

2008 Fall Snapshot Survey of Catholic Charities Agencies



Many more Americans are relying on Catholic Charities agencies to provide food, housing and direct financial assistance services.

PHOTO: SANDY ISHAM

Forty-four Catholic Charities agencies responded to a Catholic Charities USA fall snapshot survey online. Results indicated an increase in demand for nutrition, housing and direct financial assistance services affecting new and preexisting populations coupled with a decrease in state, corporate, and philanthropic donations. Below are the some of the highlights from the survey.

Increasing Need

As working families continue to struggle to meet their most basic needs many more Americans are relying on Catholic Charities agencies to provide food, housing and direct financial assistance services.

■ Food

“Fresno, California is experiencing a 69 percent increase in those seeking food assistance. Working poor and those already living below the poverty income guidelines are our target populations. Catholic Charities Diocese of Fresno has received more than 16,000 new families and individuals who have never entered our doors for services before. Food is in such high demand we have had to reduce our service hours.”

— Lydia Gutierrez, Site Director, Catholic Charities Diocese of Fresno, CA



- 77 percent of agencies are seeing an increase in the need for food
- 64 percent of agencies anticipate food to be the greatest need of their clients this holiday season
- 56 percent of agencies report that food will be the greatest need of their agency during this holiday season
- 51 percent of agencies anticipate food shortages during this holiday season

■ Shelter

“All of the homeless shelters that house families in our area are full. We are working with the local homeless coalition to respond to the need. Last year we ran 80 percent occupancy in our family transitional housing program this year it has remained at 100 percent over the last couple months. The number of phone calls for utility and rent assistance has increased 25 percent over this point last year.” — *Fr. Ragan Schriver, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of East Tennessee, Knoxville, TN*

- 41 percent of agencies report an increase in requests for temporary housing
- 70 percent of agencies are seeing an increase in the need for rent or mortgage assistance
- 82 percent of agencies report an increase in requests for utility assistance
- 41 percent of agencies are seeing more housing counseling requests

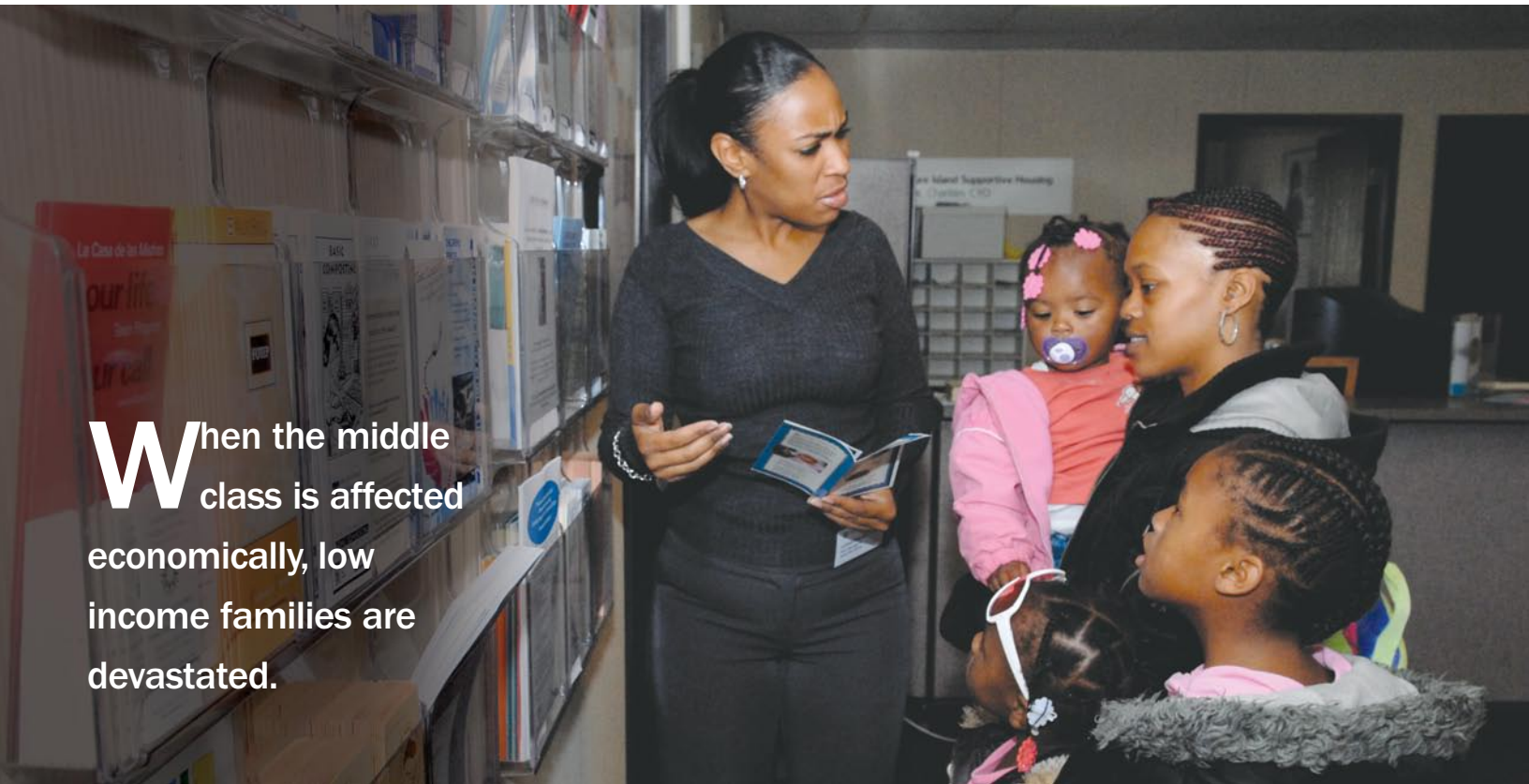
■ Financial Assistance

“We are seeing an increase in the total number of persons seeking assistance (across the economic spectrum) and those who approach us have larger financial needs.”

— *Vickie Riddle, ACSW, Executive Director, Catholic Charities Diocese of Springfield, MA*

- 86 percent of agencies report an increase in requests for financial assistance
- 95 percent of agencies report that financial contributions will be the greatest need of their agency during this holiday season

When the middle class is affected economically, low income families are devastated.

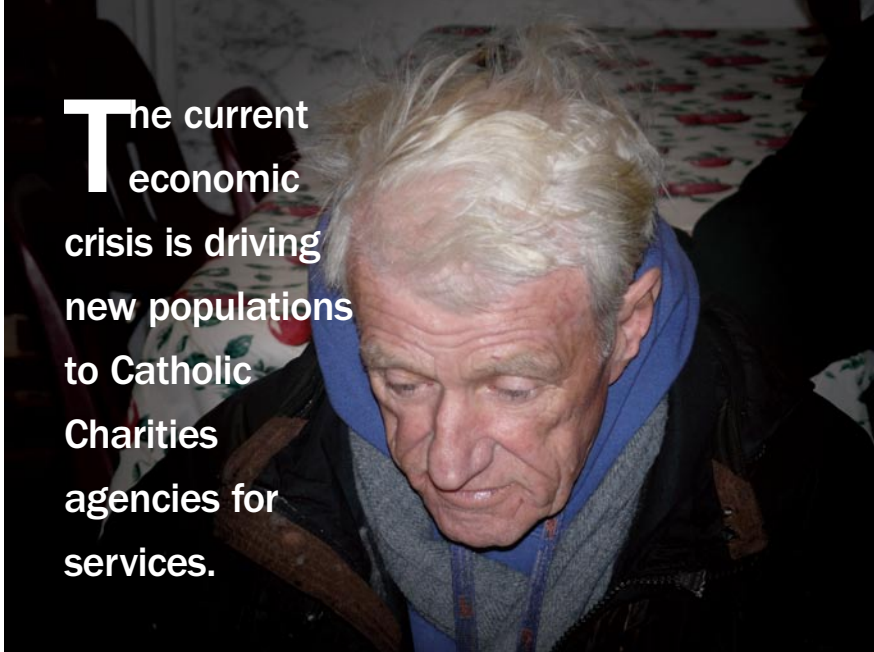


- 82 percent of agencies report that financial contributions will be the greatest need of their clients during this holiday season
- 84 percent of agencies anticipate financial contribution shortages during this holiday season

Seeking Help

The current economic crisis is driving new populations to Catholic Charities agencies for services. “I personally receive a call or two per week from donors who have lost their jobs, had a medical emergency after losing health coverage, or have a mortgage crisis.”

The current economic crisis is driving new populations to Catholic Charities agencies for services.



— Paul Martodam, Executive Director, Catholic Charities Community Services-Phoenix, AZ

- 91 percent of agencies report an increase in the working poor seeking services
- 89 percent of agencies report an increase in families requesting services in 2008, up from 76 percent in the June snapshot
- 66 percent of agencies are seeing more seniors
- 52 percent are seeing an increase in middle class clients in need of help, up from 43 percent in the June snapshot

Funding Crisis

The survey results indicate that Catholic Charities agencies are working to find solutions to provide expanded services to new and preexisting populations with less funding sources and increased commodity and fuel prices. “Obviously I am concerned about our revenue (government, foundations, corporate giving, private donations). There has been lots of talk about resources for Wall Street and those on Main Street, but not a mention of so many of our families that live on the ‘Back Streets’ and long to live on Main Street someday. When the middle class is affected economically, low income families are devastated. We are looking at what to do when resources decrease yet need dramatically increases.”

— Ken Sawa, Chief Executive Officer, Catholic Charities of San Bernardino, CA

- 41 percent of agencies report a decrease in state government funding while 34 percent agencies are seeing level funding
- Donations from individuals dropped 55 percent according to local agencies while 30 percent reported level private donation levels
- 41 percent of agencies report a decrease in Corporate donations while financial support from foundations has decreased 25 percent for local agencies
- 82 percent of agencies reported a loss in income from investment revenue sources

Local Catholic Charities Experiences

The experiences of local Catholic Charities and the people turning to them for help are mirrored throughout the country.

- “We have a great number of middle class and working poor coming to our doors. Needs include increased demands for rental assistance, food, and mortgage payments.”
— Gary Huelsmann, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services of Southern, IL
- “We have an increase in phone calls requesting financial assistance for rent, utilities, as well as assistance with transportation. A growing concern is due to the unavailability of affordable housing. Not to mention the most recent need resulting from two evacuations and the devastation from Hurricane Ike.”
— Dean M. Terrebonne, President, Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas (Beaumont, TX)
- “We are seeing an increase in usage of our emergency and perishable food pantries, especially with the working poor. We are also seeing an increase in our substance abuse detox services, presumably due to increase stress of rising costs, unemployment, etc.”
— Jerry C. Pape, Executive Director, Catholic Charities of Omaha, NE
- “We are seeing a large number of clients who are in need of everything from utilities assistance, rent, mortgages, help with medicine, insurance payments, food and the need has increased over 40 percent over last year and we have expended 50 percent of our budget in the first quarter of the fiscal year.”
— Constance Cavrich, Director of Development and Planned Giving, Catholic Charities Diocese of Pittsburgh, PA
- “We provide primary health and dental care to people without insurance who do not qualify for government programs. We are seeing not only working class low wage workers but also middle people who have lost their employer sponsored plans.”
— Marguerite Harmon, CEO, Catholic Charities of Tucson, AZ
- “We have a great number of middle class and working poor coming to our doors. Needs include increased demands for rental assistance, utilities, food and mortgage assistance. Many are clients that have never asked for help before.”
— Peter Routsis-Arroyo, CEO, Catholic Charities Diocese of Venice, FL
- “Senior services are the most strained under these circumstances. Seniors are on fixed incomes, so any increases in living costs, such as food, energy, or taxes, usually hit them the hardest.” — Scott Stepp, Development and Communications, Catholic Charities of Rockville Centre, NY
- “We are facing a tremendous financial challenge. If we don’t obtain the financial funds needed we may close.” — Tom Chagolla, Executive Director, Catholic Charities Diocese of Las Cruces, NM

