

Safety Net Alliance of Northern Kentucky

“Mending holes in the social safety net.”

The Safety Net Alliance was created to give “front line” service providers a forum for interaction, so that they can: enhance communication, share relevant resource/service information, identify common issues and trends, and ultimately maximize resources to avoid duplication. The Alliance strengthens the fabric of the local social services sector by providing *the only forum* for managers and direct service staff across local agencies to regularly interact and to build personal working relationships. These Partners are currently committed to working together to more holistically support underserved individuals/families in need.

Background

- In summer of 2007 with the growing trend of an increase of individuals and families accessing our Safety Net services such as financial emergency assistance, clothing vouchers and food and personal care pantry services, we recognized a need to pull together local organizations and groups that provided Safety Net services as an effort to discuss critical issues including:
 1. The increase need and demand with a limited supply of resources.
 2. The “new face” of individuals and families accessing services. This new face is the *Working Poor Class* who are caught between a rock and a hard place. They were working and making enough to get by until the current harsh economic conditions limited their ability to make ends meet, if they seek government assistance, often times they make just a little too much to qualify for services. In many cases, if they chose not to work and access government benefits and services their family would actually be better off financially. Additionally, we are seeing more new folks asking for help in the mid \$20,000 to \$40,000 annual income range (depending on household size) asking for help after the family suffered a life altering event such as: loss of a job due to company down sizing, one of the family breadwinners has an accident or illness prohibiting them to work indefinitely.
- June 2007 Brighton Center hosted the first Safety Net Alliance meeting inviting over 30 entities from Campbell, Kenton and Boone counties.
- Over 20 different organizations, churches, government agencies, funders and schools attended the meeting.
- We discussed that we needed to commit to monthly meetings in light of the tough economic times to best support individuals and families struggling to make ends meet in Northern Kentucky in a more *efficient* and *effective* manner.

Our motivation

Literally dozens of entities provide emergency assistance services to low-income and homeless individuals and families throughout Boone, Campbell, and Kenton Counties. These are non-profit agencies, government entities, and faith-based organizations (the “Partners”). There is significant overlap in the population that they serve. The Partners’ annual funding comes from federal and state allocations, private grant dollars, corporate and individual donations, and fundraising events. Historically, funding limitations have forced some of these Partners to compete with others for resources. Over time, this competition results in a breakdown of communication between and among Partners and funders, and creates significant inefficiencies in Northern Kentucky’s social services sector. In recent years, government funding for Safety Net programs has substantially decreased, and local organizations have experienced a dramatic increase in families seeking emergency assistance for the first time. In light of these trends, the Safety Net Alliance was created to give “front line” service providers a forum for interaction, so that they can become better informed about (1) current resources available and (2) gaps in funding and services that need to be addressed.

Our accomplishments:

- Streamlined NKY resource list with safety net provider info for 3 counties distributed through all agencies attending mtgs.
- \$20,000 funding (\$10,000 from GCF & \$10,000 matching from Ralph V. Haile/U.S. Bancorp Foundation) for 7 member agencies (selected by the funder based on volume of families served) to restock their food pantries after the enquirer attended our November meeting focusing on increase access of several food pantries drying up pantry shelves across area of NKY. They published a story on our group and the funding sources read it.
- Representatives from 39 entities are now at the table attending the monthly meetings.
- Group decided on a web based platform and Butler foundation is committed to funding \$10,000 to begin implementation. The Butler foundation also sponsors our lunch for our meetings and a member agency makes the lunch.
- Our group votes on key items such as meeting leadership. We have a meeting facilitator and chair, someone who takes minutes and someone who contacts key external resource speakers such as the Cabinet for Health Families and local housing entities to educate the group on changes in services or service eligibility. A member agency also spends 10 minutes each meeting educating the group on the services they provide.
- As the Safety Net Alliance we are committed to bringing our resources together in an effort to more holistically support individuals and families in need.