



**EMERGENCY SERVICES**  
**CONGREGATIONAL**  
**RESOURCE GUIDE**

**2011-2012**

MIFA  
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## Congregational Resource Guide

The Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA) was founded in 1968, several months after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., through an unparalleled alliance of clergy and lay leaders of different faiths and races. Their efforts built upon those of many others, starting as early as 1929, who believed that faith communities should lead the way in addressing the problems of poverty, racism, and injustice in the Mid-South. They knew that the health of our city, and of every individual, depends on our willingness to come together, focusing on the things that can unite us, and celebrating the contributions that diverse groups can make. MIFA's founders spoke and acted at a time when championing justice and dignity for all was anything but popular, and since that day we have all benefited from their courage.

MIFA began as an all-volunteer agency whose purpose was to coordinate the efforts of local congregations, but by the early 1970's, it had initiated programs of direct service and greatly strengthened its financial stability. Now, after 43 years, MIFA has evolved into a broad-based, professional, community-wide non-profit agency serving more than 55,000 people a year. MIFA's vision is to unite our diverse community to address the challenges of poverty, and its mission is to engage the community to sustain the independence of seniors, transform the lives of families in crisis, and equip teens for success.

The spiritual commitment of MIFA's founders is well expressed by Rev. Walker Wright of White Stone Missionary Baptist Church: "MIFA is love, brotherhood, sisterhood, spirit and action. It captures what Jesus is all about." This commitment remains at the center of the organization, and we strive to promote the sacred value and dignity of all persons. MIFA seeks to do more than just solve problems; its programs are designed to give hope and thus to help change lives.

MIFA's nine programs target critical needs of the community, such as food for homebound seniors, transitional housing for homeless families, and emergency assistance for families suffering a sudden crisis in employment or health.

## Emergency Services

MIFA's Emergency Services program coordinates several efforts to assist individuals and families during temporary, unavoidable financial crises. Even stable families can be devastated by a sudden loss of employment, the prolonged illness of a child, or an unexpected catastrophe such as a fire. Emergency Services' goal is to stabilize those families to prevent the original crises from leading to a devastating situation.

Emergency Services is not an income-based entitlement program, nor is it designed to serve those who are chronically unable or unwilling to provide for their own needs. Clients must be able to demonstrate the recent, unanticipated and/or unavoidable circumstance which precipitated their current financial emergency. Because large numbers of requests for assistance are processed by MIFA staff every day, preference is given to those who have not been previously assisted. Emergency Services maintains accurate records to ensure that we follow funding source guidelines and offer the best services available.

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## How MIFA's Emergency Services program can assist your congregation

In recent months, many congregations have seen requests for basic, essential services increase drastically. MIFA's Emergency Services works with churches, synagogues, and other faith communities to provide assistance to those persons with valid and verifiable requests.

**Please refer people to MIFA's Emergency Services.** Experienced social service workers are on staff at MIFA to assist applicants. When a person is screened for services, his situation and needs are handled with care and consideration. If MIFA is unable to assist him, staff members are well-versed in services offered by other community agencies and will make appropriate referrals. Even if MIFA cannot provide assistance directly, MIFA staff can be an invaluable resource for an individual seeking assistance.

One of Emergency Services' key funding sources is **CASES (Churches and Synagogues Emergency Services)**. Comprised of gifts from individuals and the area's religious community, CASES increases our ability to help those in desperate situations. This special resource is testament to the Mid-South faith community's willingness to combine its efforts to make an impact.

Since MIFA's Emergency Services has a comprehensive and well-developed system of screening applicants for assistance and an extensive network of community agencies, our program is able to implement effective strategies for meeting specific emergency needs. Congregations are usually not equipped to screen, prioritize, or process these requests.

**Therefore, we encourage congregations to utilize Emergency Services by:**

- **contributing** a portion of their benevolence budgets to CASES and
- **referring** individuals with benevolence requests to Emergency Services. You are welcome to contact us with information about individuals and families whom you refer. You may also request that we inform you of any assistance granted in those referral cases.

For more information on the benefits of partnering with MIFA through the CASES fund, contact:

**Linda Marks, Inter-Faith Coordinator**  
**527-0208, ext. 218 or [lmarks@mifa.org](mailto:lmarks@mifa.org)**

## Congregational Clearinghouse

Emergency Services has a comprehensive client screening service that allows MIFA to store records of assistance provided by congregations. This system allows Emergency Services to verify information and avoid duplicated services, and other congregations may also access this resource.

The form on page 7 can be completed and faxed to MIFA when your congregation assists someone. Feel free to duplicate this form and use it often.

For more information, call 529-4583 for the Director of Emergency Services or 527-0226 for the Emergency Services receptionist.

## Screening for people seeking assistance

Below are suggested guidelines for screening clients, if your congregation chooses to do so

- Always ask for identification.
- Record the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and social security numbers for all adults.
- Require documentation of the financial crisis. (Examples include late rent letter from landlord, utility cut-off notice, work separation letter, medical receipts, etc.)
- Never give the client cash or a check. Checks should be written to vendors only; mailing the check to the vendor provides additional security.
- If possible, make arrangements with a nearby gas station for gasoline vouchers. MIFA cannot assist with gasoline.
- Inform those requesting assistance that you work with MIFA's Emergency Services Congregational Clearinghouse (see page 3) and will report the assistance you provide to MIFA.
- Call MIFA's Emergency Services at 527-0226 to:
  1. see if the person has received assistance and/or make a referral to MIFA or
  2. report the assistance you granted to the Emergency Services Congregational Clearinghouse.
- All churches and synagogues should have a security plan for the protection of staff and volunteers.

## Available Services

Emergency Services offers various types of assistance to qualified individuals and families in need. Emergency Services is open to screen applicants for financial assistance and vouchers **Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m.** No appointment is necessary.

- **Rent/mortgage:** For clients in danger of being, or who have been, evicted.
- **Utility:** For those with cut-off notices or whose utilities have been terminated.
- **Food:** MIFA provides screening and vouchers for a five-day supply of food; clients retrieve their food items from pantries sponsored and stocked by congregations and other agencies. Currently, there are over 35 food pantries operating in various congregations, United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, and Catholic Charities.

Services among MIFA's Emergency Services, other community agencies, and local congregations are professionally maintained to increase efficiency and prevent duplication of services. For more information about how you can participate in the Congregational Clearinghouse and report any assistance your congregation provides, please refer to page 3.

## Assistance Guidelines

Emergency Services exists to assist families who have had a **recent, temporary, and unavoidable** loss of income which has prevented the payment of rent, mortgage, or utility debts.

MIFA has limited funds and cannot help all who apply. Preference is given to applicants who have not been assisted before. Preference is also given to families with children, individuals over the age of 60, DHS Protective Services clients, and those who receive SSI, SSD, or veteran disability, or who have had one of the following crises described below.

- **Medical crisis:** A medical crisis in the past three months has resulted in the client's loss of income and/or extraordinary expenses. (Only at-risk pregnancies qualify as medical crises.)
- **Employment-related loss of income:** Clients who have experienced a job loss in the past three months, with preference given to victims of layoffs who have been with their employers for more than six months. Individuals who have been terminated, have resigned, or are on labor strike will be reviewed by the Director of Emergency Services and decided on a case-by-case basis.
- **Other loss of income:** Client has experienced a verifiable theft of income or temporary, unavoidable loss, reduction, or delay in receiving benefits. Wage-earner and/or bankruptcy costs, court costs, fines, bail, and bonds are not included.
- **Income pending:** Client has begun work, but a paycheck is pending, or disability benefits are pending within 31 days.
- **Domestic crisis:** Clients who have experienced recent divorce, verifiable separation, incarceration of a family wage-earner, or the death of an immediate family member resulting in a loss of income and/or funeral expenses.
- **Disaster:** Clients who have experienced a recent fire or robbery/theft in which household necessities or funds were lost. The event must have been reported when it occurred.
- **Unusual expenses:** Expenses may be related to recent, major, necessary house repairs or the re-establishment of a home after living in a shelter or a condemned house. The applicant must demonstrate the means to maintain the residence.
- **Other crises:** The Director of Emergency Services will review extraordinary situations as needed.

### To be considered for emergency rent/mortgage or utility assistance:

- Your household cannot have received MIFA Assistance within the **last 2 years**.
- You will need to document a temporary, unavoidable loss of **working income** or a crisis in your household that prevented you from paying your bill such as: a job lay-off, inability to work due to illness, reduction in salary, house fire, etc.
- The loss/crisis should have occurred within **the last 90 days**.
- In most cases MIFA **cannot pay** your entire bill; be prepared to pay or make arrangements on your balance.
- Losses of benefits or reduction in hours **are not** qualifying reasons for MIFA assistance.

**Please note that the following circumstances will not be considered by the Emergency Services department:** damages to utilities or property, accounts in the name of a nonprofit agency, utility bills in a name other than the applicant's due to a delinquent bill, households headed by minors under 18 years of age, and misrepresentation on the part of the applicant.

## Required Documentation

### **For rent/mortgage or utility assistance:**

- Picture ID for all adults. (including children 18 and older)
- Social Security cards for all in the household.
- Verification of children's ages (shot record, report card, birth certificate, etc.)
- Proof of your address.
- Proof of your loss/crisis (layoff notice, doctor bills, etc.)
- Proof of all household income.
- Cut-off notice or late rent or mortgage notice.
- Please note that MIFA cannot pay old utility bills from previous addresses.

### **For food pantry vouchers:**

- Picture ID for all adults (including children 18 and older)
- Proof of address
- Verification of children's ages (shot record, guardianship paper, birth certificate, etc.)
- Social Security cards for everyone in the household

### **For food pantry assistance, please note the following.**

- You must bring your documents each time you apply for a voucher.
- Your household is eligible for 4 vouchers a year.
- Request for vouchers must be 5 days apart with a verifiable crisis.
- Non-perishable food will be provided at a food pantry as close to your address as possible.

## How to make a referral to MIFA

When referring clients to Emergency Services, choose the most convenient method below.

- Instruct the person seeking assistance to call MIFA at 527-0226 for information. Please ask him to call before stopping by to ensure that he brings all the necessary paperwork to his appointment.
- On your congregation's stationery, write a note verifying that you have met this person and referred him or her to MIFA for assistance. Ask the applicant to include it with the other documentation. In your note, you may also ask MIFA's social service workers to inform you of the outcome of a client's request for assistance.
- If you wish to speak with a social service worker at MIFA when a client comes to you for assistance, call 529-4583 for the Director of Emergency Services or 527-0226 for the Emergency Services receptionist. You may also call to advocate for an individual requesting assistance, but all clients are subject to eligibility requirements.

If you have questions about handling a request for assistance, feel free to call Emergency Services at 527-0226.



## How your congregation can help

In-kind donations are valuable assets to MIFA's Emergency Services program.

### Care Packages

When clients come to MIFA's Emergency Services, they often need help getting back on their feet after a setback or disaster. Sometimes the needs are immediate and extremely basic, and can be met with MIFA Care Packages, which we provide to homeless, transient, or indigent clients to help them through the day while they access other services such as shelters or soup kitchens.

To meet this need, simply choose the package your group would like to collect and encourage everyone to participate. You will need collection boxes in your office for contributions. You may decide to go a step further and assemble the packages in individual, ready-to-use bags. Please be sure to label each bag and remember that all items must be new and in their original packaging.

#### Baby Care Package

Disposable diapers, 4 packs each

Ready-to-use formula in screw-cap container

Infant juice, 4-6 oz. cans

Jars of infant fruits and vegetables

Baby bottles

Travel sizes of baby lotion, baby wipes, baby powder

*\*Please indicate on package the diaper size and type of formula---soy or iron*

#### To-Go Meals

Canned Vienna sausage, tuna, or chicken\*

Pork & beans\*

Fruit cup or applesauce\*

Granola bar or individually wrapped sweet treat

\*Single-serving, easy-open cans

#### Adult Care Package

Toothbrushes

Soap

Deodorant

Set of razors

Travel sizes of toothpaste, men's shaving cream, feminine hygiene products, shampoo

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Joan Dennehy at (901) 529-4526 or [jdennehy@mifa.org](mailto:jdennehy@mifa.org).

**Food**

Donations of food can be made through Mid-South Food Bank at 527-0841.

**Food pantries**

MIFA partners with congregations across the city to provide food pantry services for individuals and families in crisis. MIFA's Emergency Services department screens clients for eligibility and refers qualified individuals and families to the pantries. Participating pantries are responsible for providing food and volunteers to assist with distribution.

**For more information or to start a food pantry, contact Food Pantry Coordinator Joan Dennehy at (901) 529-4526.**

**PLUS – 1**

Emergency Services administers funds collected through MLGW's Plus-1 program, which allows utility customers to add \$1 or more to their monthly bills. If you would like a bulletin insert that can be duplicated and distributed to your congregation, contact MIFA's Inter-Faith Coordinator at 527-0208, ext. 218. Members may return the completed form to MIFA or include it with an MLGW payment.

**Funds**

Contributions for the CASES fund can be made directly to MIFA, 910 Vance Ave., Memphis, TN, 38126.

**Volunteers**

Volunteers are needed in Emergency Services and other MIFA programs. For more information, contact the Director of Volunteers at 529-4514.

# Community Resources

## 24-hour services

Child Protective Services	947-8800
Adult Protective Services	320-7220
American Red Cross	726-1690
Crisis Center Telephone Hotline	274-7477
Crisis Stabilization Unit (Emergency Mental Health)	577-9400
Family Link (Runaway Shelter)/Project Safe Place	725-6911
Homeless Families, or Families Facing Eviction in Shelby County	260-HOME (260-4663)
Salvation Army	543-8586
YWCA Abuse Center	725-4277

## Multiple services

LINC	415-2790 or 2-1-1
LINC TTY for the hearing impaired	415-2701

This information and referral service provided by the Memphis Public Library and Information Center is a valuable resource for available services in the community. [www.memphislibrary.org/linc/211.htm](http://www.memphislibrary.org/linc/211.htm).

### Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS)

170 N. Main 543-7351

- Provides welfare and food stamps for eligible clients
- Investigates and assists cases of abused or neglected children and adults
- Works in cooperation with MIFA to screen clients and provide assistance.

### Shelby County Community Services Agency (CSA)

100 N. Main 545-4630

Rent assistance	523-7551
Utility assistance (Southeast)	362-6518
Utility assistance (Raleigh)	380-3756
Homeless program	416-7275
Food commodities	545-4526
Case management	523-7518
CSA Information and Referral services	523-7554