



Northeast Family Strengthening Conference – Richmond, VA – September 26-27, 2011



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Region I Region II Region III



Virginia Department of Social Services

September 26, 2011 – 3:30 pm

Getting Fit to Operate an IDA Program: Using Asset-Building Coalitions and Developing Organizational Capacity

Panelists:

- Kelli Hinkle, W. VA Alliance for Sustainable Families**
- Patricia Scott, Kanawha Institute for Social Research & Action (KISRA)**
- Margaret Miley, The MIDAS Collaborative**

Moderator:

Joe Diamond, Massachusetts Association for Community Action (MASSCAP)



MASSCAP

- **MASSCAP** is the association of the 24 Community Action Agencies operating in Massachusetts – federally mandate antipoverty agencies – serving 600,000 people in the state in every city and town through advocacy and the provision of up to 75 different services.
- **MASSCAP 's mission:** MASSCAP is a statewide association of community action agencies that supports its members and works with them to reduce poverty regionally and across the Commonwealth by advocating for public policies, resources, and social changes that enable low income people to meet their basic needs, access economic opportunities, build strong communities, and realize their full potential.



But First, Some Questions for You...

- How many of you are currently involved in policy or advocacy work with state or federal administrations or legislatures related to expanding opportunities for low-income people?
- How many of you participate in a group to do this work (above)?
- How many want to work more in this area (above)?
- How many of you are currently involved in running an IDA or matched savings program?
- How many want to learn more about approaches to setting up a program?



What is Asset Building?

Assets are resources that enable people to take control of their lives and participate in society in meaningful and productive ways. Along with earning power, these assets are the tools forming personal financial safety nets and enabling family movement to sustainable, life-long economic security. This comprehensive view of assets includes:

- Financial assets such as savings, investments, and equity in a home or business
- Education, training and the skills to succeed in a competitive, global economy
- Social assets that strengthen inclusion and collaborative problem solving in communities
- Effective community services and institutions to promote participation in community life

The combination of assets and community vitality builds resilience. Together they provide a base of resources for weathering crises and establishing the long-term stability required to achieve permanent reductions in poverty and opportunities for economic mobility.

From the Report of the Massachusetts Asset Building Coalition, June 2009



Massachusetts Asset Building Coalition (MABC)

-MABC uses the same definition of assets

“MABC defines assets as resources that enable people to take control of their lives and participate in society in meaningful and productive ways. Along with earning power, these assets are the tools forming personal financial safety nets and enabling family movement to sustainable, life-long economic security. This comprehensive view of assets includes, but is not limited to:

- Financial assets such as savings, investments, and equity in a home or business
- Education, training and the skills to succeed in a competitive, global economy
- Social assets that strengthen inclusion and collaborative problem solving in communities
- Effective community services and institutions to promote participation in community life

Mass ABC finds that the combination of assets and community vitality builds resilience. Together they provide a base of resources for weathering crises and establishing the long-term stability required to achieve permanent reductions in poverty and opportunities for economic mobility



Massachusetts Asset Building Coalition - MABC (Cont'd)

- How did we get from the Commission to the Coalition in Mass?
- A more immediate question? How did we get to the Commission in the first place?
- A brief history:
 - >AFI-IDA programs in early 2000's
 - >Commission as an idea in 2003
 - >State IDA 2007-2009
 - >"Dialogues and conversations" on Asset Development
 - >Commission approved in **Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2006, June 24, 2006**
 - >Efforts to get it seated; underway by spring of 2008
 - >Report issued June 2009
 - >MABC forms late 2009/early 2010



Massachusetts Asset Building Coalition - MABC (Cont'd)

MassABC is governed by an 8 member steering committee, chaired by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley. For more information, please contact coalition coordinator Robert Amara at ramara@supportunitedway.org.

- The Midas Collaborative
- BostonEITC Coalition
- Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations
- Crittenton Women's Union
- Massachusetts Association for Community Action
- Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley
- Institute on Assets and Social Policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University



Massachusetts Asset Building Coalition - MABC (Cont'd)

Mission - All residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should have the opportunity to experience **financial stability, achieve financial independence, and contribute to civic participation and the economy.** Toward that end, the Massachusetts Asset Building Coalition will **conduct research, engage diverse constituencies, and make and advocate for policy and practice recommendations** ensuring Massachusetts residents, especially those who are low and moderate income or asset poor, throughout life have opportunities to acquire and retain the assets necessary for sustainable economic security and improved quality of life, and the capacity to end intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Coalitions Broadly understood

Connection to IDA



Massachusetts Asset Building Coalition - MABC (Cont'd)

MASSABC Policy Agenda

- Introduce Financial Education into the K-12 Curriculum**
- Increase the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)**
- Increase Asset Limits in State Public Assistance Programs**
- Re-establish the State Individual Development Account Program Line Item (IDA)**
- Establish a State Commission to Study For Profit Schools**



IDA 101

When thinking about starting an IDA program, here are a few questions/factors to consider:

- How does the IDA fit into your mission, goals, activities?
- Remember that the IDA is not for every client
- It is a relatively small program: few in number, high in impact
- Unlike other programs, success is measured over a few to several years
- Adequate staffing
- Sophisticated fiscal operation
- Ability to collect and report data
- Connections in the community: Banks for accounts, for match, for loans, for expertise.
- Ability to raise funds locally from individual donors
- Relationships with small business owners
- Trust of clients perhaps through other agency programs, also helps with recruitment
- Staff know and appreciate financial education
- Be part of a coalition for mutual assistance
- Experience with case management
- Ability to outreach



Snapshot of MASSCAP Member IDA Programs

The MASSCAP IDA initiative:

- Started in 2006, by 2008, **20 agencies** operated IDA programs
- 355** low-income people save to buy a home, attend college, or start a business

Since 2006:

- 99 participants** have purchased their assets
- they have saved **\$440,942** collectively
- MASSCAP and its members have obtained **\$818,464** in federal, state, and local matching funds for the IDA accounts
- These IDAs are a portion of the statewide total
- Stemming from this work the Financial Education Toolkit Training for case managers (housing and homelessness; early education and care.





Joe Diamond

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Ending Poverty by Creating Opportunity

