

Immigration Crisis along the Border: UMCOR's response

The current immigration crisis involving adults, accompanied minors, and unaccompanied minors crossing into the U.S. along our Southwest border has been labeled a humanitarian disaster. UMCOR's has responded by supporting the conferences most affected with grant funds for hospitality, material supplies where needed, and collaboration with our ecumenical and governmental partners.

In the U.S., UMCOR always works on invitation of the episcopal leadership of the Annual Conference that has been affected by a disaster. In this instance, UMCOR has released emergency grants of \$10,000 to the Southwest TX and Desert South West conferences upon request of Bishop Dorff and Bishop Hoshibata. UMCOR is currently engaged in grant discussions for ongoing coordination of relief services for the areas of McAllen, Laredo, Brownsville, and Nogales. Bishop Dorff announced the appointment of Rev. Javier Leyva to oversee the coordination of Immigration ministry response for SWTX conference - a position that will be supported with UMCOR grant funds. The Holdings Institute – a UMW property – within SWTX has been meeting the hospitality needs of immigrant arrivals in their area and will become part of a response plan with SWTX. UMCOR is in discussion with the WJ Council of Bishops about ongoing coordination needs for the entire region including the Methodist conferences on the Mexican side of the border.

UMCOR has supported the Mexican Border Ministry Network (16 sites) in the past with grants for blankets, Socks, and medical supplies. The MBMN and the neighboring churches have been providing hospitality for the persons who have been processed through Immigration and then released to appear at a later date. The individuals (sometimes with children) are being dropped at bus stations and mission centers without notification to the regional groups or physical resources to continue their journey. UMCOR will be supporting these ministries through conference grants. A delivery of 18,000 health kits was recently released in the areas of McAllen, Laredo, and Brownsville to help support the hospitality needs of those arriving.

UMCOR has been in continuing conversation with FEMA, ICE, DHS, HHS, and the White House Office for Faith-based initiatives to get greater access and insights to the processing of arriving immigrants to be able to provide needed services. UMCOR will continue to support the faith groups in the area so that they are able to assist and offer hospitality. At this time, the conferences are not asking for any outside assistance or donations of supplies from outside their region. UMCOR will work with them on the possibility of teams coming to assist to provide respite for the local church hospitality teams who have been tireless in their work.

In the area of Unaccompanied Minors – UMCOR – along with most faith organizations – are included in a conference call each week with officials from FEMA, ICE, DHS, HHS, and the White House Office for Faith-based initiatives. Since their detention has been declared a “national security issue” the only persons with access are Dept. Homeland Security and ICE contractors. NO groups are being given continual access for Spiritual and Emotional Care or visitation. There has been limited access by our Episcopal leadership. UMCOR and the Bishops are continuing to pressure our governmental agencies for access to little or no avail... but we continue to dialogue. The government has clearly stated that the children held in detention facilities have no unmet needs and are not accepting donations of supplies or funding towards their care.

JFON (Justice for our Neighbors) – which is supported by UMCOR is sending volunteer attorneys to the area on request of the government to help expedite some immigration proceedings with legal representation.

BULLET POINTS:

South West Texas	\$10,000
Desert South West	\$10,000

Anticipated grant to SWTX: \$200,000 for ongoing coordination in McAllen, Laredo, and Brownsville TX
Grant: WJ Bishops/Immigration committee – consultation for action plan – Aug. 18 in McAllen

18,000 health kits delivered to the region

Conversation and collaboration with: conferences, JFON, UMW, GBCS, Council of Bishops, CWS, Catholic Charities

Government contacts: FEMA, ICE, DHS, HHS, White House office of Faith Based Initiatives