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Hampshire Community Action Commission Records

1965-1984

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A private, non-profit corporation founded in 1965 in Northampton, Massachusetts to finance community action programs for eliminating poverty and assisting low income people. Programs included day care centers, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Summer Head Start, a drug addiction clinic at the jail, Legal Services, and the Foster Grandparent Program. Records comprise bylaws and organizational charts, annual reports, board of directors minutes; administrative directors' records, including correspondence with the federal agencies and state agencies granting funds, grant applications and awards, program plans, financial and legal documents, personnel records and staff training directives; the agency newsletter County Voice, Noticero Latina; and newsclippings about welfare programs.

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Background on Hampshire Community Action Commission

Hampshire Community Action Commission, Inc. (HCAC), a private, non-profit corporation, was founded in 1965 in Northampton, Massachusetts, as a response to Lyndon Johnson's Great Society aims and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 which offered cities and towns grants to finance community action programs for eliminating poverty and assisting low income people. The 1964 Act stipulated that there be maximum participation by the low-income recipients in the program's administration.

The 1964 Act established the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), a federal bureau which allocated monies and coordinated the programs with other governmental agencies. The OEO operated separate staffs for the Job Corps, VISTA, Head Start, and Community Action Programs. HCAC is a Community Action Program under this agency. In the 1970s the OEO ceased to exist, succeeded by the Communities Services Administration (CSA), which then became the federal bureau overseeing local Community Action Programs. Under federal auspices, there were also special programs, such as one for migrant workers. The federal agency also granted funds to existing agencies to administer programs funded by the 1964 Act. For example, work training programs were run by the Labor Department; rural antipoverty programs were under the Department of Agriculture.

The Hampshire Community Action Commission began in 1965-1966 with programs including day care centers, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Summer Head Start, and a drug addiction clinic at the jail. Soon they added a Legal Services program with neighborhood law offices primarily aimed at educating the poor in preventive law, and teaching them their legal rights and obligations. Another early program was the Foster Grandparent Program, which recruited low-income people over sixty to serve neglected and deprived children who had no close adult contacts.

With the 1970s and new presidential administrations, some funding sources were cut, while a few others appeared, causing the HCAC to drop some programs and to focus on new areas. Programs in after-school day care, family day care (where the child is taken care of in the home of the caregiver) and the energy/weatherization/fuel assistance programs are examples of newer HCAC programs.

A 1975 fact sheet stated the emphasis of HCAC: "To serve as an incubator for developing community-based and community supportive projects which will eventually stand on their own." Measured effectiveness was said to be not just by the provided services, but by the changes the program achieved in the attitude of the community toward the poor, and the refocusing of public and private resources for anti-poverty purposes it effected.

Scope of collection

The records comprise bylaws and organizational charts; annual reports (1974-1984); board of directors minutes (1969-1982); the Administrative Director's records, including correspondence with the federal agencies and state agencies granting funds, grant applications and awards, program plans, financial and legal documents, personnel records and staff training directives; the agency newsletter County Voice, Noticero Latina; and newsclippings about welfare programs.

The records are inconsistently kept, depending on the staff, which had a rapid turnover rate. There are noticeable gaps; some programs are more represented than others. For example, the Hispanic Center is seen through a small lawsuit with the landlord of the center, and the Legal Services Program is only a list of lawyers. But, in the other series, such as the correspondence and the financial documents, the Hispanic Center and the Legal Services can be documented.

This collection, which could be updated periodically, should be a good source for historians interested in the 1960s and the promise of the Great Society legislation; for researchers in social service areas, such as early childhood education, programs for the elderly, preventive alcoholism programs; for researchers in Hispanic immigration; and for people studying the long range effects of federal programs on the poverty in Hampshire County.

Arrangement

This collection is organized into four series:

Series 1. Agency Administration Records, 1965-1982

Series 2. Administrative Director's Records, 1971-1981, n.d.

Series 3. Programs, 1970-1981, n.d.

Series 4. Printed Material, 1968-1980

Series descriptions

Series I. Agency Administrative Records

1965-1982

Includes the bylaws, fact sheets, history, organizational charts, and annual reports. In addition there are records of the Board of Directors: lists of board members, orientation materials from the federal agency or earlier boards, as well as minutes of meetings (1965-1982, with gaps).

Series 2. Administrative Directors' Records

1971-1981, n.d.

Comprised of the various director's planning reports to the federal agency, grant proposals and awards, other fundraising material of a more local nature, correspondence with the federal agency, Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and Office for Children material, job descriptions, employee union and health plan material, staff orientation and salary information, as well as program directors' meeting minutes. There is also a section of legal documents related to the agency: legal correspondence, agreements, and lawsuits. Here (Box 11) are also some records of the Hampshire (County) Council of Social Agencies and HCAC's part in that coordinating group, which evolved from a loose confederated to a more formal organization with a Hampshire County Coordinator of Human Services at the head.

Series 3. Programs

1970-1981, n.d.

In alphabetical order.

Includes material related to the sub-agencies administering the programs, from the Alcohol Prevention Program through the Youth Employment Service Program. Within each program can be found correspondence, and financial and legal records.

Series 4. Printed Material

1968-1980

Contains the agency newspaper, County Voice, Noticiero Latino, 1971-1980, as well as a set of mounted newspaper clippings from Massachusetts newspapers in 1968-1969. These clippings reflect the 1968-1969 public welfare program statewide including strikes by recipients for more aid, and letters to the editors criticizing public welfare programs.

Inventory

Series I. Agency Administrative Records

1965-1982

Bylaws, fact sheets, history, organizational charts

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Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Kerrie Clark, Executive Director of HCAC, 1985. Also, 1965 minutes and by laws from files of Harvey Finison.

Processing Information

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English

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Search terms

Subjects

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Hampshire Community Action Commission.
Hampshire County (Mass.)--Economic conditions.
Hampshire County (Mass.)--History.
Poor--Massachusetts--Hampshire County.

Contributors

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