

**CENTER FOR FAMILY LIFE
IN SUNSET PARK**

**Progress
Report
2009**





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Community Service Program





Introduction

The Community Service Program (CSP) provides support in times of crisis with services that help families and individuals address basic needs. The program combines an emergency food pantry with the resources of an Advocacy Clinic and Single Stop Center to help low-income families gain stability. On-site advocacy services include benefits screenings, legal and financial counseling, and tax-filing assistance as well as information and referrals for immigration, housing, health, employment and family issues.

With an easily accessible storefront location, the Community Service Program offers both immediate assistance and support to find lasting solutions. The program is a valuable first point of contact for many neighborhood residents who come seeking emergency support and choose to engage in other services available at the Center and in the community. Rather than dealing with each problem in isolation, our staff help participants to connect with other programs and services, so that the resolution of the immediate crisis becomes a meaningful first step toward stability.

Program Participants

In FY 2009, the Community Service Program's food and advocacy services engaged 4,521 neighborhood residents. Figure 8.1 shows CSP participant demographics. The vulnerable population served by the program includes recent immigrants, adults who have lost their jobs, individuals coping with illness or disability, families facing eviction, and seniors struggling to meet rising food and housing costs.

FIGURE 8.1 COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS, FY 2009

Age	Afr.-Amer.	Arabic	Asian	Latino	White	Other	Unknown	Total	% of Total
0 – 4	3	0	3	97	1	5	8	117	3%
5 – 9	3	0	5	153	3	17	10	191	4%
10 – 13	2	0	5	144	2	7	0	160	4%
14 – 17	3	1	4	207	4	7	7	233	5%
18 – 20	7	2	2	167	4	7	7	196	4%
21 – 64	61	13	55	2,213	84	73	197	2,696	60%
65+	5	0	24	663	14	24	108	838	19%
Unknown	1	0	4	79	2	3	1	90	2%
Total	85	16	102	3,723	114	143	338	4,521	100%
% of Total	2%	<1%	2%	82%	3%	3%	7%	100%	



Program Components

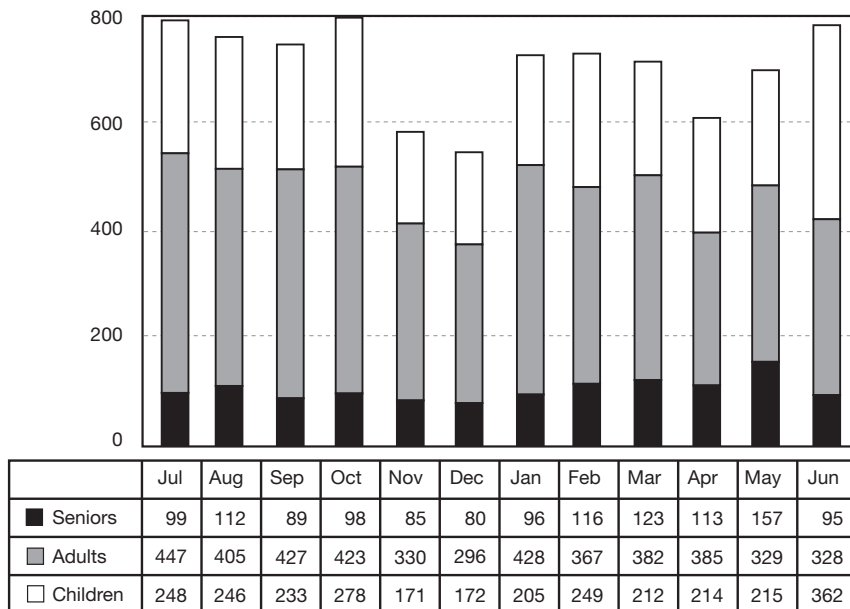
The Community Service Program houses our food pantry and Advocacy Clinic/Single Stop Center. The food pantry addresses the acute needs of individuals and families by providing free emergency food and household items. At our Advocacy Clinic/Single Stop Center, participants are screened for government benefits, receive financial and legal assistance, and obtain referrals to other services at the Center and in the community. The program is open daily, all services are free and eligibility criteria are minimal.

Food Pantry

The Center’s food pantry helps neighborhood residents meet short-term emergency needs by providing food packages with a three-day supply of food for all family members. The pantry collaborates with other neighborhood organizations, including local hospitals and clinics, churches, Head Starts and senior centers. In this community network, the Community Service Program is a reliable and trusted site where our partners can refer participants, knowing they will be treated with respect and dignity.

In FY 2009, the food pantry provided 77,535 nutritious meals to neighborhood families, serving an average of 718 individuals each month. Figure 8.2 shows the number of people who received emergency food over the course of the year. 53% of meals were distributed to adults, 33% to children, and 15% to senior citizens.

FIGURE 8.2 FOOD DISTRIBUTION, FY 2009





Advocacy Clinic/Single Stop Center

Many participants come to the Community Service Program facing crisis situations, such as eviction notices, mounting bills and discontinued benefits, or physical danger from an abusive relationship. These issues are often intensified by limited English language skills or undocumented immigration status.

The Advocacy Clinic helps low-income neighborhood residents access and use government services, particularly economic support programs such as public assistance and food stamps. Program staff also help participants resolve issues related to housing, utilities, taxes and documentation. The CSP provides assistance to manage unpaid telephone or utility bills, to translate documents, and to communicate with landlords, insurance companies and benefits offices.

Single Stop, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, provides access to an array of supports, all in one location. Weekly Single Stop sessions offer:

- Comprehensive benefits screening using the Self-Sufficiency Calculator, a web-based tool that enables participants to identify which public benefits they are eligible for and estimate the value of benefits they would receive.
- Legal services provided by South Brooklyn Legal Services and the Legal Aid Society.
- Financial counseling and credit reports provided by Acción, a nonprofit financial education organization.
- Family Counseling and social service referrals provided by an MSW social worker.

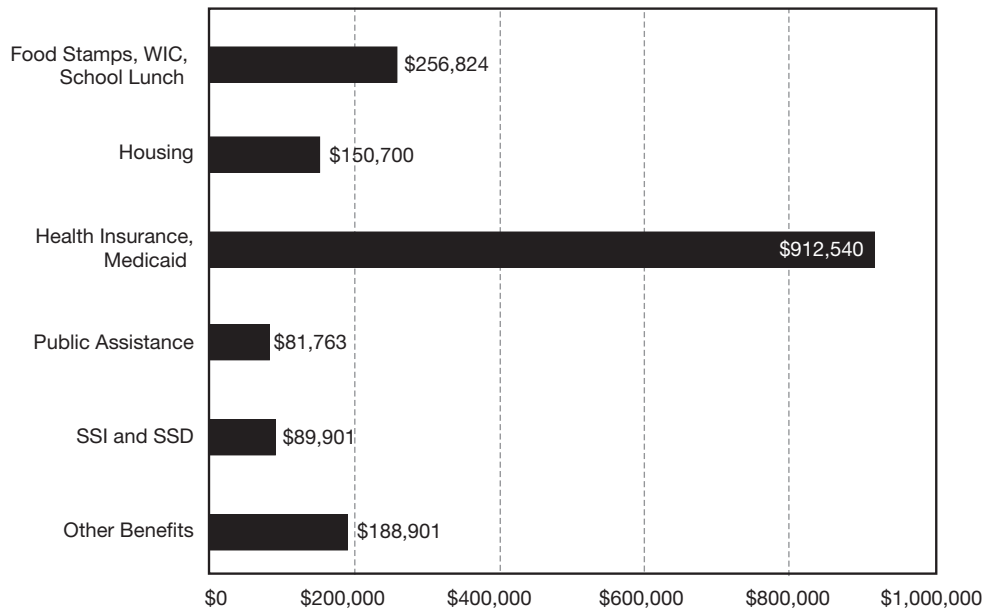
Benefits Screenings

Using the Self-Sufficiency Calculator, staff at the Community Service Program are able to determine if participants are eligible for any of nearly 20 different public benefits, including food stamps, public assistance, housing and health insurance. After conducting a benefits screening, our staff help participants to complete applications, offering assistance at each step in the process to ensure that participants receive the full value for which they are eligible.

In FY 2009, the CSP helped 388 participants obtain benefits with an annual value of over \$1.6 million. Figure 8.3 shows the benefits received by participants in FY 2009.



FIGURE 8.3 BENEFITS OBTAINED BY PARTICIPANTS, FY 2009



Legal Services

Through our partnership with South Brooklyn Legal Services and the Legal Aid Society, the Community Service Program provided on-site legal services for 251 neighborhood residents. South Brooklyn Legal Services provided advice or representation in a range of areas, including housing, employment, education, government benefits and family issues. The Legal Aid Society provided legal services specifically for immigration issues, including assistance with citizenship, green cards, work permits and family petitions.

Financial Services

Our financial services partner, Acción, provided financial counseling to 67 participants between March 2008 and February 2009. Acción helped participants to obtain and review credit reports, open bank accounts, create budgets, and manage and repair credit, as well as providing advice related to consumer protections and business development.

Tax Filing Assistance

From late January to mid-April, the Community Service Program collaborated with the Food Bank for New York City to provide free tax-filing services, encouraging low-income families and individuals to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit. Each year, free tax-filing assistance results in a significant cash infusion for the local economy in this low-income community. In FY 2009, the program yielded over \$4.5 million in tax returns to 1,900 Sunset Park residents.









