



Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency Report

The ABC's of ATCAA

June 30, 2020



Tuolumne County from Yankee Hill Rd.

Photo: Luann Hopkins



Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency Report (ATCAA)

The ABC's of ATCAA

Summary

The primary function of the Tuolumne County Grand Jury is to conduct civil investigations into the operations of county agencies within its jurisdiction. The reports of the Grand Jury are published, among other places, online and in local media - and they are available to the public. The purpose of this report is to inform the community about Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency (ATCAA), an agency offering support and services to members of our community living at or below the poverty line.

This report includes a brief history of Community Action Agencies in general, and a glimpse into the many diverse and comprehensive programs that ATCAA administers in the pursuit of supporting the most vulnerable members of Tuolumne County.

Glossary

ATCAA	Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency
CAA	Community Action Agency
CSBG	Community Service Block Grant
JPA	Joint Powers Agreement
ATCR Inc.	Amador Tuolumne Community Resources Inc. a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation
EOA	Economic Opportunity Act of 1964
CAP	Community Action Programs
OEO	Office of Economic Opportunity
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
EFAP	Emergency Food Assistance Program
LI-HEAP	Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
DOE	(US) Department of Energy
TCRCD	Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District CalWorks
HSP	CalWORKS Housing Support Program
HAP	Housing Assistance Program (Section 8)
HUD	(US Department of) Housing and Urban Development
CoC	Continuum of Care
BOS	Board of Supervisors
HHS	(US Department of) Home Health Services
YES Partnership	Youth Empowerment Solutions Partnership
CARB	California Air Resources Board

Background

President Johnson appointed Sargent Shriver, who was the first director of the Peace Corps, to draft the Economic Opportunity Act and to get the program approved by Congress. Shriver is also credited with being “the architect” of the War on Poverty. After the Economic Opportunity Act became law, Shriver became director of the newly created Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), and he spent 1964-1968 traveling all around the country as he familiarized himself with the true scope and plight of poverty in the United States. He was passionate about the various programs that were created because of the EOA, and many of those programs continue to be vital sources of support to the poor of America today.

Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency (ATCAA), formed in 1981, is a part of the Community Action Agency (CAA) network in the United States.

The goal of a CAA is to identify and address the specific issues that low-income people encounter in their own unique communities, to empower them to become self-sufficient. People working directly to address the root causes of poverty in individual communities can create new opportunities for growth and a way out of poverty. ATCAA has developed a comprehensive approach to the unique challenges and needs of those living at or below the poverty line here in Tuolumne County.

In his State of the Union address in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson declared a “War on Poverty,” which led to the passage of The Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) on July 23, 1964. Community Action Agencies were an integral part of the EOA, and they introduced the concept of allowing federal aid to flow into communities directly, giving them their own autonomy in determining the ways in which those funds could best support the poor.

One of the main components of the EOA was the Community Action Programs (CAP), which were designed to allow “maximum feasible participation” of under-privileged people to determine for themselves how to address the issues facing them. As the federal government continued to encounter opposition to this approach, they eventually created the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) which came to replace the provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act, and allowed block grants to go directly to states and communities.

In 1981, neither Amador nor Tuolumne counties had the required population (a minimum of 50,000 each) to qualify for the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) funding, and so the two counties combined to meet that requirement. Calaveras County opted out of the program at that time. The two counties formed a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA), which enables ATCAA to be a public non-profit agency. Amador Tuolumne Community Resources, Inc. (ATCR Inc.), is a non-profit corporation formed in the 1990s to assist the agency.

Methodology

- ▶ Site visit and in-person interviews with six ATCAA Program Directors and Executive Personnel
- ▶ Reviews of various partner agency websites

- ▶ Internet research regarding the Employment Opportunity Act, the War on Poverty, the development of Community Action Agencies and Tuolumne County economic demographics and statistics

The 2019-2020 Grand Jury reviewed the following documents:

- ▶ ATCAA 2019 Board of Directors Roster
- ▶ ATCAA 2019 Current By-Laws
- ▶ ATCAA 2019 Audited Basic Financial Statements
- ▶ ATCAA Income statement by department 7/19 - 12/19
- ▶ Financial spreadsheets and accounting for several individual ATCAA programs
- ▶ Tuolumne County Board of Supervisor board meeting video
- ▶ Amended title 13 California Code of Regulations Section 2025 Article 4.5
- ▶ California Air Resources Board Truck and Bus Regulation Compliance Requirement overview rev. June 18th, 2019

Discussion

ATCAA's Organization

As a community action agency, ATCAA is responsible for managing the main Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) from the federal government, which provides the bulk of their funding for services. There are several other funding sources from state and local grants and donations, and the amounts and availability of these sources are constantly changing. Some of the CSBG grant is also allocated directly to the state in some cases, and then the state passes those funds along to the counties. There are numerous regulations and stipulations for the management of all these funds, which ATCAA is also responsible for managing. Coordination of all these funding sources and regulations is a complicated process of management and accountability.

ATCAA is also responsible for coordinating the efforts of numerous local agencies, as well as other state and federal programs that are part of the CSBG constellation of assistance. Each of the programs that ATCAA offers to the community has a director who is responsible for all the financial accounting for their program. Directors may also be responsible for the coordination or management of additional staff and volunteers, as well as multiple partners in the local community. Each director is responsible for the management of many moving parts to keep each program running efficiently.

For ATCAA to receive funding from the CSBG, they are required to maintain a board consisting of three parts, including representatives from the public, private, and low-income sectors. ATCAA's board has no less than 15 members and no more than 18 members at any given time.

Public sector members are appointed public officials who have the authority to implement policies and changes within their respective communities. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) of both Amador and Tuolumne counties each provide two members to serve on ATCAA's Board. These same members also constitute the membership of the Joint Powers Governing Board and they serve concurrently in these capacities. An additional member, one who is an elected

official of a city or municipality, is selected by each BOS as the third member of the Public Sector.

Private sector members are selected to assure that varied and broad interests of Amador and Tuolumne county communities are represented and involved. Members may come from business, industry, labor, or faith-based groups. Priority is given to those individuals who have shown a commitment to diverse views and an interest in social service interests. Low-income representative members may or may not themselves be poor, but they must be able to represent the interests of those who are. Members must reside in the neighborhood served and can participate fully in all aspects of board membership.

This tripartite structure provides ATCAA with the necessary information to address “a wide range of community needs and views.” Members of the public and low-income sectors serve for a period of 10 years - a substantial commitment of time and energy to the essential work the agency does.

Tuolumne County Poverty Statistics and Demographics

U.S. Census information is used by federal, state, and local agencies to determine funding for over 100 different programs benefiting communities nationwide. The last census was conducted in April of 2010 and the U.S. Census Bureau began mailing out surveys to American homes in mid-March for the 2020 census. ATCAA will rely on this updated information as they manage their many outreach programs that benefit our community here in Tuolumne County.

According to the 2010 census, the median income in Tuolumne county was \$54,325 annually. Between 2013 and 2017, the Census Bureau conducted a community survey to estimate growth and/or decline in various categories. According to the US Department of Home Health Services (HHS), poverty guidelines for 2020 used to determine eligibility for community assistance programs allow a single person household an annual income of \$12,760, and a four-person household an annual income of \$26,200. In the interim survey mentioned above, the estimates are not differentiated with regard to single person households (which include a number of seniors and persons living on social security income) but there are approximately 1,152 people residing in Tuolumne county with an income between \$25,000 and \$34,999.

People between the ages of 65-74 make up the largest group of the local population, followed by children aged 5-17. There is also a large population of veterans in Tuolumne county, over 50% of whom are veterans of the Vietnam War. These populations are the most vulnerable and at-risk for issues of ill-health and financial disaster, which can lead to their joining the ranks of the poor. Currently, the largest population already at or below the poverty line in Tuolumne County are men and women aged 25-34 and women between the ages of 64 and 74.

The programs, services, and collaborative efforts of ATCAA provide a vital lifeline for the most vulnerable members of the Tuolumne County community.

ATCAA Food Bank

Grant funding for ATCAA’s food bank comes out of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The monies from this grant are used for all total costs in the coordination of the food bank - including food stores and administrative costs. Additional food is sourced out of a federal program called the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).

Grant funds are used to purchase food from Second Harvest and Cal Foods - food banks operated nationally and statewide, respectively. There are several local stores and businesses that donate food.

Part of the CSBG grant mandates that a community action agency provide services regarding nutrition. ATCAA accomplishes this by working with the UC Davis Nutrition and Wellness Department to select and purchase healthy food items, and to educate food bank recipients in healthy nutritional eating habits.

The ATCAA food bank coordinates monthly distribution sites all over Tuolumne County, in addition to neighborhood partner distribution food pantries that operate every day of the week, all month long. Flyers with days, times, and locations of distribution sites are widely available throughout the county. ATCAA's food bank received 1,054,778 pounds of food in 2019 and distributed 940,009 pounds of food to the clients of Tuolumne County. The lesser amount distributed was due to food spoilage or items not usable because of various food handling mandates. The food bank director oversees all financial management and accounting, as well as administrative matters. There is a small staff of two full-time coordinators and several full-and part-time associates who manage operations and client intake and who work with volunteers. The food bank is always in need of volunteers, particularly tradespeople (such as electricians or people trained in refrigeration maintenance) or people who can drive a truck or forklift (no special licensing is required).

Through the years, Tuolumne County food banks have faced many challenges including: recessions, keeping equipment maintained and up-to-date, food recalls, the changing demographics of people who don't have enough food for themselves or their families, and providing healthy food options for low-income people and families.

One of the challenges the food bank is currently facing is the need to replace the diesel truck. The truck is used for pickups, deliveries, and distribution. They will no longer be able to register the truck they are currently using due to a regulation impacting companies using diesel trucks in California. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has been phasing in Title 13, California Code of Regulations Section 2025 for several years. This regulation, effective January 1, 2020, made 2019 the last year the food bank's current truck could be registered. The cost of a new truck that meets CARB requirements now and into the foreseeable future, will be a significant expense. This is a challenge many organizations are facing this year, but a more significant challenge for a non-profit agency.

ATCAA's food bank is well-organized, creative, and passionately managed. It provides a comprehensive and diverse source of food for clients in need in Tuolumne County.

Food bank services include the following:

- ▶ Emergency food assistance program
- ▶ Senior farmer market program
- ▶ Food for kids
- ▶ Holiday food program
- ▶ Neighborhood partner pantries

In 2019, the food bank received 656,416 pounds of donated food and distributed a total accumulation of 940,009 pounds of food throughout the community to approximately 200 individuals each month. The Turkey Drive in November collected 1,100 turkeys to help fill holiday food baskets.

The food bank program has 590 local volunteers who spent a collective 10,356 hours in 2019 serving those in need on a regular basis.

ATCAA's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Major grant funding for ATCAA's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) comes out of a federal fund distributed to the states and administered by HHS. Additional, smaller funding comes out of the Department of Energy (DOE), Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD), and California's Prop. 84: Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006.

LIHEAP provides utility assistance to qualified clients, by way of a once-yearly credit payment to either PG&E or one of the several local propane vendors. Qualification for assistance includes income level, number of dependents in the home, proof of residence and amount of rent. Grant funds also offer weatherization measures, to help clients cut down on their energy costs by helping with various home improvements. ATCAA has a crew of three to seven staff members who provide an in-home analysis to assess issues that may satisfy the program protocols and qualify for funding. The Prop. 84 funding provides a similar in-home water conservation program for qualified clients. A relatively new solar program is being implemented and ATCAA's energy department staff are currently in training with five homes slated for conversion.

ATCAA also has a small fund available to help clients who are in danger of having their power shut off due to non-payment. ATCAA staff act as a liaison with PG&E to prevent a shut off and will work with clients moving forward to help them with money management and an affordable payment plan. ATCAA will also provide weatherization measures if necessary.

ATCAA's LIHEAP program provides essential assistance to low-income residents in Tuolumne County, while operating on a dwindling amount of state and federal funding.

In 2019, the Home Energy Assistance Program served 4,402 individuals:

- ▶ Utility payment assistance was provided to 3,894 individuals
- ▶ Weatherization assistance was provided to 2,432 households
- ▶ Individuals with improved energy efficiency/or energy burden reduction in their homes were 298

ATCAA's Housing Program

Grant funding for ATCAA's housing program comes from numerous federal, state, and local sources. HUD administers a grant at the federal level which requires individual communities to coordinate services under the auspices of a Continuum of Care (CoC). HUD's definition of a CoC is "a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximize

self-sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.” State funding includes several emergency housing sources, and Tuolumne County also funds a variety of programs and shelters. ATCAA serves both Amador and Tuolumne counties in the CoC, along with representatives of Mariposa and Calaveras counties.

The funding amounts vary, and they are determined based upon bi-annual “point in time” counts, which serve only as a “snapshot” of the amount of homeless in these communities. Members of the CoC are required to collect and submit data to HUD’s Homeless Management Information System, their database which collects and analyzes client-level data and data on the provision of housing and services to the homeless.

ATCAA coordinates a comprehensive spectrum of programs and services to our homeless population (approximately one third of whom are over the age of 55), in both Tuolumne and Amador counties. Programs include a homeless shelter that sleeps approximately 30 people and several local properties administered by Stanislaus County Housing Authority (Tuolumne County does not have its own housing authority).

ATCAA has agreements in place with local motels/hotels and provides vouchers for people when another emergency housing is unavailable. The number of vouchers vary according to availability. There are some units available in Sonora, Columbia, and other parts of the county that help clients with affordable temporary housing while they explore job opportunities and strive to achieve housing stability on their own. ATCAA has a liaison service with local landlords to help clients get into rental properties—providing a business model of stability to potential landlords and teaching clients about responsible bill paying and being a good tenant.

The housing system consists of multiple funding sources, properties, and agencies that are in a constant state of flux according to availability and need, with need typically being greater than supply. ATCAA also works with Give Someone a Chance, a local agency which, among other things, provides a mobile unit for showers and toilet facilities to Tuolumne County homeless encampments.

Homelessness is a steadily increasing and vast problem. Many people here in Tuolumne County are one disaster away from finding themselves in dire straits. As the issue continues to grow, funding for solutions is shrinking. ATCAA works against the odds to ensure as many people as possible have a roof over their heads and a stable living situation.

ATCAA Participation in YES Partnership

ATCAA coordinates Tuolumne County’s Youth Empowerment Solutions (YES) partnership—a coalition of local agencies who are “dedicated to supporting youth and families by preventing suicide, substance and child abuse.” Grant funding for YES partnership comes from Tuolumne County Behavioral Health and the Sonora Area Foundation, in addition to some private donations. The partnership is managed by an Executive Committee and ATCAA acts as the fiscal agent.

The partnership consists of a 13-sector coalition, including members of local law enforcement, education, public health, faith-based communities, families, and youth. The work of the partnership includes multiple training opportunities for members of the community. Trainings in-

clude identifying possible suicidal ideations, as well as suicide prevention and intervention. In the event of possible suicide, support groups for survivors of suicide and mental-health first aid are also covered. There is a peer-group mentoring program for high school students, which the partnership would like to expand to elementary-aged children as well—although these programs are always suffering from a lack of funding and are often difficult to sustain. Friday Nite Live is a program developed in the mid-1980s, originally as an alternative social scene for local youth; since the early 1990s the program has shifted its focus to a youth development program which includes teaching leadership skills, and project management. All staff and members of YES partnership are trauma informed and understand the need for a trusted adult, other than a parent, in a youth's life.

In 2018, there were 18 reported suicides in Tuolumne County, an increase of four from 2017. The number of adults and youth who exhibit suicidal behavior is much greater than the number of reported suicides. The number of people directly affected by suicide or attempted suicide is variable, but at any given time, five percent of the population is living with thoughts of suicide. The number of suicide deaths in Tuolumne County is difficult to determine for any given year, because the data collected by the California Department of Public Health is aggregated among Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne Counties, with the most recent publicly available report dated March 2019.

The Grand Jury recognizes that the county needs the services that YES Partnership offers, and ATCAA's involvement in the coalition is one of the most vital functions of the agency.

Findings

- F1.** Title 13, California Code of Regulations, Section 2025, effective January 1, 2020 requires the replacement of the diesel truck used for the essential pick up, delivery and distribution for the food bank. At the time of this Grand Jury inquiry, a replacement truck had not been obtained.
- F2.** ATCAA is meticulous in its duties of coordinating multiple-funding sources and federal, state, and local regulations. Likewise, in the general management of the agency and individual programs, the Grand Jury found their performance to be exemplary as they employ creative and frugal solutions to address diminishing resources.
- F3.** ATCAA practices a spirit of cooperation and collaboration with neighboring counties in pooling resources and partnership activities, to help as many people in need as possible.

Recommendations

- R1.** The Grand Jury recommends ATCAA identify a means to replace the truck used for food bank pick up, delivery and distribution, through funding sources such as grants, loans, budgeting for replacement, and/or donations and community fund-raising efforts. (F1)

Commendation

The Grand Jury initially decided to investigate ATCAA out of a desire to learn more about the agency. Most of us had only a limited understanding of the services ATCAA provides to the com-

munity of Tuolumne County. During the investigation we learned of the compelling history of Community Action Agencies, and were subsequently deeply impressed by the professionalism, innovation and creativity, and dedication to our community demonstrated by ATCAA. People from all walks of life, often with successful careers in the private sector, have come to direct the agency and are managing the programs and services with the highest degree of integrity and compassion for the clients of Tuolumne County. There is an open atmosphere of cooperation with the entire Motherlode area, including non-agency programs in both Calaveras and Mariposa counties. The programs and services discussed in this report represent only a partial accounting of the diverse and comprehensive work that ATCAA does in the community, and the Grand Jury commends ATCAA for a job well done.

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- ▶ ATCAA Audited Basic Financial Statements, Izabal, Bernaciak & Company, CPA - for the year ended June 30, 2019
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- ▶ ATCAA Fiscal Officer Narrative - 2/2020
- ▶ 2019 ATCAA Food Bank Poundages
- ▶ Tuolumne County ATCAA Food Donation/Distribution Summaries - 7/2019 to 2/2020
- ▶ ATCAA List of Housing Program Funds; Contracts and Grant descriptions
- ▶ ATCAA Housing Resources Organizational Chart as of August 2019 Not Just the Tip of the Iceberg - YES Partnership suicide statistics; Tuolumne County 2018

California Department of Health Data Brief, Overview of Homicide and Suicide Deaths in California, March 2019

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What is a Community Action Agency?

<http://communityservices.us/about/detail/category/community-action-agency/>

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Tripartite Board Composition

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Second Harvest Food Bank of San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/second-harvest-food-bank-of-san-joaquin-and-stanislaus-counties>

California Association of Food Banks <http://www.cafoodbanks.org>

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Central Sierra Continuum of Care website <https://www.centralsierracoc.org>

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Reports issued by the grand jury do not identify the individuals who have been interviewed. Penal Code §929 requires that reports of the grand jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the grand jury.