

2022 Council of Church Representatives

Ways to Engage Your Congregation in Alleviating Poverty Through CCSC



CCSC exists to address the impact of poverty in our community—through both “in the moment” services that cover urgent basic needs and through long-term interventions that help people become more self-sufficient. We keep in mind that poverty has many facets and contributors including generational poverty and situational (crisis-related) poverty. We also aim to view poverty as an issue that impacts all of us in the community rather than an “us vs. them” matter, realizing that in trying circumstances, many of us could face financial struggles.

Ways to Engage Your Congregation in Addressing Poverty:

Awareness

- Encourage everyone to follow CCSC on social media to learn more about how CCSC responds to poverty. Platforms: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.
- Look for ways to educate your congregation on poverty-related issues. For example, share information including:

In Greater Houston, 14% of families are surviving on incomes below the poverty level and another 33% are employed but struggling to afford necessities including food, housing and health care.

An annual “survival budget” to support a family of four persons (2 adults, 1 infant and 1 preschooler) in Texas in 2018 was approximately \$64,500. To earn that income, *both* adults would need to earn \$16 per hour in consistent full-time jobs.

Texas labor statistics from 2018 show that 64% of adults were employed yet more than half of them were paid hourly. Hourly paid jobs tend to have lower wages, fewer benefits and less stability.

Most sources estimate that monthly rent for an apartment in Greater Houston averages \$1,200.

Hands-on Work/Volunteering

- Conduct donation drives (gently used clothing, shelf-stable food, etc.) and deliver items to CCSC to learn about how and where donations are put to great use.
- Volunteer in the Workforce Program (one-on-one or facilitate a class) to assist job seekers.
- Tour the CCSC campus to see our Workforce and Basic Needs teams in action.
- Promote volunteering or engage a special group to serve at an event (Jingle Bell Express or Back To School) where interaction with clients occurs.

CCSC Guest Speakers

- Invite President & CEO Michelle Shonbeck to speak at a worship service.
- Invite Program Directors Yolanda Holmes or Karen Holloman to speak with classes, outreach committees or other gatherings.

Tell our Clients' Stories! Putting a face on poverty brings out understanding and compassion in our community. Here are two examples you might share:

Susan's "Safety Net" Story

"Susan" is a great example of the client situations seen every day at Emergency Services. She is a 40-year-old single mother of one daughter, age 1. They live in an apartment on the edge of Bellaire in the Gulfton area. Susan made her first visit to CCSC in August 2022. She is employed full-time and earns approximately \$2,200 per month, which is usually just enough to pay for her usual expenses. She has no "emergency fund" or savings for unexpected expenses.

In July, Susan changed jobs to take a better position but had a short income gap between jobs. Around the same time, her mother passed away and there were burial expenses. Then, her once reliable babysitter stopped working and she had to find alternate childcare, which ended up costing far more. Due to this combination of factors, Susan fell behind on her \$800 per month rent.

The team at Emergency Services-Southwest interviewed Susan, made a pledge to cover three-quarters of her rent, provided other resources to help her secure additional funding, and provided groceries and hygiene items to help stretch her budget. Susan thinks she will be back on track this month but is admittedly unprepared for the next emergency that might hit. The CCSC Team hopes she will return and make good use of coaching and workforce services to help her plan for a more secure future.

Jesús and Josefina – A Workforce Success Story:

A 2016 graduate of CCSC's Martha's Way vocational training program, Jesús recently reached out with an update on the progress of his housekeeping business. Prior to 2016, Jesús was employed in a different industry but lost his job. His wife, Josefina, is a 2009 Martha's Way graduate and was modestly successful with her solo business, augmenting Jesús's income. Her earnings (\$1,800 per month) couldn't support their family, however, so Jesús and Josefina created a new plan to build a business together.

Jesús told CCSC that in the beginning, it was difficult—they struggled to get clients because of competition and pricing. But six years later, after sticking with it, they have 20-25 clients every month and can no longer accept new customers. Their income has increased to \$5,000 per month and they are able to pay their mortgage on time and send their children to college.

Jesús and Josefina now refer the job requests they cannot accept to CCSC so that other Martha's Way graduates can benefit from housekeeping referrals. "Sometimes, I'm surprised how much money we are making," Jesús said. He reports that their next goal is to learn how to manage their income for long-term goals including retirement. Fortunately, CCSC has another service to help with that: Tina Marie Amrhein, our Workforce Financial Coach.

For more information, please contact CCSC's Program Directors:

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