

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

September
2026



Partnership in Action



Last month, staff from NEMCSA, Michigan Community Action (MCA), and MSHDA came together in Alpena to highlight the power of partnership in addressing the housing and community needs of Northeast Michigan. During the visit, participants toured NEMCSA programs, discussed housing challenges facing rural communities, and explored the impact of services that help individuals and families achieve greater stability and self-sufficiency. The visit provided an opportunity to share local perspectives, celebrate successful collaborations, and strengthen relationships that help improve quality of life throughout the region.

Kind Words from Program Participants!

“I don’t know where I would be today without the information and support given to me by the BOSS Program!”

From a BOSS Program participant and recent program graduate.....

Progress Toward Strategic Goals

The September 2026 Executive Director’s Report demonstrates NEMCSA’s continued progress in delivering impactful services, strengthening community partnerships, and expanding opportunities for individuals and families across the region.

Highlights include growth in early childhood education, housing stability and homelessness prevention efforts, aging services, youth development initiatives, workforce and financial empowerment programs, and strong community engagement.

These accomplishments directly support the goals of NEMCSA’s 2025-2030 Strategic Plan by advancing Improved Client Outcomes, fostering Collaborative Partnerships, promoting Long-Term Sustainability, and strengthening organizational capacity to support a stable workforce.

We are pleased to now own the Standish Pine River site. The building is at 2032 Pine River Road, just about 4 miles from the main intersection of US-23 and M-61 in Standish (or about 6 miles off I-75). NEMCSA had rented from Bay Arenac ISD for several years prior, operating a Head Start classroom at the site.

Standish Pine River



Program Impact: Early Childhood Services

Michigan Head Start Association Leaders Visit Lapeer Head Start Site

In July, NEMCSA's Lapeer Head Start site welcomed Michigan Head Start Association Executive Director Chanda Hillman and Abbey Dewey, Events and Membership Manager, as part of their statewide tour of Head Start programs.

During their visit, Family Services Coordinators Lori Naracon and Christy Culver, along with Area Manager Laura Bell, provided a tour of the facility and shared their personal journeys to Head Start. They also highlighted the impact the program has on children and families and discussed the services and supports that matter most to the communities we serve.

Tricia Grifka, Early Childhood Services Director, presented program data and statistics that showcased the size and reach of NEMCSA's Head Start program, which serves families through 60 centers across 22 counties.

The visit provided a valuable opportunity to share the important work happening in our classrooms and communities while strengthening connections with state Head Start leadership. We are grateful to Chanda and Abbey for taking the time to visit Lapeer and learn more about our program. We look forward to welcoming them back and invite them to visit any of our centers throughout our service area in the future.



Port Huron Grand Opening

Last month, our Port Huron Early Childhood Center hosted its Grand Opening ceremony ahead of the start of its first full school year under NEMCSA management.

The event brought together community leaders and organizations, including St. Clair County RESA, the Foster Grandparent Program, Community Dental, Blue Water Community Action, staff from State Representative Pavlov's office, staff from U.S. Representative Lisa McClain's office and Port Huron Mayor Anita Ashford, who shared remarks during the event. Following the program, guests had the opportunity to tour the facility, explore the classrooms and learn more about the services offered to children and families.

Thank you to our Port Huron staff, who helped make the event happen and have set a strong foundation for a successful school year ahead!



Program Impact: Area Agency on Aging



UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- **September 9, 2026:** SHIP New to Medicare webinar at 10:00 am. Contact your local COA or call 989.358.4612 for more information or to register.
- **September 10, 2026:** Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Conference at the Divine Shepherd in Standish from 9:30 am - 1:00 pm
- **September 28, 2026:** RAC Meeting at NEMCSA Main office at 1:00 p.m.

Michigan Journal of Public Health Lunchtime Learning Series

Join Dr. Richard Douglas from Iosco County for this 30-minute conversation about Non-Emergency Medical Transportation in Rural Michigan.

September 17 @ 12-12:30
[Register Here](#) or visit the NEMCSA website.

GetSetUp

DISCOVER FREE ONLINE LEARNING WITH GETSETUP

LOOKING TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW, STAY ACTIVE, OR CONNECT WITH OTHERS?

Through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Michigan residents ages 60 and older can access GetSetUp at no cost.

Enjoy thousands of live, interactive online classes led by older adults on topics including technology, health and wellness, fitness, cooking, travel, financial wellness, and more. All from the comfort of your home. Join today and discover new skills, make new connections, and continue learning at any age.



www.getsetup.io/en-US/partner/michigan

Special Event- The Aging Brain: What's Normal vs. a Warning Sign?

The Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and Region 9 Area Agency on Aging, with support from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services through the ACCESS-ADRD Grant, will host a free community event, "The Aging Brain: What's Normal vs. a Warning Sign?" on Friday, September 11 from 10AM-2PM at the Alpena Public Library. The program will help participants better understand normal cognitive aging, recognize potential warning signs of memory changes, connect with local resources, and access free cognitive screenings.

To register, contact

Sydney Funnell at 989-358-4667 or funnells@nemcsa.org

Date: Friday, September 11

Location: George N. Fletcher Public Library, 211 N. 1st Ave., Alpena

Presentation Topic: Understanding normal aging versus potential warning signs of cognitive decline.

Speakers: Dr. Annaliese Boutton-Fluigik and Gloria Wallace, LMSW-C

Medicare Part D Open Enrollment

Period for 2027 coverage runs from October 15 through December 7, 2026.

Call for Assistance:

1-800-803-7174



New Program - **Dementia Live!!**

Sydney Funnell, Special Project Coordinator, completed training in August to implement a new program, Dementia Live, for Region 9 Area Agency on Aging. Dementia Live is an innovative program designed by a team of dementia, sensitivity and awareness, and professional development experts from the nationally recognized AGE-u-cate Training Institute. Using specialized gear within a safe, experiential setting, Dementia Live gives participants a real-life simulation of what it is like to live with dementia. Participants gain greater awareness and understanding of the constant struggles affecting people with dementia, which leads to more sensitive care partnering. NEMCSA staff, including NEMCSA CEO, Lisa Bolen, participated in the first Dementia Live training on Monday, August 3rd.



Long-Term Care Ombudsman News

Region 9 Ombudsmen continue to make their third quarter visits to Skilled Nursing Facilities, Homes for the Aged, and Adult Foster Care homes. Routine visits, attendance at resident council meetings, being present for community fairs to share information and resources and advocating for residents are some of the things they do. Both Ombudsmen will be attending the September National Consumer Voice Conference in St. Louis, which is hosted by the National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center (NORC). NORC provides support, training, resources and technical assistance to ombudsmen. Recently, LTCO Tammy Dean presented to the AmeriCorps Senior Companion Volunteers in-service meeting.

Program Impact: School Success



Cooking Up Confidence: Students Build Life Skills Through Community Partnership

Through an ongoing partnership among Trinity Episcopal Church Women's Group of Alpena and SSP's PIVOT program, students participate in hands-on food preparation and nutrition workshops designed to build practical life skills and promote healthy living. PIVOT, a local youth intervention and support program, helps young people develop essential life skills, strengthen educational success, and create positive pathways for their future.

During these workshops, students gain valuable experience in meal planning, food preparation, and basic cooking techniques while working alongside dedicated community volunteers. Participants receive recipes, ingredients, and necessary supplies to take home, enabling them to recreate healthy meals with their families. This approach extends learning beyond the workshop setting, encourages family engagement, and reinforces healthy habits at home.

By combining nutrition education with hands-on learning, the program empowers students with the knowledge, confidence, and skills needed to prepare healthy, affordable meals for themselves and their families. Through this meaningful community partnership, students develop lifelong skills that support increased self-sufficiency, personal well-being, and long-term success.



Welcome Back to the 2026-2027 School Year!

As we begin a new school year, we want to take a moment to thank each of you for the care, dedication, and compassion you bring to our communities every day. Together, we make a difference in the lives of children, families, and individuals across Northeast Michigan.

As the School Success Partnership Program team returns to schools throughout our region, we are grateful for the support, collaboration, and teamwork that make our work possible. We look forward to another year of building connections, supporting student success, and helping families access the resources they need to thrive.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to NEMCSA's Board Members for your continued leadership, advocacy, and commitment to our mission. Your support helps make this important work possible.

Wishing everyone a successful, rewarding, and inspiring 2026-2027 school year. We are proud to be on this journey together.

With Gratitude,

Dorothy Pinter

Community Programs Director, NEMCSA

Liz Skiba

School Success Program Area Manager



NEMCSA's School Success Program extends its sincere gratitude to Joe Gentry and the United Way for their continued partnership and support. Through the United Way's annual Stuff the Bus event, essential school supplies are provided to students throughout Northeast Michigan, helping to remove barriers to learning and promote student success. Thank you for investing in the future of our region's children.



Top Three Reasons for Referral to the Program:

Academic

Behavior

Attendance

School Success Partnership Program Mission Statement:

The School Success Program is dedicated to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We provide personalized support, mentorship, and a nurturing environment designed to foster academic success and personal growth. Our commitment is to remove barriers to learning, promote good attendance, and actively involve families in their child's education journey and life goals, ensuring a holistic approach to each student's development, happy, healthy and ready to learn.

Program Impact: Housing



Homelessness and Prevention staff recently attended a Situational Awareness Training hosted by Alpena Community College. Staff reported that the training was a valuable refresher and provided new strategies and practical techniques to help ensure the safety of both staff and participants during meetings. Currently, our homeless services list includes 111 single households, 16 youth households, and 58 family households experiencing homelessness.

Our region was recently allocated additional slots for the stability voucher waitlist. The Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program is actively working to house two households utilizing Stability Vouchers. An additional 7 households remain on the waitlist.

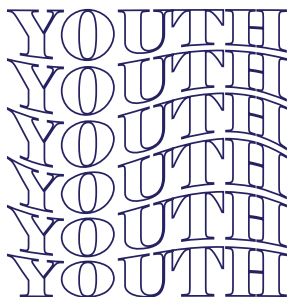


Donations were collected from Cooper Standard's Oscoda and East Tawas locations over the past several weeks. Together, the two sites contributed a variety of household cleaning and laundry products, personal hygiene items, and back-to-school supplies, which are being shared with participant families. We are grateful for Cooper Standard's support of local families in need.

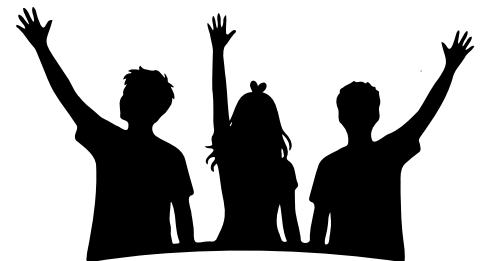
Housing Pathways for Young Adults

Housing Pathways for Young Adults is currently serving 37 households across its Street Outreach, Transitional Housing, and Rapid Re-Housing programs. Of these households, nine are on track to secure permanent housing through the Fostering Youth to Independence (FYI) Housing Voucher Program.

The program currently maintains 7 transitional housing units across the service region, including:



2 units in Cheboygan County
1 unit in Alpena County
1 unit in Iosco County
3 units in Roscommon County



These units provide short-term housing and supportive services geared to help young adults build the skills and stability needed to achieve permanent housing outcomes.

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

Program Impact: Steps to Stability

The Steps to Stability program continues to make steady progress, with six households enrolled during the last 30 days. Program efforts have increasingly focused on diverting households directly from the call center and into appropriate housing solutions, allowing the program to engage families earlier and prevent deeper housing crises.

The grant has been extended through December 31, 2026, ensuring continuity of services for the remainder of the year. During the most recent funder meeting on August 18, 2026, the grant representative shared that there is currently no formal guidance regarding funding for 2027. However, she expressed a high level of confidence that the program will continue beyond 2026. She anticipates that funding will remain at approximately \$3 million statewide, to be allocated among participating agencies, and believes agencies will be able to begin spending 2027 funds on January 1, 2027.



With the start of the school year approaching, staff are strengthening partnerships with McKinney-Vento liaisons to identify students and families who may have experienced homelessness during the summer months. This collaboration will help connect vulnerable families with housing resources and supportive services as they prepare for the school year.

Program priorities continue to evolve beyond financial assistance alone. Staff are placing greater emphasis on housing navigation and stabilization services, helping households identify sustainable housing options, access community resources, and develop long-term plans for maintaining housing stability. This approach supports the program's goal of creating lasting outcomes and reducing future episodes of homelessness.



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

Program Impact: Financial Empowerment

This past month was highly productive, with a total of 11 rental counseling appointments, 5 homebuyer education sessions, and 5 pre-purchase counseling appointments completed. Our FSS coordinator attended two community outreach events: the SERGE Outreach event and Project Connect in Alpena.

The SERGE Outreach initiative is a new jail-based program that is currently being expanded at the Alpena County Jail. Over the next several weeks, staff will launch another six-week financial empowerment session consisting of four classes, an increase from the previous three-class format. The program will focus on credit repair, budgeting, distinguishing between wants and needs, and providing information about the services and support programs NEMCSA offers to individuals upon their release.

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program continues to seek additional participants. To support recruitment efforts, we will be presenting at Aldergate Apartments in Oscoda to increase awareness of the program and encourage enrollment.

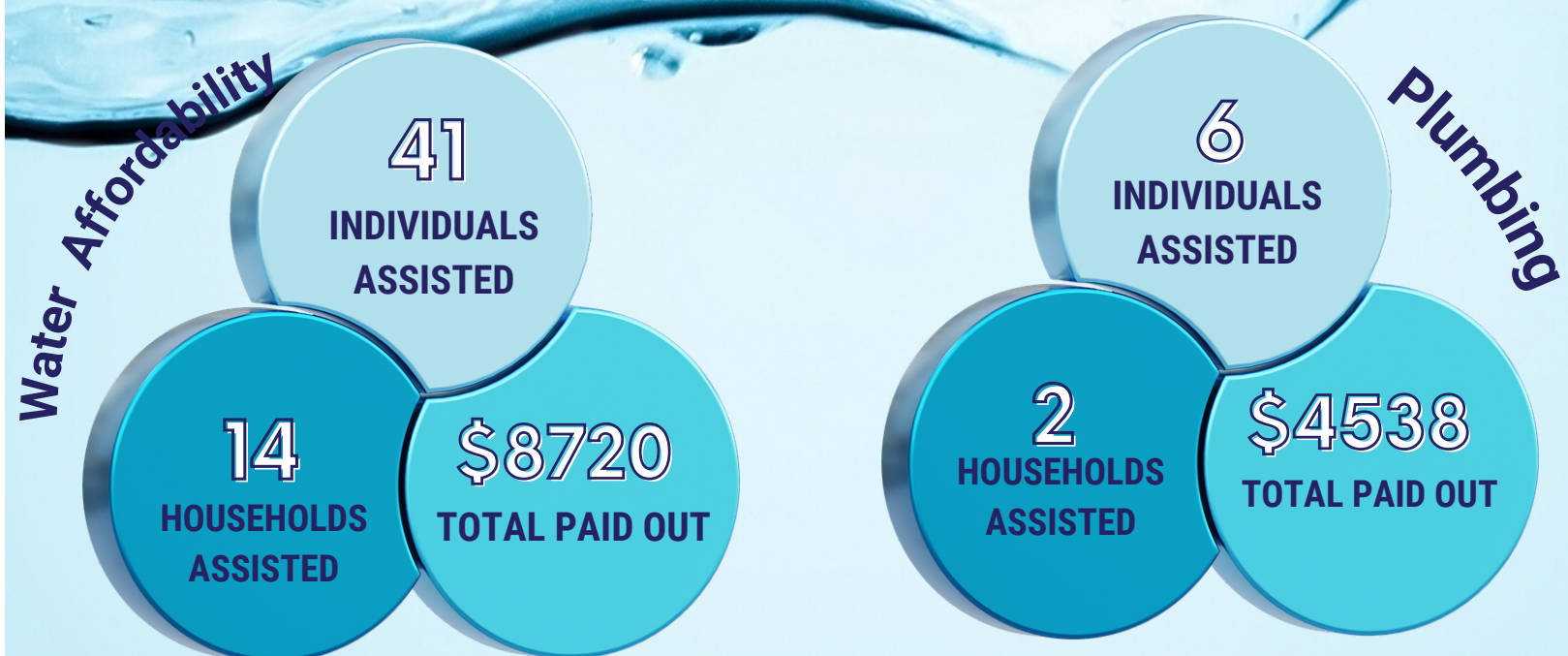
We are also actively seeking a qualified homebuyer for a newly constructed home in Onaway. This opportunity will provide an eligible family with access to a brand-new home at an affordable cost. Applicants must be first-time homebuyers, have a minimum credit score of 640, and meet income eligibility requirements of 60% Area Median Income (AMI) or below.

For more information regarding this homeownership opportunity, please contact Ashley Smart at 989-358-4702 or smarta@nemcsa.org.

Water Program

The Water Affordability Program

successfully provided the following assistance through both the water and plumbing programs:



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

Program Impact:

FGP/SCP VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS



Allow us to introduce new Senior Companion Arminda Ransom. Mindy, as her family and friends call her, joined our AmeriCorps Seniors family as a Senior Companion this June at the prodding of current volunteer Ruth Ann Ormsbee. She originally thought about the Foster Grandparent program but changed her mind in part through Ruth's influence but mostly because she loves working with older adults having had a 25-year career as a Nurse Aide and providing home care. Mindy is currently volunteering five days a week at Medilodge of Gaylord and visits her in-home client Bonnie twice a week.

Although Mindy has only been working with Bonnie for a few weeks, Mindy finds her delightful and looks forward to each visit. When asked about why she wanted to volunteer, she says she was looking for something to keep her active and something to do once the chores are done. She prefers her visits with Bonnie because the interaction is more personal and one-on-one. We are grateful to welcome Mindy to our AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Volunteer Program!

Weatherization

NEMCSA's Weatherization department traveled to Phoenix, Arizona to attend The Energy Out West Conference which is a regional event focused on the latest technical and organizational advances in the weatherization and energy conservation profession. This conference is heavily focused on Weatherization & Building Science, Peer Exchange which includes professionals, state program administrators, and tribal representatives from across western states who share administrative knowledge and technical manuals and Industry Innovation.

While attending, the department was able to share a unique team bonding dinner on the 24th floor of our hotel at a rotating restaurant.

Staff returned with new ideas, expanded technical knowledge, and a renewed perspective on program operations.



WEATHERIZATION@NEMCSA.ORG



989-358-4700



Program Impact: BOSS Program

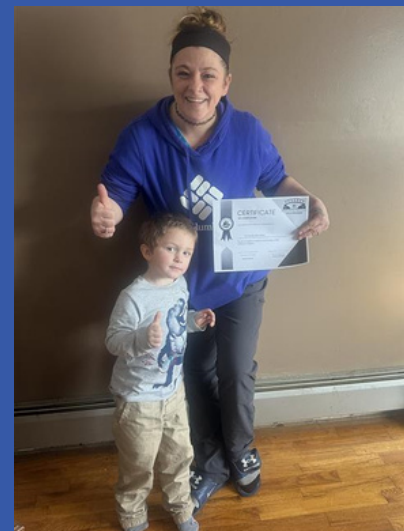
Creating Pathways to Self-Sufficiency

As the final month of the Mi-Impact Grant came to a close, the BOSS Program provided an opportunity to reflect on the meaningful progress participants have made toward long-term stability and self-sufficiency. Throughout the grant, participants secured employment, completed certification and training programs, earned GEDs, increased household income, obtained reliable transportation, and achieved major personal and financial milestones. Average income among program graduates increased by more than **\$11,500**, demonstrating the lasting impact of individualized coaching and support.

One recent success story highlights the importance of transportation in maintaining employment. Through a combination of participant savings and program support, a participant was able to purchase a vehicle, allowing him to keep his job and continue building financial stability. Stories like this demonstrate how targeted assistance can create lasting change for individuals and families.

BOSS Program Impact

- 25 program graduates
- 111 certifications completed
- 18 participants obtained full-time employment
- 8 participants gained transportation access
- 4 participants earned GEDs
- 2 participants achieved homeownership



Thank you to the Iosco County 50+Women Who care/Quota group who donated \$250 to NEMCSA,

Community Connections & Partnerships

The Community Resource Team responded to 77 requests for assistance in July, helping residents connect with resources, referrals, and support services across Northeast Michigan. The team also strengthened community partnerships through health fairs, regional collaboration efforts, Poverty Awareness Training for medical residents, and presentations at the Michigan Community Action Summer Conference, where NEMCSA staff shared innovative approaches to community engagement and participant success.