



Emergency Assistance Roundtable Summary May 14, 2008

Changes in Extent of Need for Emergency Assistance

- Number of people seeking help has increased.
 - More people need crisis intervention.
 - People are “middle-class” and haven’t sought assistance before.
- More housing issues
 - Adjustable rate and subprime mortgages creating problems for some homeowners - can not afford payments on higher-rate mortgages.
 - People who lost job are finding employment, but earning less and therefore having difficulty making mortgage payments.
 - Renters also are affected because landlords face foreclosures.
- “Typical” clients more “squeezed”: Have to make tough decisions about what’s most important, how to best spend limited funds.
- People request help more often.
- More transportation needs: people can’t afford gas to get to work.
- Mothers can’t afford child care.
- Seniors who were able to make it on fixed income are trying to help family members and this adds to their stress.
- People lack survival skills, including financial management.

Policy Changes as a Result of Changing Needs

- Organizations are trying to stretch resources.
- Center of Grace: Reduced the number of times per month that a client can access their Clothes Closet, and changed hours of operation.
- Human Services and Aging (HS/A) – Multi Service Center (MSC): Changed eligibility for utility assistance to up to 200% of poverty, and attempted to increase the amount of assistance. Food vouchers have been extended to every other month. In Gardner, food limited to 1x/month.
- Salvation Army: Financial assistance has been increased and requests are considered “case by case.”
- El Centro is considering if it should continue to provide emergency assistance in Johnson County, or rather if it should make more referrals to other organizations and emphasize preventative health.

Identified Gaps in Services

- Funds for rent and mortgage payments.
- Funds for controlled substances (example: medication for chronic pain).
- Gasoline vouchers.
- Organization willing to pick up and store large items until needed and others can pick up.
- Transportation – especially in Gardner.
- Employment opportunities in rural areas.
- Job readiness training, job coaches, job training.

What Are the Barriers to Applying for Food Stamps (Why don't people apply?)

- SRS is intimidating for some people.
- Long application with lots of documentation required.
- Perception that Food Stamp benefits are not worth effort to apply.
- Seniors don't re-apply when their applications expire.
- People seek help when in crisis and need immediate help; Food Stamps not available immediately, application process takes time.
- If individual appears to be eligible for SSI, he/she must apply for those benefits before SRS will provide Food Stamps.
- Applicants who are denied don't follow-up, and providers do not have capacity to follow-up.

How Can Our Community More Effectively Respond?

- Food Stamps: SRS expand use of telephone interviews.
- Reach out to civic groups for donations.
- Use newsletters to ask community for help (include numbers about increased needs).
- Provide help to people who do not have a Social Security number, especially to those with medical needs.
- Provide a list of resources that includes description of services and geographic boundaries (*SRS will share its list with other providers*).
- Promote United Way 2-1-1 as resource.
- Remain compassionate, caring, and non-judgmental.
- Increase collaboration between agencies.
- Focus work to fill gaps.
- In order to avoid duplication of services, this year Salvation Army and H/SA will get list of people served through the Christmas Bureau.
- Christmas Bureau will help with outreach. Agencies are invited to send brochures to them.

Other Updates and Opportunities

- MSC now serves as intake site for KC Medicine Cabinet. For people under 200% of poverty, this provides durable medical supplies. (Must apply through the MSC and provide a Social Security number). Vouchers are provided for emergency dental care. Prescription assistance is also available (no controlled substances).
- In 2010, SRS will provide dental coverage for qualifying persons (up to 250% of poverty), and a smoking cessation class.
- REACH Foundation is funding dental services for young children (0-3 years) and for qualified seniors.
- Olathe School District has funds to provide lunch throughout the summer for at least 50% of the children who qualify for free/reduced-price lunch (any age).
- LIEAP benefits are available during summer and amounts are higher.

17 Attended: Betty Athey (Jo. Co. Christmas Bureau), Jennifer Creagor (Church of Resurrection), Laura Flynn (Salvation Army), Nan Frink (Jo. Co. HS/A), Toni J. Hull (Jo. Co. HS/A), Mary Lou Jaramillo (El Centro); Pam Hider Johnson (GKC Housing Information Center), Ellen Jones (Catholic Community Services), Shirley Kelso (Catholic Community Services) Roberta Lyle (Church of Resurrection), Rebecca McKinley (Salvation Army), Stevie Morris (Jo. Co. HS/A), Linda Rogers (Jo. Co. HS/A, Gardner MSC), Sylvia Romero (Center of Grace); Michele Shively (Kansas Gas Service), Becky Smith (Jo. Co. Area Agency on Aging), Cheryl Tolbert (Ks. Dept. SRS)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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