

March 2003

Background

Neighborhood/Community Centers (Centers) may be multi-purpose or single purpose centers that provide an array of possible services at locations in neighborhoods throughout communities. The services provided by Centers are normally focused on the particular needs of the residents living near the physical location of the Centers. The community needs which may be met by Centers include medical, dental, counseling, nutrition, meals, mentoring, training, computer access, child care, parenting classes, recreation, youth programs, transportation, economic leadership, neighborhood revitalization, and others.

The Centers are an important vehicle for delivery of services to those in need for a variety of reasons.

- The Centers are located close to homes of the residents needing services. Transportation alternatives for families, elderly persons and handicapped persons who do not have their own vehicles are limited and cumbersome. Some critical services may be foregone by persons not able or willing to access transportation.
- Center staffs develop ongoing relationships with those who are served and family issues and concerns are more likely discussed with counselors and advisors who are familiar and trusted. In addition, staffs are more likely to notice issues if regular contact with a family member occurs.

- Centers provide a meeting place for families and residents where they can share common concerns, learn from each other's experiences and leverage their views by being part of a larger group.
- Centers can be a cost efficient way of providing a number of different services or facilities that may be used for service delivery by collaborating organizations.

Local Area

Centers in the KCF counties provide medical and dental clinics, thrift stores, child daycare; mentoring; physical fitness for all ages; senior citizen activities; home delivered meals; food pantries; counseling; social intervention; and transportation programs. Many of the area Centers are located within neighborhoods where most residents live at or below the poverty level. Centrally located within its target population, the Centers are usually within walking distance; and limited transportation is normally available for those who need it. A secure environment; knowing that they won't be turned away in times of crisis; a trust built over time with those working at these centers; and a sense of belonging are some of the reasons individuals keep returning to these centers. For many it is a place of refuge from the problems they face day in and day out. Many centers network with local churches; schools; and clinics to provide multiple sources for meeting the needs of individuals.

A partial list of Neighborhood/Community Centers in Bandera; Bexar; Comal; and Kendall Counties:

- Ella Austin Community Center
- Presa Community Center
- El Centro del Barrio
- Wesley Community Centers
- House of Neighborly Service
- Madonna Neighborhood Center
- YMCA
- YWCA
- Christian Senior Services
- Rainbow Senior Center
- Bulverde Senior Center
- Good Samaritan Center
- Comal County Senior Citizens Center

Additionally, the City of San Antonio operates 48 Nutrition/Community Rooms in churches and housing properties throughout the city.

References

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