
ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE
NEWS RELEASE



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Community Action Agency to Merge with Kent County

GRAND RAPIDS – In an effort to provide efficiencies and better serve residents, at today's meeting, the Board of Commissioners authorized staff to move forward with a plan to merge two programs with similar goals. The Area Community Services and Employment Training Council's (ACSET) Community Action Agency Division (CAA) will merge with the Kent County Community Development/Housing Commission Department to better serve the community.

ACSET's CAA provides weatherization services, utility shut-off protections, food distribution, senior services and more to low-income clients in Kent County. The Kent County Community Development staff have been working on similar projects with agencies such as Home Repair Services, Dwelling Place and others. "The County staff did its due diligence in looking at how a proposed alignment of CAA and Community Development/Housing Commission could improve the delivery of services to low-income clients," said Matthew VanZetten, Interim Director of Kent County Community Development/Housing Commission. "As Kent County continues to grow and change, government needs to be responsive. The merger allows us to streamline services and reduce silos so we can better serve our residents."

Over the past year, County staff researched and evaluated the potential of combining and aligning resources of CAA and Kent County's Community Development/Housing Commission. Once the merger is complete, employees will be housed in the Human Services Complex at Franklin and Sheldon in southeast Grand Rapids. "This alignment of resources provides the best possible environment for CAA and the County to continue to deliver essential services," said Jacob Maas, Chief Executive Officer for ACSET. "It's an exciting opportunity to better serve low-income individuals and families in Kent County."

The CAA Advisory Committee and Kent County Housing Commission provided input during the process, and a community forum was held last month to receive comments or concerns. To date, all feedback has been positive. The State of Michigan has provided a letter indicating its support for Kent County to assume the Community Action Agency designation from ACSET. "Our County staff has once again demonstrated that collaborating with an external agency can provide needed services in a cost-effective manner," said Chair Jim Saalfeld. "I applaud and thank the County staff for seeking creative and innovative ways to help our low-income residents."

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