

UWGMC 2008-2010 Grant Cycle Vision Council Project Descriptions

Fostering Self Sufficiency

Nutrition Alliance

Lead Agency:

Mercer Street Friends

Collaborative Partners:

Community Action Service Center of Hightstown

The Crisis Ministry

HomeFront

Mt. Carmel Guild

Project Mission:

To increase access of indigent, homeless, working-poor, and fixed income Mercer County residents to healthy food; help improve their eating habits, health, food budgeting, and productivity; strengthen their economic stability and self-sufficiency by addressing the causes of food emergencies; and combat rising health costs by improving the nutritional status of the county's poorest residents.

Project Description:

The Nutrition Alliance will provide food to low-income residents in communities throughout Mercer County. The project will increase access to nutritious food for low-income families; upgrade the nutritional quality of food packages or meals offered to clients, with particular sensitivity to cultural preferences and dietary restrictions; and increase the knowledge and importance of healthy eating and best nutritional practices.

Collaborative partners will distribute food and educational materials to 2,850 households per month in Trenton, Princeton, Hightstown, E. Windsor, Cranbury, and Washington Township communities. The Alliance will utilize the combined social services expertise of its member agencies to deliver wraparound services that will enable participants to stabilize their households and improve their self-sufficiency.

Community of Services Collaboration

Lead Agency:

Family Guidance Center Corporation

Collaborative Partners:

CONTACT of Mercer County
Court Appointed Special Services (CASA)
HomeFront
PEI Kids
Womanspace

Project Mission:

To combine the expertise of proven programs, build upon their quality and capacity, and achieve maximum community impact by meeting the existing and emerging self-sufficiency needs of the people of Greater Mercer County. The project's motto is: "We do this so that clients do not give up."

Project Description:

Community of Services Collaboration combines the expertise of six agencies to provide case management services to individuals and families, including: behavioral and mental health services, consumer credit counseling, substance abuse counseling and treatment, transitional housing programs, prevention, education and intervention for families, and comprehensive services to individuals and families impacted by domestic and sexual violence.

The project utilizes a "no wrong door" approach that will facilitate access to services. A unified assessment will be completed to determine the client's need for services; a care review team will determine what services the client may need and how to best support the client; and partner agencies will complete an evaluation tool to determine each client's goals and to measure improvement. UW funds will be used to pay for professional staff that directly provide care to the clients of the collaboration.

Clients to be served include individuals and families in crisis. Units of service include 8,100 hours of assistance and 3,500 phone calls, with 242 families, 120 women, and 25 children being served. Clients can initiate services through any of the six partner agencies in Mercer County without being put on a waiting list or referred out.

Mercer County Latino Domestic Violence Initiative (“Prevention”)

Lead Agency:

Catholic Charities

Collaborative Partners:

Womanspace

Community Action Service Center of Hightstown

Project Mission:

To stabilize and coordinate domestic violence services across the spectrum of interventions in all major Latino communities in Mercer County in order to reduce domestic violence incidences and improve family functioning.

Project Description:

The initiative brings together partnered agencies to provide services to both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence and helps families to access services in times of crisis, while at the same time addressing the underlying causes of domestic violence. The initiative will develop a safety net geographically covering all of Mercer County’s largest Latino communities and provide a full range of preventive and remedial services. Specific program elements will include an aggressive outreach to families at risk of or experiencing domestic violence; individual counseling; crisis and emergency services, including shelter; legal assistance and advocacy; anger management training for batterers and potential batterers; women’s support groups; training in health relationship skills; and substance abuse counseling and AA linkage.

The project will serve 385 clients during the first year with a 10% increase or more expected thereafter. Clients will receive 3,095 total units of service: outreach, assessment, case management, support groups, healthy marriages training, individual counseling, and emergency shelter. The project will utilize a “no wrong door” approach that will facilitate access to services and help prevent gaps in services.

The Domestic Violence Initiative will service the Latino populations in Trenton and expand services to Hightstown, East Windsor, and Princeton. Through this initiative, it will be able to provide a formalized communication and care coordination system beyond simple referrals.

EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit) and Asset Building Campaign

Lead Agency:

Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness

Collaborative Partners:

Boys & Girls Club of Trenton

The Crisis Ministry of Trenton

John O. Wilson Hamilton Neighborhood Center

Project Mission:

This Mercer County Empowerment Project seeks to build on the success of the Greater Trenton EITC and Asset Building Campaign by implementing a structured financial literacy program to ensure Mercer County households utilize their EITC as a component of building longer-term financial stability. Through a pilot project with select nonprofit partners, the project will identify the most successful strategies for integrating financial literacy and asset building training into the broader case management activities and objectives of Mercer County caseworkers.

Project Description:

The Mercer Alliance will coordinate with collaborative partners to implement a pilot program that will support low-income households as they participate in an asset building program, while identifying the most successful strategies for integrating ongoing financial literacy training in participating households.

UWGMC funding will enable the project to maximize the impact of the EITC and Asset Building Campaign by providing 10 hours a week of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites' coordinators' time for 12 weeks during the tax preparation season at two additional VITA site locations.

The three collaborative partners will ensure that 30 households participate in the full asset building seminar series, totaling 90 new participants. Mercer Alliance will develop an evaluation tool to assess financial behavior and recruit and train volunteer tax preparers. This evaluation will adapt those techniques and processes that have proven successful in other communities.