In order to apply for services please see the contact information below:

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Mission

The mission of CEO is to ameliorate the causes and effects of poverty and promote self-sufficiency among low-income and vulnerable populations in Luzerne County.

Goals

CEO’s multiple services are based on the following goals:
• Respond to basic, material needs of children, adults and seniors in poverty.
• Increase economic self-sufficiency among low-income individuals and families.
• Promote renewable energy and environmentally sustainable innovations to reduce the effects of poverty
• Promote the positive development of low-income children, youth and their families.
• Promote the health and independence of the elderly and disabled through supportive, in-home services.
• Provide leadership in policy issues affecting low-income children, adults and seniors.

Services and Programs

Goal: Respond to basic, material needs of children, adults and seniors in poverty.

Regional Food Bank - Sponsor of the Weinberg Northeast Regional Food Bank, serving four counties in Northeast PA. As an affiliate of Feeding America, the nation’s largest charitable food network, the Weinberg Regional Food Bank located in Jenkins Township, assists the community by collecting donations of wholesome goods from the food industry and distributing it to those charitable organizations that provide food to needy families and individuals in Northeast Pennsylvania.
• In partnership with the Pennsylvania Association of Regional Food Banks, CEO distributes 2,000 Senior Food Boxes each month through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
• CEO serves as the lead agency for the PA Department of Agriculture State Food Purchase and TEFAP programs for Luzerne County.

The Monsignor Andrew J. McGowan Center for Healthy Living – A 50,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art receiving and distribution facility housing the Regional Food Bank. The energy efficient Center includes a demonstration kitchen, and multi-purpose community meeting facilities in addition to covered loading docks, freezer, refrigerated and dry storage space.
**Community Food and Nutrition** – In addition to the Food Bank, the Commission operates food and nutrition programs through the Community Kitchen. These include:

- **Summer Food Service Program** operates because many children who normally receive school breakfast and lunches may not receive the same nutrition over the summer. 40,000 meals and snacks are served each year to 2,759 needy children over the summer at 65 sites.
- **After School Meal program** provides 75,000 dinners and snacks to more than 780 children in after school programs. By providing meals and snacks, we not only feed children at risk of hunger, but also support struggling after school programs and help them focus their limited funding on programming instead of food.
- **Registered Dietitians and Nutrition Educators** provide nutrition education to kindergarten through 9th grade students in 23 schools and work with the SHINE Program and food bank member agencies providing consultation and developing educational materials which address healthful food selection, meal planning, food preparation, shopping and food safety.
- **Feedback** Newsletters have been distributed each month to clients and member agencies. More than 85,000 copies are distributed each year to clients of emergency food assistance programs. 2,500 of these were in Spanish.

**SNAP (Food Stamp) Outreach Program** - Through Food Bank member agencies CEO endeavors to increase awareness and enrollment in the Pennsylvania Food Stamp Program throughout Luzerne, Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Wyoming counties.

**Housing** – CEO provides comprehensive housing services to working families with children and fixed income senior citizens with low to moderate incomes. Staff assess the client’s housing requirements, counsel tenants and homeowners concerning their rights and their responsibilities, provide housing options and financial assistance where needed, identify and provide technical assistance for mortgage and housing loan products with community lending institutions, and facilitate sustainable solutions with landlords and lenders on behalf of clients.

**Mortgage Assistance Counseling** – CEO trained and certified housing counseling staff provide mortgage modification and mortgage scam assistance to homeowners to combat the effects of the foreclosure crisis in our community. Assistance includes: an analysis of the borrower’s financial situation; evaluation of the current value of the property; counseling and advice on restructuring and refinancing strategies; approval of a workable and sustainable strategy by all interested parties; and a determination of long term affordability of the mortgage retained by such counseling activity. CEO is a HUD approved Housing Counseling Agency and certified by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) to perform housing counseling activities throughout Luzerne County including the Cities of Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton.

**Urgent Financial Assistance** – On a case-by-case basis, CEO offers emergency financial assistance accompanied by counseling to develop longer-term solutions.
Energy Assistance - This program provides financial assistance to individuals and families who are unable to pay fuel bills, have had utilities shut off or are in need of emergency fuel supplies or furnace repairs.

Homeless Assistance – Besides being the lead agency in Luzerne County’s plan for a coordinated response to the issue of homelessness, CEO provides transitional housing and supportive services to homeless veterans; permanent supportive housing services for homeless families and individuals with a disability; and Case Management Services to address the crisis of homelessness and to prevent its recurrence.

Goal: Increase economic self-sufficiency among low-income individuals and families

Employment-Training – Center for Employment Opportunities (located within the Innovation Center @Wilkes-Barre): Offers several programs for welfare-to-work transitions, including The Work Ready Program which provides welfare recipients with education, skills training, work activities and job placement services designed to enable them to become self-sufficient. The Work Ready Program is designed to offer special assistance to overcome particularly difficult barriers.

In collaboration with Luzerne County Community College and the Luzerne/Schuylkill Workforce Investment Board, CEO offers case management and comprehensive wrap around services to reduce education and employment barriers of participating learners in the Career Pathways Partnership Project. In addition to the intensive case management services, the pilot project focuses on providing a clear sequence of educational courses and credentials to prepare individuals for high demand occupations, regardless of their skill level at the point of entry.

Veterans’ Programs
- Transitional Housing – Staff and manage two converted Veterans’ Administration buildings housing 14 semi-independent, formerly homeless single male and female veterans who have a mental health, substance abuse diagnosis or dual diagnosis, with little or no income. The residents are assisted with employment and job skills training, housing counseling and self-sufficiency skills to obtain permanent housing.
- Supportive Services for Veterans – Outreach, case management and financial assistance to provide permanent housing stability for homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families.

On the Job Training - CEO’s clients are often its employees, interns or trainees.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) - Providing free federal and state income tax filing for individuals and families in Luzerne and Wyoming counties. Filing is done electronically by trained volunteers for individuals whose income is under $40,000 per year.

Goal: Promote environmentally sustainable and renewable innovations to reduce the effects of poverty
**Weatherization** - This program is designed to reduce energy consumption in low-income households by installing conservation measures such as insulation, weatherstripping, heating plant modifications, and energy consumption education. The program also provides job skill training to previously unemployed workers.

**Demonstration site for solar technology** - On the roof of CEO’s main office, solar collectors and conductors have been installed for separate systems to heat hot water and a grid connected photovoltaic system generating electricity.

**Goal: Promote the positive development of children, youth and their families.**

**Academic Scholarships** – College tuition assistance is offered to academically talented, economically disadvantaged students nominated by their high schools.

**SAT Preparation** – An intensive SAT preparation course preparation course for low income high school sophomores, juniors and seniors who may not otherwise have opportunities for either SAT preparation or college tuition assistance. The course focuses on the dynamics of the test itself, how to make the most of what skills one already has, and how to evaluate what types of remedial instruction may help raise SAT scores.

**Goal: Promote the health and independence of the elderly and disabled through supportive services.**

**In-Home Services** - Provided to the frail elderly and disabled adults and directed toward preventing unnecessary institutionalization. Services include: semi-skilled home maintenance tasks, environmental modification, and the provision of nutritionally balanced meals to home bound individuals unable to perform these tasks for themselves.

**Goal: Provide leadership in policy issues affecting low-income children, adults and seniors.**

**Utility Rate Increases & Restructuring in Pennsylvania** – As the gas and electric utility industries have undergone historic changes from monopoly services to a competitive environment, CEO has taken a leadership role in protecting the interests of low income and elderly rate payers.

**Comprehensive responses to homelessness** – CEO has been recognized by the Commonwealth for its outstanding contribution and leadership in Luzerne County’s Continuum of Care Planning for homeless individuals and families.

**Advocacy for environmentally sustainable innovations** - CEO and its executive director serve in prominent, national leadership roles in the development of environmentally sound technologies that hold great promise in the new millennium for
reducing the effects of poverty for society’s neediest individuals, families and communities.

History

CEO was incorporated in 1966 as a community action agency to alleviate poverty. This multi-service nonprofit organization is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of three constituencies with equal representation: consumers, public sector, and private sector. With its central office in the Heights neighborhood of Wilkes-Barre, CEO maintains site offices in downtown Wilkes-Barre, Kingston, Hazleton, Jenkins Township and Tunkhannock.

Operating a broad array of programs with a staff that exceeds 175 full- and part-time employees, CEO annually serves more than thirty thousand individuals from about twelve thousand households. Its annual budget, with revenues from multiple public and private funding sources, approaches $20 million. CEO is a participating agency of the United Way of Wyoming Valley, United Way of Hazleton, and the United Way of Wyoming County.

Several notable organizations serving low-income residents of Northeast Pennsylvania originated in CEO, which often serves as an “incubator,” spinning off programs when they reach a point of organizational readiness. These include: Luzerne County Head Start; the Child Development Council of NEPA; Rural Health Corporation of NEPA; Maternal and Family Health Services of NEPA; and North Penn Legal Services.

Community involvement is highly regarded by CEO, utilizing our “People Helping People” approach. Many of CEO’s programs and services rely heavily upon volunteers and would not be able to have as great an impact without their help. In 2016, approximately 2,940 volunteers provided more than 37,800 hours of service.