

# Annual Report 2021



Brought to you by  
The Social Services Team





# ICGC SOCIAL SERVICES

UPLIFTING LIVES!

## Meet the Team

(In order by joining date)



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Social Services Manager



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Food Pantry Coordinator



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## BACKGROUND

ICGC Social Services started its work in 2015 as a community focused service project. In 2018, it transformed formally into a social services initiative. We serve individuals and families in the Greater Cincinnati area, who through no fault of their own are experiencing certain challenges in life and need a little support and guidance to overcome barriers and re-establish themselves financially, emotionally & socially.

## VISION

A healthy, financially strong, and socially connected region, where all families have the opportunity to uplift their lives and thrive.

## MISSION

Empower families towards financial independence, health, and well being through supportive services, educational programs & strong partnerships.

## VALUES

Empathy  
Collaboration  
Creativity  
Excellence  
Growth



## FOCUS AREAS

Reducing Poverty through:

*Fulfilling Essential Needs* - Food | Clothing | Housing | Benefits Assistance | Transportation

*Stabilizing Households* - Bills Assistance | Financial Coaching

*Education* - ESL | Citizenship | Life Skills

*Employment* - Jobs | Career Coaching | Skills Development

Promoting Health & Wellness through:

Health & wellness focused educational programs for women

## STRATEGY

"Our strategy is to focus on family self-sufficiency, upward mobility and immigrant integration by focusing on income, education, health & wellness."

## GOALS

Begin implementing the strategic plan

Create brand recognition

Establish & maintain partnerships that align with our vision

Deliver focused and impactful programs & services

Achieve efficiency in terms of systems, processes & finances



# LIFE'S CHALLENGES

Once families get stuck in the cycle of poverty, it is very difficult to exit the circle at least in the short term.

## Family Life | Health | Skills

Whether financial stress leads to broken homes or broken homes lead to financial stress, the impact on the family is traumatic. Unfortunately we see this phenomenon play out quite often than we would like to.

According to a Pew Research Report, the number of single parent families increased from 9% to 26% between 1960 to 2014. This number is significantly higher for Black and Hispanic families and for women at 21% compared to men at 4%.

Inadvertently this has led to an increased labor market participation for women, with 64% of moms with preschool-aged children now working. However despite higher participation, one-in-five (19%) of single parents say they don't have enough money to meet their basic expenses. Lack of sufficient income means struggling paycheck to paycheck with unpaid bills, debt, and credit problems and never really having the opportunity to plan for or achieve upward mobility.

In addition to these financial burdens single parents also tend to feel more guilty, overwhelmed and lonely when it comes to raising children, leading to anxiety and depression. To address these mental health issues, single parents need access to time and resources for self care which they rarely have.

As chronic physical and mental disabilities complicate matters further, for some families not having the legal status to pursue certain benefits such as childcare or Medicaid limits stability even more.

Another challenge often times faced by immigrant families is the need to survive on a single earner's income as the other spouse is unable to work for various reasons. Add to that the problem that many adult earners lack transferrable skills to American standards be it due to language, literacy or vocational skills, the access to high paying jobs is limited unless they pursue further education or training.



# SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

While the financial markets saw growth,  
the US economy faced many challenges.

## Pandemic | Inflation | Inequality

With the rising cases of Corona virus globally, more and more workers chose to work from home or not at all due to illness or concerns over health & safety. Many left the workforce temporarily or permanently due to burnout. This has resulted in the phenomenon of the "Great Resignation" which also created supply chain problems leading in part to the inflation

US inflation rate rose 6.8% in 2021, the highest increase since 1982 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. While this is not good news in general, low income families faced the brunt of this increase, as the prices of the most essential consumer goods such as food, gas & housing went up significantly. Gas prices rose by 58.1% in November (the largest increase over 12 months since 1980). Used cars went up by 21 % and home prices rose 16.2%. The median one-bedroom rent went up by 10.7%.

This economic downturn exacerbated income and wealth inequality. Even as the economy heals, the recovery is uneven for some of the country's most vulnerable as Black unemployment is twice that of whites (7.9% vs. 4.2%), while 6.3% for Hispanic workers.



# OUR APPROACH AND SOLUTIONS

Keeping in line with our strategic aspiration to reduce poverty and promote health & wellness, these are some of the strategies we use to address the needs of our community, impacted by the systemic issues and inequalities mentioned above as well as life in general.

Our programs begin with basic needs and gradually work towards addressing advanced needs.

## **Safety**

First and foremost we ensure the safety of our clients by fulfilling basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. We make sure they don't go hungry and have a roof over their heads and a safe place to call home.

## **Stability**

Next we dive a little deeper and build relationships to identify trauma, strengths and challenges. We navigate difficult conversations and topics with cultural, gender and religious sensitivities in mind. Our goal is to empower families by identifying goals, create plans and achieve these dreams through a journey towards self-sufficiency.

This means providing financial assistance & coaching as well as teaching life skills to create behavioral change.

## **Self Sufficiency**

With a positive mindset, families are then able to move towards financial independence through employment and career development. Families can also begin to think long term in terms of higher education, savings & retirement.

## **Growth**

Education is the key to success. Our families are encouraged to focus on language acquisition, literacy and citizenship.



# THE NUMBER STORY...

Program enrollment increased by 10% i.e. from 62% to 72% keeping us on track of our goal to reach 80% by end of 2022.

Higher enrollment also reflects deeper engagement and commitment.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>New Clients</b>	125
<b>Program Enrollment</b>	Success@Home - 40 Success@Work - 50 Success@Learning - 15 Total Enrolled - 105
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	Middle Eastern - 42% White - 17% African - 14% African American - 13% Asian/Other - 9%
<b>Location</b>	Butler County - 43% Hamilton County - 40% Warren County - 9% Other - 5%
<b>Gender</b>	Women - 60% Men - 40%
<b>Single Parents</b>	26%



## Food & Hygiene | Clothing & Household Items Government Benefits | Referrals

### **Unduplicated**

275 households = 1000 people

### **Duplicated**

650 households = 2400 people

**Reach** = 43 zip codes

**Demographics** - 47% children

**Total Food Distributed** = 100,000 lbs.

**Impact** = 25,000 meals

**Hygiene Items** = 650 bags

450 service deliveries including referrals:

**Govt. Benefit signups** - 93

**Clothing & HH items** - 50

**Medical** - 28

**Legal** - 11

**Housing** - 18

**Education** - 24

**Misc.** - 55



## Campaigns & Drives

### **Meijer Simply Give Campaign**

The Meijer campaign raised approximately \$7000 in Gift Cards. These funds allow our pantry to purchase food, diapers and other essential items from Meijer as needed to serve our pantry families.

### **Ramadan Food & Eid Gift Card Drive**

We were able to serve 400 families in Ramadan due to the generous donations of our community with food and Eid gifts for kids.



**Success@Life**  
Stability | Strength | Social Connections

## Bill's Assistance

The Bill's Assistance program addresses emergency needs by assisting with rent & utility payments to ensure families are able to stay in their homes as well provide stability in terms of transportation, childcare and higher education to ensure parents are able to reach their career goals by removing certain barriers.

Zakah Funds Distributed = \$110,500/-  
Sadaqah Funds Distributed = \$4,500/-  
**Internal Funds Total = \$115,000/-**

Project Lift = \$33,000/-  
Emergency Rent Assistance Program = \$73,000/-  
Emergency Food & Shelter Program = \$12,000/-  
**External Funds Total = \$118,000/-**

**Total Amount Spent = \$233,000/-**

## Total Impact

**250+ Households Served**  
**1000+ People Served**

STABILITY



SELF-SUFFICIENCY

## Employment Services

**Approx. 600 Service Deliveries**

Resume - 18

Job search / Application Asst. - 100

Interview - 30

Placement - 33  
(avg. hourly rate of \$15.20)

Placement Support - 310

Unemployment Benefits - 105

## Raises & Recognition

11 program participants received wage increases, equivalent to an annual total of \$36,000. This represents a per household, annual income increase by \$3300/-

One participant was nominated as **Employee of the Month**, because of *"excellent job performance and for promoting a positive work environment."*

This individual is also **"One of the top performers for 2021"** recognized for being punctual, engaged & very productive.



**SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

### **Project Lift**

We have a total of 66 participants enrolled in Success@Work out of which 16 are part of Project Lift.

Project Lift allows participants to focus on long term self-sufficiency. A total of \$33,000 was used to support self-sufficiency efforts of these 16 participants.

The most common areas of service were:

Housing/Utilities

Car Repairs

Education.

### **Overall Impact**

9 families increased income by 20% or more and 4 families moved up a poverty level.

One of our participants was spot lighted as a success story program wide.

Read her inspirational story here.

<https://www.uwgc.org/blog/stories/project-lift-aided-mother-and-her-teens-during-trying-times>

Additional information about Project Lift can be found at

<https://www.uwgc.org/your-impact/programs-initiatives/project-lift>



## Success Stories

No personal info is being shared!

### **Single Mom/DV Impact**

Our team assisted this single mom with basic needs, employment services, budgeting & benefits sign up to stabilize her situation. Later she was connected to Legal Aid to assist with her divorce. Within a year this mom is working 3 jobs, pursuing a career skill certificate, and renting her own home.

### **Significant Wage Increase**

Another single mother who was working full time and earning \$12 an hour over 5 years with a company, got an opportunity to start a new job at one of our partner employers at \$15.50/hr. This annual household income increase by \$7000 will allow this mom to invest in her and her children's future.

### **First Job Ever - Female**

A refugee mother who had never worked before was able to not only get her 1st job but also got promoted after a few months earning almost \$2/hr. more. She was also rated as one of the top performers at her company.

### **First Job Ever -Male**

A refugee dad who came to the US 5 years ago with limited language skills completed his 5 years at the same employer in 2021. He was recognized for this and other achievements.



## **Adult Education**

### **ESL | Life Skills | Citizenship**

Our adult education program provides efficacious education, infrastructure and direct services, to support adult foundational education skills, lifelong and life wide learning for the marginalized. We do this by providing complementary education for those not fully served by other standardized programs.

Our program aims to help overcome barriers to on-going education and provides updated education for the elderly, moms and caregivers of small children, persons with limited previous education, trauma or other learning issues.

Despite disruptions from COVID we continued to teach and tutor both online and in person. We conducted weekday/evening sessions online and Sunday/week day classes at ICGC and public libraries across town respectively. In fact 3 of our students passed their citizenship tests.

### **Digital Literacy**

We also increased the use of tech-based teaching, including phones and mobile devices, and using various techniques and platforms i.e. Google Meet, Zoom, Jam board, WhatsApp and online readers. We produced videos offering guidance on studying for citizenship and ESL.

### **Employment ESL**

In addition, we piloted a Vocational ESL teaching program at one of our employer partners. We hope to build on this initiative further in 2022 inshAllah.



**WELCOME  
2 CINCI**



## Refugee Resettlement

We worked closely with Catholic Charities of South Western Ohio to welcome New American Muslim families to Cincinnati.

For the fiscal year of 2021/2022  
the following are expected to arrive:

Afghans = 50

\*Other Refugees = 225

Total Refugees Expected = 275

\*Includes refugees from Sudan and Syria.

We are grateful to all the volunteers who stepped up in delivering, warm meals and groceries to the new families. As families begin to settle down, we will be able to evaluate and serve other needs as required.

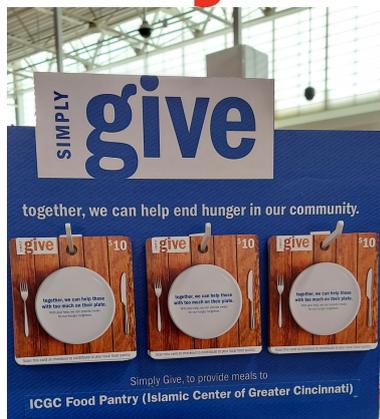
**WELCOMING  
NEW FAMILIES**



# PARTNERSHIPS

## Employer Partners

We currently have about 9 clients working at West Chester Gear and 6 at the LEM group. In 2021, the LEM group awarded all of our referrals with pay increase for being top performers. We also plan on piloting a VESL program onsite with them in 2022 like the one piloted at West Chester Gear this year. In addition we also expanded on our relationship with other employers such as Cintas, Panera and other local retail chains.



ICGC Social Services was chosen as the "Partner Pantry" for the Meijer Simply Give Spring Campaign 2021. We were able to raise \$7000 to help with our pantry purchase from this campaign and hope to continue the partnership in 2022 as well.



The Cars4Jannah partnership has proven to be another successful initiative. We raised about \$2500 from 5 car donations which is an average of \$500 per car. For 2022 we plan on expanding C4J scope to ICGC vs. Social Services and double our donations inshAllah.

COLLABORATION



# GRANTS

We not only continued with the multi year grant programs such as Project Lift and EFSP from last year but also participated in disbursing ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance Program) funds in collaboration with SELF (Supports to encourage low income families) of Butler County.

## Self Sufficiency Program (Hamilton County)

**Project Lift** - Guided 16 families towards self-sufficiency by providing support for rent, utilities, education, transportation, etc. adding up to more than \$33,000/- for 2021.

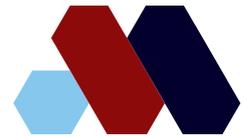
## Emergency Services Programs (Butler County)

**EFSP** - Provided 25 households with rent & utility assistance totaling approx. \$12,000/-

**ERAP** - Supported 17 families receive rent & utility assistance totaling \$73,000/-.

Total spent for 2021 = \$118,000/-

# 2021 AT A GLANCE



**Program Budget** ..... **\$265,000**

## BUDGET BREAKDOWN



## KEY CHALLENGES:

Pandemic related work environment changes (Work from home / Hybrid)

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Service delivery changes

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## 2021 RECAP

**Emergency** - In terms of basic needs, the amount of food distributed per person increased by **57%** from last year. This is due to the fact that programs like Retail Rescue and Meijer Simply Give increased our food supply access in addition to our ability to store more perishable food in the fridge and freezer acquired last year.

**Stability** - Similarly rent & utility assistance numbers went up by 50% compared to 2020, reflecting the disproportionate impact of economic instability and downturn on low income families.

**Self-Sufficiency** - The average wage rate for the people placed in jobs by our program went up from **\$13.56/hr.** to **\$15.20/hr.** This is a **12%** increase in wages from job placements last year and especially important as inflation rose by almost **7%**.

**Growth** - Compared to 2020, program enrollment went up by 10% in 2021. This indicates a desire by families to uplift themselves out of poverty by committing to their goals. In addition, the number of people committed to learning language, literacy and citizenship stayed steady despite pandemic related challenges.

**What's  
Next?**

**2030  
Strategic  
Aspiration**

Reduce poverty  
and promote  
health & wellness  
in the region.





## **POVERTY**

Our aim is to reduce poverty amongst the families we serve, by focusing on these strategies:

- 1) **Increasing sources of income immediately** - This includes better paying jobs, more hours and/or dual income families along with benefits if needed.
- 2) **Improving future income potential** - Focusing on developing employment, education and career skills. This includes education for adults as well as focusing on young adults in the household.

## **HEALTH & WELLNESS**

We see and acknowledge the trauma affecting all of our families and as we continue to remove barriers to financial well being we also plan on addressing stress, anxiety and trauma through group therapy, wellness education and family safety.

# Growing Social Services

STEP 3

STEP 2

## FOCUS AREAS

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Education	Success@School
Coaching	Financial & Life
Self Sufficiency	Project Lift / Success@Work

## STRATEGY

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System Development	CRM Improvements
Partnerships & Collaborations	Employers / Educators / Health & Wellness
Funding Development	Program specific

## RESOURCES NEEDED

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Space | Staff | Training | Equipment