

St. Margaret's Center

St. Margaret's Center, a program of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles Inc., has served low-income and homeless families since 1987. The Center provides a comprehensive range of emergency and supportive services to more than 10,000 unduplicated individuals annually in the Los Angeles "L.A.X." area, primarily those living in the cities or streets of Lennox and surrounding communities.

St. Margaret's Center's mission has remained the same throughout its history, but the Center's programs have grown and evolved to respond to the needs of the community. St. Margaret's Center's programs target individuals and families who live at or below the poverty level, and are administered by a paid staff of three, and an average of 40 volunteers. Programs are offered in both English and Spanish, and are free of charge, with the exception of nominal fees for immigration and counseling services. Two target groups have developed over the years as the Center's staff has become aware of their unmet needs: Spanish-speaking families, and homeless individuals. The Center provides assistance, though, to anyone in need, regardless of the person's race, national origin or religious affiliation.

St. Margaret's Center's goal is to provide relief, dignity and support to low-income persons in crisis and to assist individuals through case management and skills development to become more self-sufficient and to achieve economic security. St. Margaret's Center's services include:

- **Emergency Food:** Monthly groceries for low-income families (@200/week), and sack lunches for homeless persons (@200/week) every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Senior food program also available the 3rd Tuesday of every month.
- **Information and Referral:** Information and referrals for free or low-cost services and programs, e.g., legal, medical, housing, employment, government programs. Advocacy with government assistance programs.
- **Translation:** Assistance in filling out simple forms, mail, telephone calls, etc.
- **Emergency Shelter Voucher:** Short-term emergency housing for eligible homeless Inglewood families and individuals with special needs.
- **Rent Assistance Program:** Rental subsidy program for Inglewood residents who are seniors or disabled.
- **Homeless Supplies:** Hygiene kits, blankets, diapers, clothing and bus tokens, as available, to low-income persons.
- **Counseling Services:** Free and low-cost counseling for individuals, couples and families provided by a licensed therapist, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Spanish-language counseling available with interns.
- **Food Stamp Application Assistance:** Free assistance with filling out the food stamp application and follow-up case tracking and troubleshooting. D.P.S.S. worker on site for this program, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- **Health Insurance Application Assistance:** Outreach worker from Community Health Councils on site to help families apply for low-cost and free health insurance programs. Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- **Vision Screening:** Free eye exams provided quarterly by the U.C.L.A./Jules Stein Mobile Eye Clinic.

- **Mammograms:** Free or low-cost mammograms for low-income, uninsured women over 50. Every other month, provided by Mobile Mammography Screening, Inc.
- **Utility Assistance:** Payment up to \$100 for Gas and Edison bills when program activated.
- **Mailing Address:** For homeless persons, use of the Center for their mailing address, and the Center's telephone and FAX machines for important calls/business (e.g., for employment, medical and legal needs).
- **Immigration Processing:** Low-cost immigration processing every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday by appointment.
- **ESL Classes:** Small intensive classes, Monday through Friday, designed to provide beginning level English language fluency, provided by Centinela Valley Adult School.
- **Citizenship Classes:** Classes Monday and Wednesday afternoons for those who are preparing for their citizenship interview.
- **Computer Classes:** Small classes, Monday through Friday, providing beginning level computer literacy.
- **Literacy Tutoring:** One-on-one tutoring for basic English language, math and computer literacy provided by volunteers for both adults and youth.
- **Job Referrals:** Employment readiness and job and training program referrals.
- **Educational Workshops:** Community workshops are held periodically with topics of interest for low-income families, e.g., health, nutrition, employment, money management, public benefits, etc.
- **Christmas Program:** Day-long party with new toys for children, food for 450 families.

A community center such as St. Margaret's offers a natural avenue to provide a range of services to poverty-level families. Over the past 23 years persons with multiple needs have come to the Center for services and referrals for food, shelter, legal, medical, employment, housing, education and social services. Currently, about 500 persons come into St. Margaret's Center each week for one or more of its programs. They are all low-income, with the majority living below the federal poverty level.

One of the Center's recent objectives was to re-locate the Center to a more adequate facility. This objective was met in 2009, and the new address is listed below. Additional space has been vitally needed in order to expand programs to continue to meet the needs of the community. With the current economic downturn in 2009-10, clientele and services have increased by 20%.

St. Margaret's Center
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