



Jackson County Systems of Care and Children and Youth in Disasters Initiatives

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” By: Mahatma Gandhi

The Jackson County Systems of Care (SOC) and Children and Youth in Disasters (CYID) is honored to serve the community in whatever way possible and are always open to new partnerships and ideas! Please feel free to reach out to us with your thoughts, ideas, and/or questions! The SOC/CYID can be reached at: (816) 482-5775 or by email:

Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov. All programs are first come, first served and are subject to availability. We will never not try!

1. Helping Hands

Helping Hands is a program designed to help Jackson County residents with smaller unmet needs such as that last \$50 of a utility bill, \$20 more for a new tire, etc. whatever the need may be! The only things that the SOC/CYID ask are that all referrals come from a professional such as a case manager, teacher, clergy, etc., that all other possible community resources first be exhausted, and a statement that the need is critical. Unfortunately, **we cannot accept referrals directly from consumers**. Whenever possible, the SOC/CYID prefers to pay the source owed directly.

2. Birthday Buddies

Who doesn't need a break on their birthday??? The SOC/CYID through partnerships with individuals and bakeries is able to provide a small cake, cupcake, cookie, etc. in addition to a card and often, a small gift just to brighten someone's day that may need it! This program is open to children or adults and especially seniors that are sadly often forgotten about. The SOC/CYID will need at least a week's notice, just send us an email!

3. Note Folks

Note Folks is a program that can send weekly letters, cards, notes, or even calls to anyone feeling isolated or alone. This may be because of health reasons or anything else really! New in town, going through a difficult time, no matter what the reason for feeling alone, the SOC/CYID will be there for you!

4. Ready and Steady

Ready and Steady is an initiative by the SOC/CYID to aide in community member's personal emergency preparedness efforts. Through different programs, the SOC/CYID is seeking to address two critical issues that could very well cost someone his or her life during an emergency, apathy and complacency. We are actively designing a campaign to reduce apathy and complacency when it comes to things such as early warnings for example about pending storms and such. Further, the SOC/CYID is developing a virtual platform utilizing AI (artificial intelligence) that is unlike any sort of software or application currently available on the market and specifically is for the average consumer. We are striving to increase resiliency and preparatory efforts through various channels and to change how people cognitively, emotionally, and physically respond to disasters. In addition to these efforts, the SOC/CYID is often able to distribute weather radios, smoke detectors, and other potentially life-saving equipment. We believe NOT in leading out of fear but rather in leading in preparation! Adding to these efforts in 2024 will be a new program to promote community resiliency. Studies are clear that people going into disasters at a disadvantage for whatever reason(s) are also the least likely to successfully emerge from any sort of a disaster be it a traditionally defined one (e.g., tornados, floods) or one that may not meet the definition of a disaster per se but nonetheless is one for the community (e.g., the Fentanyl crisis, human trafficking).

5. Stronger Together KC WATCH (We All Together Can Help)

This initiative continues to evolve and seeks to reduce suicides throughout the Jackson County community through education and coming together as the community that we are to support one another and recognize early warning signs. Each one of us has the potential to save a life and while this initiative involves trauma-informed best practices as do other efforts, it incorporates innovative strategies not typically found in most programs and seeks to normalize talk that has often been considered "taboo."

6. Foreclosure Prevention

The SOC/CYID is developing a very unique model that could potentially keep people in their homes and reduce neighborhood blight that often occurs when a home is foreclosed. This incorporates case management, education, community service, and more and intersects across different disciplines. The program would cost substantially less than an average foreclosure and keep families intact. This in turn has positive ramifications on physical and mental health. Please note that this is temporarily shelved as we continue to seek a lender that would be willing to pilot this program!

7. Ray Way Resource Directory

The Ray Way was the first initiative of the SOC/CYID and for more than 3 years has been and will continue to be, a weekly publication that is distributed by email (along with a list of changes from the prior week) on Monday mornings to anyone who would like to receive it and is posted on our website! It is a comprehensive listing of many different kinds of resources covering the greater KC Metro area and is currently more than 70 pages long! The SOC/CYID endeavors to connect people to critically needed resources and achieve independence. All the help in the world will not make a difference if you do not know it exists!

8. Got Gas???

No, this isn't about what you ate last night!!! How many of us have been waiting for that first paycheck or had something significant come up that drained our budgets and left no money to get to work, doctor's appointments, and more? The SOC/CYID is able to provide gas cards to people in need but are only able to accept referrals from professionals such as case workers, teachers, etc. We are meant to be a funder of last resort so please make sure that other resources have first been tried and the need is substantial. We have an allotment of gas cards given to us each month and those go fast! That said, please do not ever hesitate to reach out and we will do our best to meet needs at other times whenever possible!

9. Book It!

Thanks to partnerships with a publisher and manufacturer, the SOC/CYID is able to provide books and other learning materials to early education classrooms and day cares to further promote literacy! We especially want to assist smaller schools and day cares that are often under-funded and left out of larger scale assistance programs.

10. Special Dietary Needs Food Distribution

The SOC/CYID has the financial ability to sponsor/co-sponsor, a very unique food distribution that focuses on people often left out of other such distributions. While people are grateful for any food that is given to them, many will eat something out of necessity despite having issues with blood sugar, sodium contents, gluten, and more. If your organization is interested in partnering with the SOC/CYID, please do not hesitate to reach out!

11. Holiday Helpers

The SOC/CYID is able to adopt smaller needs and sometimes some larger needs at the holiday times. This may consist of a meal for an individual or family, a present, a card, etc. The Jackson County SOC/CYID will be able to provide some complete meals at the holidays for those unable to get to food distributions or who may lack the facilities to prepare meals. This is in addition to providing what we have in the past for others such as turkeys, canned goods, and other miscellaneous needs. As with other SOC/CYID initiatives, this is subject to availability but generally we can either help or find someone who can. Again, all referrals for this must come from someone working with the family.

12. Back to School

We are able to help anyone struggling with basic school supplies, small fees, school clothing, and more.

13. Well Care

The SOC/CYID is able to assist individuals and families with loved ones in the hospital. This can take many forms such as providing basic hygiene items to families while they are at the hospital, support, food, etc. The SOC/CYID wants people to focus on their loved ones and not have to worry about these other needed things!

14. Duds and Suds

Through a partnership with a discount retailer, the SOC/CYID can provide basic laundry essentials such as detergent, bleach, fabric softener, etc. Under some circumstances, we may be able to assist with laundromat costs.

15. Warm Hearts

The SOC/CYID is able to supply people with necessary items to keep warm such as hats, coats, gloves, boots, etc.

16. AFNC

AFNC stands for “Access and Functional Needs Committee.” The AFNC is dedicated to helping people with physical, developmental, or intellectual disabilities, any chronic condition, limited English proficiency, anything at all that may interfere in the ability to access things that many of us may take for granted. Special emphasis is placed on helping people with access and functional needs during times of emergencies and disasters to ensure the same successful outcomes as anyone else.

17. Cancel Cancer

Cancel Cancer is the SOC/CYID’s latest initiative and is continuing to evolve. In its early stages, this initiative will strive to connect people newly diagnosed with cancer and their friends/family to critically needed resources and supports. As this initiative continues to evolve, my intent is that it will greatly expand to include sponsorships of walks and a formal campaign with 100% of the proceeds going to cancer research. Because this effort is evolving, I am very wanting to hear feedback and ideas from anyone who may be interested in partnering with the SOC/CYID to further support people of all ages newly diagnosed with any type of cancer.

In short, the SOC/CYID is here to serve and support the community in whatever way that we can. What we are able to do is made possible through multiple individual and business benefactors. If someone you are working with has an unmet need, please feel free to reach out and if we can help, we will! Thank you for everything that you do for our communities and it is our pleasure to assist you in doing this!

Dr. Jennifer

Chair of the Jackson County SOC and Children in Youth and Disasters