



Emergency Assistance Roundtable Summary May 13, 2009

On May 13, United Community Services (UCS) hosted a roundtable discussion with Emergency Assistance Providers in order to provide them with an opportunity to learn from each other and to discuss ways to work together to address emergency needs in this community, as well as to provide UCS with a better understanding of current conditions and ways to respond.

Current Opportunities

- Inter-Faith Hospitality Network: Housing available for one or two homeless families.
- Johnson County Multi Service Center: Assistance with weatherization. Call 715-6600.
- SRS: Food Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps):
- The amount of food assistance benefit has increased.
- In Johnson County, single individuals may receive assistance for more than three months if they are looking for work.
- Cash value of pension plans including 401(K), IRA and Keogh no longer are considered a resource when determining household resources for eligibility purposes.
- Unemployment: Increase in benefits and extensions are being granted.
- Some restaurants allow Food Pantries to pick-up food at their establishments.
- Catholic Charities will soon have small amount of funds for temporary shelter at motels or Housing Coalition apartments. An agency must refer the client and that agency must provide case management for the client.
- Salvation Army (not present, but reported by others) received grant funds to help people laid-off after September 1.

New/Emerging Needs for Emergency Assistance

- More single men, and those in their 20's, are seeking assistance.
- People are seeking help with multiple bills that are beyond the ability of agencies to pay. (People were on a payment plan, but could not manage it so they were dropped from the plan.)
- Significant utility bills.
- First time poverty, especially families where both adults lost jobs.
- People have taken significant salary cuts and can not make their payments with their reduced income.
- People need legal assistance in order to file for bankruptcy.
- Teens do not know how to deal with poverty. Leads to grief, depression, anxiety and possible suicide.
- Faith-based organizations are experiencing an increase in the number of children/teens talking about their depression, etc.
- More people are seeking assistance who have never sought it before (first-generation poverty) and often they wait too long to ask for help.
- Number of people seeking help has increased and amount of help being requested has increased.

How are agencies prioritizing given their limited resources?

- Most organizations do not have enough staff to see everyone who wants help. As a result, organizations are setting appointments rather than serving people on a walk-in basis.
- Multi Service Centers have changed to appointment only. In Gardner food and utility assistance are provided on different days.

How are agencies prioritizing given their limited resources? (cont'd)

- Spending more time with case management – helping clients plan for near future.
- Village Church Food Pantry sees people by appointment only. People seeking food assistance appointments are seen within 4-5 days; other appointments are two weeks out.
- Using MAAC-Link tool to help clients with budgeting.
- Using volunteers, social work students and other students for internships. However, this is not seen as a long-term solution.

Referrals – Where are people referred to for services? Any new providers?

- Housing Information Center helps people set-up mortgage payment plans.
- Olathe Food Pantry – Formed through consolidation of several churches. Only open on Friday and must call ahead.
- Referrals are most effective if provider tells client to use provider's name when making contact, and provider also calls organization that he/she referred the client to.
- CHAMPSS (Choosing Healthy Appetizing Meal Plan Solutions for Seniors) is offered through the Older Americans Act and the Nutrition Program/Area Agency on Aging, in partnership with the two Hy-Vee stores in Olathe and Overland Park. Get application through Human Services and Aging (715-8894).
- Christine German volunteered Village Presbyterian Food Pantry to make a comprehensive list of all faith-based assistance providers.

Identified Gaps in Services

- Transportation including bus tickets.
- Legal assistance including bankruptcy.
- Temporary housing.
- Health insurance for adults and undocumented persons.
- Car repair.

As network of providers, how can we respond more effectively and efficiently?

- When leveraging funds from Catholic Charities, send documents to Tamra before Friday.
- Always ask people if they receive Federal Food Assistance and if they do not, but appear eligible, encourage them to apply.
- Meet as Emergency Assistance providers more than one time year.
- All providers should use MAAC-Link. If cost is barrier, seek grant from MAAC or other sources.
- Distribute contact information for those in attendance today.
- Have same staff person work with client over time in order to develop relationship and trust, and help the client avoid having to tell his/her story repeatedly.
- Providers should attend Johnson County Continuum of Care on Homelessness.

14 Attended: Tamra Brandes (Catholic Charities, Olathe), Roxie Byrne (Village Church Pantry), Vicki Dercher (Inter Faith Hospitality Network), Christine Germann (Village Food Pantry), Pam Hider-Johnson (Housing Information Center), Ellen Jones (Catholic Charities, Overland Park), Shirley Kelso (Catholic Charities), Magdalena Lugo (El Centro), Jamie McGinn (KCP&L), Cindy Muehelberger (Jo. Co. Human Services and Aging), Margaret Outler (Indian Creek Community Church), Linda Rogers (Jo. Co. Human Services and Aging, Gardner MSC), Dorothy Shuler (Indian Creek Community Church), Cheryl Tolbert (Ks. Dept. SRS)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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