



# Community Action Solutions

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## Heavy Spring Rains Impact Oklahoma's Community Action Agencies Services

Community Action Agencies struggled to deal with the impact of severe storms that dumped historic amounts of rain this Spring but continued responding to needs in their service areas.

Kevin Stinson, Human Resources Director for **Big Five Community Services**, reported the public transit program, Southern Oklahoma Rural Transportation System (SORTS), provided necessary medical doctor appointments and kidney dialysis rides. However, there were so many flooded streets that some transit vehicles had to be re-routed. In some case, drivers were sent home early because of flooding in Bryan, Love and Carter counties.



Flooding created problems for agency's Head Start activities. Big Five's annual Head Start Fish-A-Thon had to be cut from eight to just two days. The agency normally has 49 classrooms participating during the two-week period. The agency also cancelled its annual Head Start Literacy Banquet held at Southeastern Oklahoma State University because of flooding in communities and the roads into Durant.

While none of the agency's facilities were flooded, the high water and subsequent bridge and roadway closures created hardships for employees trying to report for work. Many employees drive from Ardmore, Madill, Marietta, Ada and Coalgate to Big Five's office in Durant. With the Roosevelt Bridge over Lake Texoma along with other roads closed, Stinson reported he along with Executive Director Kent Watson and other employees had to drive 1 hour and 45 minutes one-way to get to work.

**Delta Community Action Foundation** staff worked in unison with the McClain County Salvation Army, Emergency Management and the City of Purcell to assist residents, according to Tina Casey, Foster Grandparents Program Director. Delta provided some emergency food and clothing and the Salvation Army provided flood kits.

While Delta's office in Purcell remained dry, Rx for Oklahoma Coordinator Becky Deaton experienced flooding first-hand when her Lexington home came within inches of being swamped by rising water. However, before what was left of Tropical Storm Bill entered Oklahoma with a second round of torrential rain, Deaton had volunteered to help fill and deliver sand bags to residents in Purcell.

As an active member of the Emergency Management Team in Atoka and Johnston counties, **INCA Community Services** worked closely with the Red Cross, Salvation Army, FEMA and local faith based organizations assisting victims of the flooding. The agency worked with partners to fulfill basic needs such as food, shelter and transportation. It assisted 23 families through the food bank, clothing bank, transportation, case management and emergency shelter program.

JAMM Transit services were impacted with many bridges and roads closed around Johnston and Marshall counties. Closures required transit vehicles to use alternate routes. In some cases that increased travel time to certain locations.



What would have normally been only a 30 minute ride took, in some cases, one to two hours.

Hugo Lake State Park, which is managed by **Little Dixie Community Action Agency**, received extensive damage. Thirteen cabins normally available to rent during the busy summer season were inundated with lake water when the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers held back the Spring rains to prevent flooding downstream, according to the Little Dixie Digest newsletter. By early August, the park was partially reopened.

