementary



Thank you for your time and energy that you put into this program every year, Anne Proctor!

The School Success Team completed CPR training last month. Thank you, Lisa Thayer, Alpena Public School Nurse for the training!



School Success and NEMCSA are so very grateful to have been chosen by Bay Athletic Club to be the recipients of their Holiday Shoe & Boot drive this year. Over 35 pairs of boots and sneakers were donated from Bay Athletic club staff and members between November 18th - December 1st. Thank you for helping us give the gift of fitness and warm feet to our kids and families in our community this holiday season. We appreciate your support.



Welcome to the SSP Team, Alex Pierson! Alex is the new School Success Liaison at Onaway Middle/High School.



Happy Holidays from the School Success Program staff. Thank you for your leadership and unwavering support!



The Little Owl Closet at Richardson Elementary has had a big upgrade! Four years ago, Richardson had one bookshelf and a cabinet storing clothes for children in need. It was difficult to keep the right sizes in stock in such a small area. The School Success Liaisons took on the task! Staff were able to repurpose one of the old locker rooms into the main storage area for school supplies, clothing, shoes, and extra food. Using the lockers, the clothes can stay organized along with using shoe organizers. This has made everything so much more accessible. Oscoda Area Schools with School Success support were able to purchase a storage shed. Currently, a shed is being used to store bulky and seasonal items that students might need throughout the year. It also gives us a place to store donations while they are sorted and put away. The Little Owl Closet provides resources to McKinney-Vento students, students who have an accident at school, and any other students who may need clothes or supplies. Oscoda Area Schools receive items and cash donations from the community to keep the Little Owl Closet stocked.

-Elena Fryer, School Success Liaison, Richardson Elementary

Amazing work, Elena!



A Visit With BCAEO

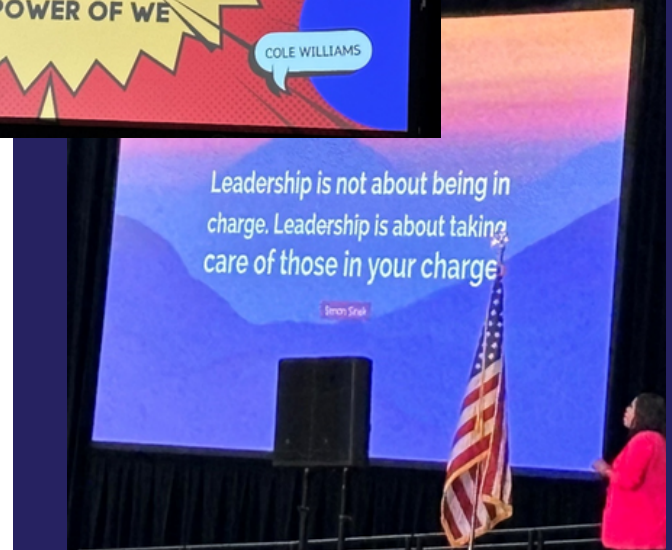
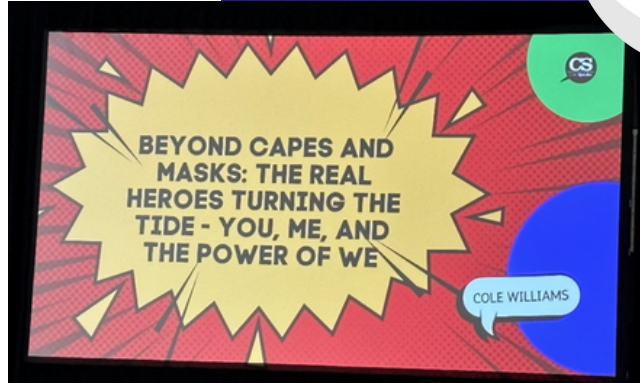
In November, NEMCSA welcomed Kris Schoenow, Executive Director, Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity, MDHHS, Paula Kaiser Van Dam, Director Bureau of Community Services, MDHHS and Brian McGrain, Executive Director Michigan Community Action Association to learn more about each of the agency divisions and what is working well and what we see are some of today's challenges.

The BCAEO crew, Dorothy Pinter-Community Program's Director, Lisa Bolen-CEO NEMCSA, Lisa Werth-Senior SSP Liaison Besser School and Paige Bruski-SSP Liaison, took a tour of Besser Elementary's School Success Program and had a sit down discussion with numerous Besser school staff and a parent who had been in the program for several years. Our SSP parent gave a heart-felt testimonial of the enormous impact the School Success Program and Lisa Werth has had on her and her families lives. The Besser staff also shared how Lisa and Paige's work positively impacts all aspects of the school community and students every day. Doug Tallent, WX Director gave an informational presentation about home projects and the weatherization program as a whole. An insightful discussion geared towards upcoming projects and plans followed. Victoria Purvis, Housing Programs Director shared a touching video of what real-life homelessness in our area looks like and had an insightful discussion on the housing challenges her program and staff face her in our service area and also shared some of their success and hurdles they have overcoming in the past year.



Program Impact

October 28th & 29th the entire housing staff joined other community action agencies, funders, and housing response partners in Lansing at the Lansing Center for the annual Summit on Ending Homelessness. This year's theme, Turning the Tide: Collaborative Strategies for Ending Homelessness, saw Keynote speakers Cole Williams and Graci Harkema who brought their experiences in leading change through diversity for those within vulnerable populations. Some of the sessions that staff attended included HUD Monitoring Strategies, Community Collaborations within the Homeless Response System, and Lessons in Self-Care: Reminders from Daniel Tiger while working in Housing and Homeless Services.



Housing Director Victoria Purvis stood in as the Moderator for one of the sessions on CoC Program: A Refresher Training.

Homeless Awareness Month efforts are in full swing. Housing staff have partnered with other agencies to participate in conversations which raise awareness to the topic of Homelessness and how as a community we share the common goal of housing for all. A Homeless Awareness Month supply drive is happening from November 1st to November 30th to collect new hats, gloves, Hygiene items, blankets and more.



FOR HOUSING ASSISTANCE CALL 989-358-4678
OR EMAIL HOUSINGINTAKE@NEMCSA.ORG

Youth Homelessness

18-24 years old

WHAT WE KNOW

- 1 in 10 young adults 18-25 years old experience homelessness annually.
- 45,000 young people experience homelessness on any given night.

RISK FACTORS

- Parenting youth are 200% more likely to experience homelessness.
- Youth without a highschool diploma or GED are 346% more likely to experience homelessness.

Youth homelessness most often involves a breakdown or conflict with the family, and failures of systems such as housing, education, child welfare and justice.

COLLECTING:

Dish soap, deodorant, shampoo, body wash, cleaning supplies, new pillows, new sheets, etc.



A WAY HOME AMERICA

To find out more about Homeless & Prevention Services, call: 989-358-4678.

Program Impact

Since the start of the fiscal year, staff have met with 8 households and completed Rental Counseling with them. Staff have also met with 4 households to complete Homebuyer Education and Pre-Purchase Counseling. We have also utilized some of the recently donated funds from Huntington Bank to purchase coupon codes through eHome America so that we're able to offer the online class completely for free. This will enable households with odd working hours to complete the class at their own pace before meeting with our staff to complete Pre-Purchase Counseling.



The Family Self-Sufficiency Program currently has 24 active participants. This number is always changing as new people are enrolling or people deciding that they don't have to participate and are exiting.

To find out more about the Financial Empowerment Programs, Call: 989-358-4627.

November 2024:

Water Affordability

54
INDIVIDUALS
ASSISTED



WATER
PROGRAM

Plumbing

4
INDIVIDUALS
ASSISTED

1
HOUSEHOLD
ASSISTED

\$3,800
PENDING WORK
COMPLETION

To find out more about the Water Program, Call: 989-358-4675.

Program Impact

While at the technical conference in October, BCAEO encouraged all Weatherization Programs to be bold, to focus on expansion and what that looks like for our agencies. The Staff at NEMCSA took that to heart and focused heavily on our marketing strategies and expanding our staff to better suit the needs of the program clients and enrollment participants.

Together with the marketing team and with help from DHHS, a mass text blast was sent to almost 7,000 potential client's cell phones, encouraging them to sign up for NEMCSA's program and explaining the benefits of Weatherization to all who rent or own their homes. Additionally, postcards were sent to almost 1,900 homes in 4 of our core counties with the lowest enrollment rate. The marketing team updated the program flyer and created door hangers for the inspectors to leave at nearby homes while performing their inspections.

The Team is also pleased to announce they will be welcoming a new staff member in December. This Weatherization Intake Assistant will focus primarily on driving to clients' homes in all 11 core counties, collecting documents necessary to enroll them in our program and to better explain NEMCSA's Weatherization Program details. This is an area that has been a huge focus for the program staff and with nearly 230 clients waiting for assistance, staff are anxious to see enrollment numbers increase heavily.





NEMCSA NO COST Weatherization Assistance Program

Proudly serving the following counties: Alcona | Alpena | Arenac | Cheboygan | Crawford | Iosco | Montmorency | Ogemaw | Oscoda | Otsego | Presque Isle

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT WEATHERIZING YOUR HOME CAN RESULT IN AN AVERAGE OF 15% TO 40% REDUCTION OF FUEL USAGE WHICH IN TURN WILL LOWER YOUR UTILITY BILLS.

THE WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PROVIDES SERVICES FREE OF CHARGE TO ELIGIBLE HOMEOWNERS AND RENTERS, WORKING ON ALL TYPES OF HOUSING.

Services that may be offered



Insulation Services, including: Attic, foundation, wall or sill box



Furnace tune up or replacement



Home Energy Audit

Services continued: Weather stripping, caulking, door repair or replacement, window assessment, carbon monoxide detector installation, and much more!

Please Note: The Weatherization Assistance Program does not include funding for structural (roofs and windows), plumbing, mold or electrical repairs. To clarify, this is not an emergency or a home repair program.

Email
WEATHERIZATION@NEMCSA.ORG

More info

Call us today!
989-358-4700

Reach us on the web: <https://www.nemcsa.org/services/weatherization-program/weatherization-program.html>



Take Control of Your Energy Bills— Apply for FREE Weatherization Services Today!

NEMCSA's Weatherization Assistance Program helps families like yours make homes safer, more comfortable, and more affordable to maintain. From insulation to furnace and water heater repair or replacements, our services are free for eligible homeowners and renters.



Call us now at 989-358-4700 or email weatherization@nemcsa.org to see if you qualify!

To find out more about the
Weatherization Program,
Call: 989-358-4700.

Program Impact

Foster Grandparent/ Senior Companions

The Foster Grandparent program welcomed five new Foster Grandparent volunteers to program. All five ladies completed volunteer orientation and we are just waiting for the completion of additional paperwork before assigning them to the local schools in their respective communities.

Represented in the picture below alongside Project Director Heidi Powers are Wanda Caron from Hale, Laura Halsey from Mio, Suzanne Lindbert from Johannesburg, and Joy Winslow, Houghton Lake. Not pictured but part of the new cohort is Kathleen Hill from Barton City. We are very excited about this cohort because it expands our reach into the previous underserved counties of Otsego and Roscommon.

Foster Grandparent Janet Kernstock serving at Standish-Sterling Elementary School was awarded Employee of the Month for October 2024. Janet was very excited to share this recognition with us and said she was very surprised and honored to be recognized even though she's a volunteer and not staff. Grandma Kernstock is a new volunteer at Standish-Sterling and it's a credit to her service to be honored following just a couple months of service.



RSVP

Shine Bright had its first activity of the year 2024/2025 program cleaning up a Head Start playground in Mio. Clark Construction graciously brought three men along with two NEMCSA Headstart employees, a RSVP Services Coordinator and one other volunteer worked hard for three and half hours. The crew cleared a large area of leaves and then moved several yards of sand and topsoil to fill an area that had roots showing and unevenness around the walkways to areas where they would plant grass seed. The Mio Head Start staff could not have been more grateful for the work that they did. It was arduous work, but the playground looked great for the children at the end of the evening. Chris Cosbitt, from Clark Construction, contacted the Shine Bright Program looking for an opportunity to volunteer. Chris stated that Clark

Construction likes to give back to the community and the company volunteers several times a year. For Chris and his crew, they happened to be doing a project in Mio, so this volunteer project was perfect timing for them. The Mio Head Start and Shine Bright volunteer program thank Clark Construction for their time and energy in cleaning up the playground.

Jim Blue started with RSVP in early 2023 by sharing his talent of the piano with the Posen Senior Center, Boys and Girls Club, Hospice of Michigan, and My Michigan Health of Alpena. RSVP staff went to one of the sites to speak to Jim and ask him how he got began volunteering. He said that he started volunteering before he even moved to Northern Michigan, when he moved up here he heard a RSVP coordinator speak and became enrolled in the program. Jim stated that he has only been playing the piano for fourteen years. He played the trumpet but found it not much fun to play by himself. He has had a passion for music and always wanted to learn the piano. He had a neighbor that taught children to play the piano, so once a week for a couple of years he would go and take lessons, and learn he did. Jim is an incredibly talented piano player, the RSVP Program and their volunteer station partners are lucky to have him share his talent and time with others.

