

Community Teamwork FY27 Budget Priorities

➤ ***Addressing Poverty through Community Action (7002-0025)***

Address inequality, promote opportunity and end poverty by supporting Community Action Agencies. Community Teamwork served more than 63K individuals across more than 70 communities in FY25. This line provides critical funding for Community Teamwork to meet the diverse needs of our communities. - **\$7.5M**

➤ ***Strengthening Families through Affordable and Accessible Early Education and Care Support for Early Education Rate Reserve (3000-1042/1596-2434) - \$30M***

Early education subsidy reimbursement rates remain 20–30% below the private market, putting significant pressure on programs like Community Teamwork that serve low-income and at-risk children. A \$30 million provider rate reserve would support approximately a 2.8% cost-of-living adjustment, helping stabilize programs and enabling providers to increase educator wages and retain staff. This investment helps keep early education programs open and ensures thousands of families who rely on subsidized care can continue accessing stable, high-quality services.

➤ ***Support for Head Start Cost of Living Adjustment for Head Start Staff (3000-5000) - \$24.56M***

This year, we are asking the Legislature to fund a 3% cost-of-living adjustment for Head Start staff through the Head Start State Supplemental Grant, bringing total funding to \$24.56 million—an increase of \$4.56 million over FY26. The 669 children enrolled in Community Teamwork’s Early Learning Program will benefit from this investment that would help stabilize the workforce serving thousands of low-income children and families through comprehensive early education, health, nutrition, and family support services. Ensuring competitive wages will help programs recruit and retain qualified educators and maintain high-quality services for children who face the greatest barriers to success.

➤ ***Support for Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Grants (3000-1045/1596-2410) \$475M***

Maintaining \$475 million in Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) Grants would sustain critical operational funding for early education providers statewide, supporting programs that collectively serve tens of thousands of children and families. The FY25 tiered structure prioritizes programs like Community Teamwork’s, that serves more than 1300 low-income and at-risk children each day, while still providing stabilization funding to the broader early education system. Continued C3 funding helps programs cover rising operating costs, maintain staffing levels, and ensure families across Massachusetts can access stable, high-quality early education.

➤ ***Dedicated Increased Access to Care for 2,000 Children of Income-Eligible Working Families (1596-2411) \$31.2M***

We are requesting \$31.2 million to expand access to early education for 2,000 children of income-eligible working families currently on the EEC waitlist. In February 2026, there were over 2,300 children in Greater Lowell on the EEC waitlist, an increase of more than 150% since 2023. Access to vouchers has largely been frozen—except for siblings—and there are now fewer

contracted slots than in 2024, leaving many working families unable to secure care even as demand continues to grow statewide. This funding would expand access through a mix of contracts and vouchers across Massachusetts and include \$8 million to support the Workforce Personal Child Care Program, which has already helped more than 1,200 early educators secure care for their own children while remaining in the field.

➤ ***Emergency Assistance Family Shelter Program (7004-0101)***

Right now, an increasing number of children and families in Greater Lowell are required to sleep in parks, cars, and emergency rooms due to restrictions on the Emergency Assistance (EA) program. In the past 12 months alone, 377 households experiencing homelessness have come to Community Teamwork's offices in need of assistance. In the FY27 budget, we urge you to: appropriate adequate funding to provide shelter spaces for all eligible families; remove length of stay limits; remove the cap on the number of families in EA shelter; and restore presumptive eligibility so families have access to shelter while gathering documents to prove ongoing eligibility. **We ask for support of \$258.6m plus \$7.5m for a new line item (7004-0110) for family shelter diversion (total: \$266.1m)**

➤ ***HomeBASE (7004-0108)***

This short-term rental assistance program helps families avoid or exit shelter. We ask that you fund it at \$80 million with an increase in the benefit cap to \$50,000 over 24 months for families.

➤ ***Individual Shelter Program (7004-0102)***

Shelters across the region are full beyond capacity. Temporary expanded winter shelter is full - and ends on April 1. To begin to address the immense gap in shelter capacity, and to support Community Teamwork's new 50-bed women's shelter, we **request \$115 million in FY27 which includes \$12m for a new line item (7004-011) for winter shelter beds**

➤ ***Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) (7004-9316)***

RAFT offers a lifeline for thousands of individuals and families to stay housed and prevent homelessness. In Fy25, Community Teamwork assisted 5,455 households across the Merrimack Valley and the North Shore with this vital resource. For FY27, we request **an increase in RAFT's funding to \$300 million and removal of the notice to quit requirement in order to become eligible for assistance. We also ask that the family cap be increased to \$10,000 per year.**

➤ ***Housing Consumer Education Centers (HCEC) (7004-3036)***

HCECs suffered a funding reduction in FY26 that resulted in loss of staff across our region and reduced office hours, invariably resulting in greater housing instability. Community Teamwork's HCEC assisted over 2,000 households in FY25 with critical services - including housing search, eviction prevention, and help accessing RAFT and other rental assistance. In order to provide their critical services, **funding should be restored to the FY25 level of \$8.974 million.**

About Community Teamwork and Community Action

Established in 1965, Community Teamwork is a non-profit Community Action Agency (CAA) serving more than 65,000 individuals and families in the City of Lowell and the seven surrounding towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, and Westford. Community Teamwork also serves as a Community Development Corporation and as the Regional Housing Agency for the Merrimack Valley and the rest of the Northeastern Massachusetts, including more than 70 cities and towns inclusive of the North Shore and Cape Ann. Community Teamwork is a catalyst for social change. We strengthen communities and reduce poverty by delivering vital services and collaborating with key stakeholders to create housing, education and economic opportunities. Our vision is a community whose institutions, systems, and people support everyone's opportunity to thrive. www.commteam.org

Since their inception as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Community Action Agencies, like Community Teamwork have helped low-income Americans escape poverty and achieve economic security. Through programs such as Head Start, job training, housing, energy assistance, and financial education, Community Action Agencies tailor their services to meet the needs of the individuals and communities they serve. They put a human face on poverty, advocate for those who don't have a voice, and provide opportunities. www.masscap.org

Community Teamwork's FY25 Impact

More than 60,000 served annually
5,400 Clients connected to services through our Resource Center
9273 WIC participants received healthy food each month
Provided education/cared for 1200 children daily
574 served by Head Start/Early Head Start
264 Parents able to keep jobs due to reliable after-school care
256 Families transitioned into permanent housing from our Shelters
6,292 households avoided utility shut-offs
795 households had energy restored after disconnection
5,773 households remained stably housed through rental assistance
51 YouthBuild Students completed Job Skills Training