




CATHOLIC
CHARITIES
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK
PROVIDING
HELP 100+
CREATING
HOPE YEARS

COVID-19 PANDEMIC
OUR RESPONSE

Dear friend,

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Catholic Charities remained open, pivoted, and continued to provide critically-needed help that preserved hope for hurting New Yorkers. Our dedicated staff rose to challenges brought on by the pandemic and even expanded efforts to meet spiraling levels of need. Generous support from our benefactors has enabled us to respond to the pandemic with strength and compassion. This report highlights Catholic Charities' work during the past year. Gratitude to the many who have made this possible.

Sincerely,



Msgr. Kevin Sullivan



FEEDING OUR NEIGHBORS

Overall, we have experienced a nearly **50% increase in demand** for emergency food assistance since March 2020. New households registering at our pantries increased by 300%, averaging over 1,690 households during pandemic months. Our Bronx food hub received more than 1.1 million pounds of donated food, which we distributed to scores of neighborhood pantries.

Throughout the hardest hit neighborhoods and communities of New York, Catholic Charities organized **over 200 "pop-up" pantries**, delivering nutritious bags of groceries with over 750,000 meals. Taking to heart the special needs of seniors, one homebound program expanded by 500% to deliver food to more than 300 homes. Wellness calls were made to battle isolation of 450 seniors. We also helped more than 1,000 households apply for longer term nutrition assistance.

Two agencies deserve special note.

- Encore Community Services never stopped; it provided **more than 500,000 meals to the homebound** isolated in their apartments throughout Manhattan.
- In the Fordham section of the Bronx, POTS (Part of the Solution) fed hungry New Yorkers daily — more than 2 million meals during this time.

Altogether, during this pandemic year, Catholic Charities' network of food pantries, community kitchens, pop-up pantries, and home-delivery programs have provided more than **8.4 million meals** to New Yorkers in need, non-Catholic and Catholic alike.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN CRISES

Catholic Charities caseworkers have assisted families in crisis throughout the pandemic, both remotely and in-person, following CDC guidelines. Since March 2020, we have opened new cases for **more than 3,400 individuals and families**. We adjusted our telephone helpline to operate from home offices on weekdays with expanded hours from 8 am to 8 pm. Our helpline received **more than 24,000 calls** during the pandemic year — more than a 50% increase from pre-pandemic years. Not surprisingly, the most frequent requests are for food, rent, and general financial assistance.

EMERGENCY CASH ASSISTANCE

When wage earners lose their jobs, there is no substitute for cash assistance. Some very generous donors recognized this need and partnered with Catholic Charities to provide approximately **\$5 million of cash assistance** to help nearly 9,000 families cover urgent expenses. While the restaurants and hotels sector suffered significant economic loss, workers suffered financial devastation as their jobs disappeared overnight. Notably, we assisted immigrants who were not eligible to receive unemployment benefits or other aid to meet their basic needs.

PIVOTING TO TELECARE

Faced with restrictions against in-person services, our agencies and programs pivoted to widespread telecare to meet ongoing and new needs brought on by overwhelming loss and fear.

A few examples provide an illustrative snapshot:

- The negative impact of remote learning on children's mental health has been well documented. Astor Services for Children & Families carried out **90,000 tele-health sessions** to ensure the emotional wellbeing of thousands of children and their families.
- Catholic Charities of Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster counties conducted close to **30,000 chemical dependency sessions** via telephone and Zoom.
- Our Alianza Youth Services program sprang into action to connect with more than 2,400 families in need. Alianza staff placed over 50,000 calls during the first three months of the pandemic. These weekly **wellness calls made contact with families 22,000 times**.

Childcare services, information, referrals, advocacy and many more services were still delivered, but during the pandemic, through thousands of phone and Zoom calls.

DISTRIBUTING PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

In first days and weeks of the pandemic, when these resources were extremely scarce, Catholic Charities' agency relations leadership organized quickly and creatively to source and distribute **more than 85,000 units of PPE** to Catholic Charities agencies. Thanks to these efforts, essential operations continued, and staff were protected. Since March 2020, we have distributed 40,000 masks, 44,000 pairs of protective gloves, and more than 1,500 bottles of sanitizer and cleaning equipment to 25 agencies.

PROTECTING AND NURTURING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Since the mid-1800s, Catholic Charities agencies, often founded by religious women, have placed children at the heart of their mission. The pandemic imposed severe stressors on our preventive, foster care, and school support services, which had to suspend the frequent in-person contact they were accustomed to. Catholic Charities agencies pivoted and continued to support, counsel, and monitor vulnerable children and youth. Telephone and Zoom calls helped us to maintain contact. When needed, dedicated workers continued to visit at-risk homes.

Our Alianza Youth Services program and Good Shepherd Services pivoted rapidly to collaborate with schools for both in-person and remote programming. This past summer, Alianza engaged nearly **3,000 youth in in-person or remote activities**. It fought to secure virtual positions to maintain our annual summer internship program, which provides crucial income and experience to underserved youth. Unable to operate a sleep-away program, we turned our Putnam Valley camp into a day camp for NYC youth. This school year, Alianza is providing **in-person and remote programming for 2,350 youth** as well as critical support for students as they transition back and forth from remote learning to in-person instruction. For families in need of childcare and a safe space for their children to learn virtually, we converted our community centers in Harlem and Washington Heights into Learning Labs.

PRESERVING HOUSING

New York's eviction moratorium, without a doubt, has prevented homelessness for many families, but it does not deal with every case, nor solve every problem. Several families have faced illegal eviction threats. Since the start of the pandemic, we have opened 4,530 new eviction prevention cases, **prevented 3,863 evictions**, and stopped 166 utility shutoffs.

We have also offered **128 Tenant Education Program workshops for more than 1,000 households**, which teaches skills such as family budgeting, rights and responsibilities of NYC tenants, and landlord-tenant relationships.

We are preparing for an upsurge of families needing assistance once the eviction moratorium fully lifts and have encouraged tenants to apply for assistance before their arrears become unmanageable and landlords take legal action.

REACHING OUT AND RESPONDING TO IMMIGRANTS

We continued to support and advocate for immigrants, refugees, and day laborers who have been severely impacted by the pandemic. Even though we were forced to operate remotely beginning in March 2020, Catholic Charities provided nearly 3,500 legal consultations, accepted almost 1,000 new cases, submitted more than 2,600 applications for legal immigration relief, and answered **more than 55,000 calls on our three immigration hotlines**.

To distribute critical information regarding healthcare, unemployment, stimulus checks, and changing immigration regulations, we have conducted **150 virtual presentations reaching more than 13,500 people**. In the Lower Hudson Valley, we hosted numerous outdoor community events that reached more than 1,000 immigrants.

Our International Center now offers virtual English language classes to more than 150 students and has provided nearly 50 workshops about how to access online services. As we have for the past decade, Catholic Charities continued to assist unaccompanied minors carefully tracking policies and procedures that were even more chaotic during the pandemic. We advocated for the reunification of detained children with family members. Catholic Charities in New York developed a **nationally distributed COVID-19 health and safety screening tool for detained unaccompanied minors** to ensure proper preventive and medical care.

Immigrant day laborers in the Bronx and Yonkers still lined up for work — but few jobs were offered. They experienced more substantial loss, and without a safety net. Catholic Charities supported thousands in these families with cash assistance, food, clothing, PPE, and supplies for work. Through the generosity of a local store owner, we even organized a “socially distanced” pizza party.

SUPPORTING THE PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY CHALLENGED

For thousands of our neighbors with disabilities, home is a decent apartment or a safe bedroom in a residence of one of our Catholic Charities agencies. As the pandemic forced widespread close downs, there was no choice but for Catholic Charities to keep open these apartments and residences, continuing to deliver these services to vulnerable New Yorkers entrusted to our care.

One example is emblematic of many others. Our Beacon of Hope residential programs and their dedicated staff **continued to house and care for nearly 500 individuals with serious mental illnesses**. We implemented new safety measures in accordance with CDC guidelines and worked closely with the State Office of Mental Health to arrange early on for testing, and then accessibility to the COVID-19 vaccines. Similar examples could be cited for residences for those with addictions and those with developmental disabilities. While the courageous work of healthcare professionals was rightly lauded, our Catholic Charities workers demonstrated heroic efforts that often fell below the public radar screen. From the outset of the pandemic, New York State recognized these workers as essential who needed to be on-site to deliver their care.



We sadly and prayerfully remember the pain and loss of so many as, thanks be to God, we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our experience also reminds us there will be numerous ongoing pandemic-related and other needs. As we have for more than a century, Catholic Charities will be present to meet these needs in the communities and neighborhoods throughout New York. We count on the generosity of our valued partners and benefactors to continue this work.