



Adult Education & Workforce Development

OUR MISSION

Mercy Center creates opportunities for women, men and families in the South Bronx to grow and thrive through education, family, civic, social and economic programs. We build community with a spirit of hospitality, respect and equity in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy.

ADULT EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Our Adult Education team believes in creating a welcoming environment where every participant feels valued and supported. Our approach is rooted in hospitality, respect, and equity, ensuring that each individual is met with warmth, open communication, and personalized care. We take time to learn participants' stories, honor their experiences from their home countries, and provide holistic services that go beyond language learning.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Many participants face challenges that go beyond language barriers. Limited literacy and educational experience make learning English difficult, while social isolation, restricted job opportunities, and a lack of occupational networks limit economic mobility. Family challenges, immigration concerns, financial insecurity, food scarcity, and the ongoing need for affordable childcare often affect their ability to focus on education. By working closely with social services, immigration support, family services, financial education, and food security programs, we ensure that students receive holistic support that helps them overcome barriers and thrive.

ANNUAL GOALS

- Enroll 1,600 ESOL students, with 80% completing at least one cycle.
- Ensure 90% of completers improve English proficiency by 30 points and advance to the next level.
- Enroll 80 participants in Work Readiness Assistance; help 100 participants obtain new or improved employment.



ENGLISH CLASSES

Three levels of intensive ESOL instruction tailored for adults with limited literacy and educational experience. Classes integrate job readiness skills and contextualized learning for industries like healthcare and hospitality.



GED & ABE CLASSES

High School Equivalency preparation in English and Spanish, plus Adult Basic Education for those building foundational skills.



EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING

One-on-one guidance to identify barriers, create individualized education plans, and connect participants to internal and external resources.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Skills for Employment Success workshops, networking opportunities, and personalized job-search coaching to help participants secure meaningful jobs and advance their careers.



HOLISTIC SUPPORT

Free onsite babysitting for parents when schools are closed, technology and computer literacy training, and civics-based ESOL classes to empower active community participation.



Immigration and Asylum Seeker Programs

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IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM SEEKER PROGRAMS

Our Immigration and Asylum Seeker Programs provide critical legal application assistance to low-income immigrants, with a special focus on recently-arrived migrants, enabling them to stabilize their status, and to fully engage in civic and economic life in the United States. It also connects immigrants with Mercy Center's other programs to address the whole needs of each participant.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Lack of access to support with applications for citizenship and other forms of immigration relief; lack of access to free, informed assistance with navigating complex laws and policies; unethical providers committing "notario fraud".

ANNUAL GOALS

- 800 individuals to be screened for immigration relief
- 172 Citizenship or DACA applications to be filed
- 35 Green Card renewal applications to be filed
- 120 individuals will receive legal assistance through consultations with our Office for New Americans (ONA) legal counsel.
- 505 asylum related applications to be filed
- 1,500 asylum seeker case management sessions to be provided



APPLICATION ASSISTANCE

Staff meet individually with participants to identify available immigration relief, complete applications, overcome barriers, and secure missing information and documentation.



IMMIGRATION LEGAL CONSULTATION

Our DOJ accredited team individually help participants to identify their legal options and complete applications. Participants with challenging cases meet with our ONA Legal Counsel at one of 20 annual legal consultation days.



ASYLUM SEEKER CASE MANAGEMENT

Our case managers offer new migrants assistance with transportation, health, clothing, food and other urgently needed resources.



CITIZENSHIP EXAM PREPARATION

We offer citizenship exam preparation classes with a curriculum covering U.S. history, civics, and government, with extensive focus on the questions posed on the exam. We also provide ESOL-Civics classes with a curriculum that emphasizes contextualized language instruction.



LEGAL WORKSHOPS

We offer in-person and online workshops that address relevant immigration legal issues and changes in immigration laws and policies.

Immigration Services Provided:

- Naturalization (Citizenship)
- Certificate of Citizenship
- Advance Parole
- DACA Renewal (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)
- Green Card Renewals
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Requests for Fee Waiver/Reduced Fee
- Immigration Relief Eligibility Consultations
- Asylum
- T-Visa & U-Visa
- Vawa Self-Petitions
- Adjustment of Status
- Employment Authorization



**Bridget Splain and
Noemie Gerreth**

Co-Directors of Immigration
and Asylum Seeker Programs



For funding opportunities, please email Executive Director, Stephen J. Stritch, III
at ssritch@mercycenterbronx.org or call 718-993-2789.



Youth Programs

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YOUTH PROGRAMS

Our Youth Programs provide academic support and enrichment for children of participants and other District 7 students through the Save for College program in an engaging and supportive environment.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Budget-stretched schools; limited in-home English exposure; barriers to enrichment opportunities; need for educational advocacy and complex systems navigation; historically redlined and distressed neighborhoods affected by violence and addiction.

ANNUAL GOALS AND OUTCOMES

- 75% of students in After School who demonstrate low reading or math scores in the first marking period will improve their grade/score by the end of the year.
- 95% of After School participants will be promoted to the next academic grade at the end of the school year.
- 80% of participants will report their experience in Youth Programs helped them improve their reading, math, and/or writing skills.
- 80% of students will report that participation in After School helped them to complete their homework.



HOMEWORK HELP

Mercy Center offers homework help as a go-to support for families with limited resources. We offer small group and individual attention to ensure students' academic progress and early intervention with learning challenges.



READING ENRICHMENT

Mercy Center's reading enrichment activities are designed to foster a love of reading while strengthening literacy skills for our children. Through interactive read-alouds, book discussions and creative storytelling, students build vocabulary, comprehension and critical thinking. For our K-2nd students, After School integrated Reading Eggs, an online curriculum that reinforces the five essentials keys to reading success



SUMMER DAY CAMP

Our four-week summer day camp during the month of July offers children opportunities to play and learn – often at the same time! The children gain new social and decision-making skills as they explore their neighborhood, the NYC boroughs, and horizons beyond the city.



STEAM ENRICHMENT

Mercy Center provides STEAM activities offering hands-on learning experiences that develop problem-solving, collaboration and critical thinking skills. Our young people connect classroom knowledge to the real world while building confidence to be creative.



SAVE FOR COLLEGE

Mercy Center partners with NYC Kids Rise to support School District 7 families to build financial literacy, and grow their child's college and/or career savings.

FY 2025 Program Milestones:

- 139 children were enrolled in onsite After School, Robotics, Summer Camp, Babysitting and Dance Class programming, participating in 17,933 activity hours.
- 100% of After School participants were promoted to the next grade.
- In partnership with Dance to Unite, 24 children were engaged in a comprehensive program that combined dance education with discussions on cultural diversity and values.
- 97 Mercy Center children attended an overnight summer camp in upstate NY with the Fiver Children's Foundation.
- 487 children received gifts during the winter holidays.



Nathalie Soto
Director of Youth Programs



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Familia Adelante/ Family Forward

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FAMILIA ADELANTE/FAMILY FORWARD

Formed in 2017, the Familia Adelante / Family Forward collaboration brings together four mission-driven partners to connect families in the South Bronx with a broad range of services. Utilizing a Whole Family, or 2-Gen Approach, families meet regularly with Family Workers to set and work toward short and long-term goals in areas of education, economic stability, healthy family relationships, and adult and child well-being.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Impact of immigration on family life and work opportunities; lack of familiarity with formal financial systems; complex secondary and higher education school processes; historically red-lined and distressed neighborhoods; need for community-building.

ANNUAL GOALS

- Over 100 enrolled families will work a family plan with goals in areas including education, finance, adult and child well-being
- 90% of families will make significant progress towards achieving their goals during their involvement, moving toward greater self-sufficiency.



COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY COACHING

The most important link between the families and the services we provide are the Family Workers: staff members trained in Family-Centered Coaching and trauma-informed practices who serve as dedicated service-provider liaisons and trusted life coaches for families.



FINANCIAL LITERACY EDUCATION

One driver of uneven wealth distribution is a lack of basic financial literacy among many members of diverse communities, which creates a barrier to participation in the formal financial system. Coaching families on how to open bank accounts, construct and follow household budgets, and save for their future goals, Familia Adelante provides pathways toward futures that are more economically stable and mobile.



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

NYC is home to one of the largest and most complex public school systems in the nation. We provide workshops and coaching to help parents and their students navigate the complexity of secondary school matriculation and college application and financial aid. Our team assists families whose children need individualized learning support.



STRESS REDUCTION AND MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES

Our stress reduction and mindfulness practitioner works with adults in group settings to identify stress and increase well-being using physical and mental awareness techniques.

FY 2025 Program Milestones:

- 105 families in active case management
- 38 families graduated from the program in Fall 2024
- 24 new families were enrolled in the program
- 247 participants attended 10 different financial education workshops hosted by the Qualitas of Life Foundation
- 18 children received educational support from Fiver Children's Foundation
- 24 participants attended mindfulness activities hosted by Maritza Puello
- 12 collaboration team meetings were held



COLLABORATION PARTNERS

Qualitas of Life Foundation

Fiver Children's Foundation

Maritza Puello
Mindfulness Practioner



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Family Skills

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FAMILY SKILLS PROGRAM

Family Skills programming provides participants with skills and support to improve the well-being of their families. We offer parenting classes in Spanish and English which focus on different developmental stages, an Anger Management class in Spanish, and a support group for mothers.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Lack of access to parenting education tailored to an immigrant population; stressful living conditions, isolation from community, and intergenerational trauma.

ANNUAL GOALS

- 40 participants enrolled in English language parenting classes, with completion rate of 75% and improvement rate of 70%.
- 85 participants enrolled in Spanish language parenting classes, with completion rate of 75% and improvement rate of 70%.
- 50 participants enrolled in Anger Management classes, with completion rate of 60%, and improvement rate of 80%.
- 30 enrolled in a mothers' support group.

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ABRIENDO PUERTAS/OPENING DOORS PARENTING CLASSES

This evidenced-based curriculum was developed with and by Latino parents and focuses on the development of children from birth-5 years old. It honors families' experiences, history, and knowledge while supporting parents in the role of being their child's first teacher, as leaders of their families, and in their communities.



ACTIVE PARENTING CLASSES IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

This evidence-based course is designed to increase parents' understanding of their children's behavior, help parents learn to develop their children's self-esteem and improve communication and discipline. It also addresses parental management of conflicts and misbehavior and promotes responsibility.



ANGER MANAGEMENT CLASSES

Designed by a Latina social worker with years of experience working with survivors of trauma, this is one of the few anger management courses offered in Spanish in New York City. Within the context of the Latino immigrant experience, it addresses anger, anxiety, depression, and substance use, emphasizing methods for self-regulation, improving relationships with partners and children, and stress reduction.



MOTHERS' SUPPORT GROUP

Mothers meet regularly to share mutual support, art activities, and mindfulness exercises, reducing stress and building community.

FY 2025 Program Milestones:

- 23 participants completed English parenting classes.
- 58 participants completed Spanish parenting classes.
- 31 participants completed Anger Management.
- 17 mothers participated in the Mothers' Support Group.

Quotes from participants:

- "I've learned in this program to respect myself and respect other people in my surroundings and I've also learned to identify anxieties that were the cause of my anger."
- "Learning how to control your anxiety or anger by using your breath exercises, is a gift to me and to others."
- "On my part, this program has totally changed my life! I am happier and live more in peace! Thank you for everything."
- "I appreciate taking courses like this because they allow me to learn new things in a supportive, non-judgmental environment."



**Debbie Panek, LMSW,
MPH**

Senior Director of Social Services
Family and Youth Programs



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Social Services & Community Education



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SOCIAL SERVICES & COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Social Services and Community Education Program provides individual case management, supportive counseling, advocacy, information, and referrals to help participants address problems and issues that prevent them from achieving their goals. The program also provides group educational workshops on topics relevant to Mercy Center participants.

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Food and housing insecurity; limited healthcare access; complicated public assistance policies and practices; complex NYC school systems navigation; unfamiliar cultural norms; domestic abuse.

ANNUAL GOALS

- 300 participants served
- 500 case management sessions over the course of the year
- At least 20 community education workshops



INDIVIDUAL CASE MANAGEMENT

An experienced case manager meets individually with participants using trauma-informed practices and family-centered coaching models to assist participants in addressing problems, identifying and achieving goals, and navigating complex public systems. Common issues include children's educational needs, domestic violence, public benefits, immigration, child welfare, affordable housing, and family relationships.



NYCBENEFITS: INCREASE ACCESS TO PUBLIC BENEFITS

Our trained social services staff help participants to increase their knowledge of, determine and maintain their eligibility for, and complete applications for all types of public benefits, including food stamps, cash assistance, Medicaid, Social Security, rental assistance, utilities assistance, and fair fare metro cards.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

In-person and online workshops that address issues relevant to immigrants are presented by local experts or experienced staff. Some workshops are offered in dual languages.

FY 2025 Program Milestones:

- 1,322 case management sessions provided to 608 participants
- Top 3 case management issues addressed were: public benefits application support (489 sessions), public benefits tech support (236 sessions) and early childcare screening and support (117 sessions)
- other issues addressed include: housing & NYCHA, SNAP & food access, and Fair Fares support.

Community Education Workshops provided include:

- Prepare to Work: Security Guard Training (90 participants)
- Know Your Rights (90 participants)
- Family Preparedness for Emergencies (32 participants)
- Me Preparo: Mis Finanzas & Mi Tranquilidad (30 participants)
- Educational Background & Local Vocational Programs (20 participants)

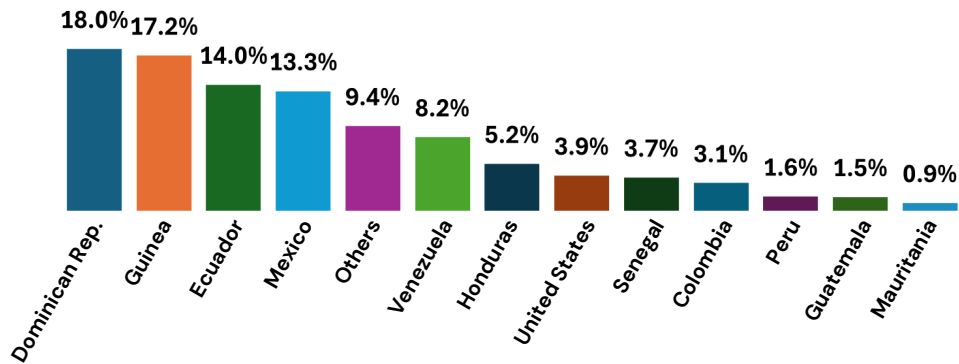


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This is what our participants look like

4,256 number of participants	50% 50% male, 50% female	72% are Hispanic	29 average age; range from 1 to 91	57% have at least a high school education
77% Bronx residents	\$21,000 62% earn less than \$21K a year	48% of those employed work full-time	76% heard about MC from friend or family	

55
countries of origin



These are the services we provide

Adult Education: ESOL, ABE, HSE

1,580 number enrolled in ESOL Classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages)	296 number enrolled in ABE & HSE Classes (Adult Basic Education; High School Equivalency)
99.5% promoted to the next level	244 improved TABE Test scores
100% increased at least 30 points on BEST Plus test score	16 obtained GED diploma

Workforce Development

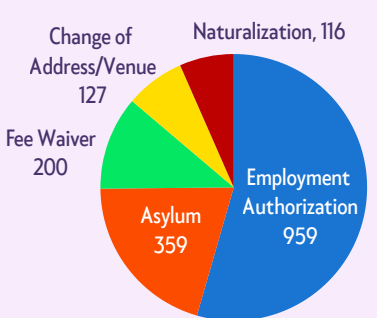
● Goal ● Achieved

80	392
# of participants served	
50	91
# obtained new employment	
50	78
# obtained improved employment	

Immigration Programs

1,862	# of applications submitted
2,059	# of legal screenings
2,126	# of legal consultations
962	# in Asylum Case Management

Applications Submitted Top 5



Application Type	Count
Employment Authorization	959
Asylum	359
Fee Waiver	200
Change of Address/Venue	127
Naturalization	116

Familia Adelante

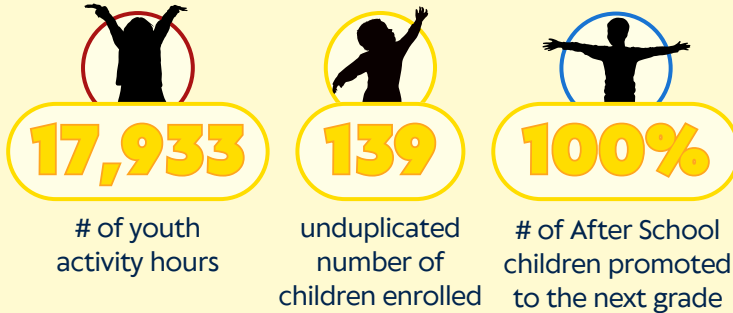
- 105** # of families in ongoing case management
- 38** # of families graduated in Fall 2024
- 24** # of new families enrolled
- 20** # of fathers in Dads & Kids Group



Family Skills

- 154** # enrolled in Parenting Classes, Anger Management Classes, and Mothers' Support Group (unduplicated)
- 30** # enrolled in more than one of these groups

Youth Programs



Thanksgiving & Christmas

Thanksgiving Food Distribution



Christmas Gifts Distributed



Educational Workshops & Community Building

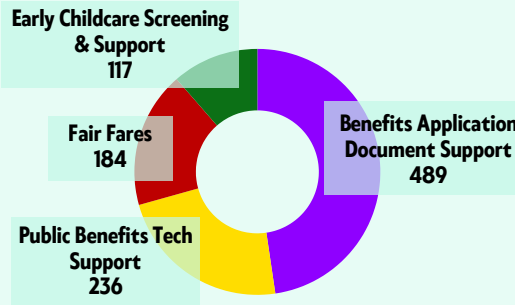
- 1,597** participated in one or more activity
- 44** workshops & activities offered
- 90** # who attended the most popular workshop: Security Guard Training



Social Services

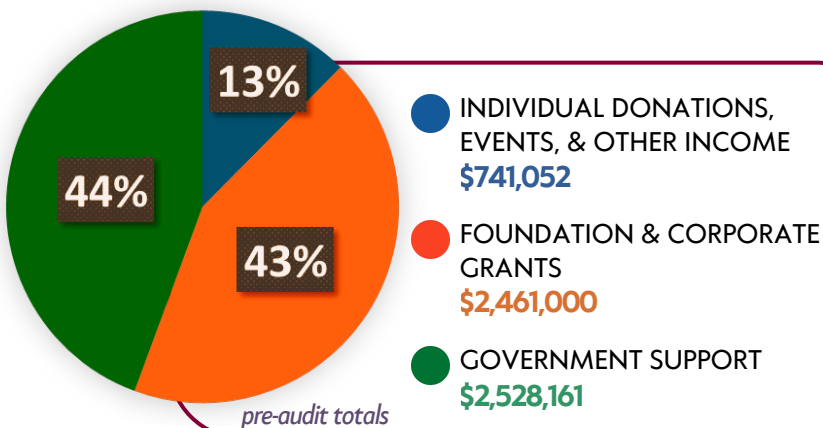
Includes General Case Management, NYC Benefits, & Early Childcare Initiative

Top Issues Addressed



- 608** number of participants served
- 1,322** number of sessions

This is the funding that makes it all possible



OUR DONORS

- 516 active donors
- 972 individual gifts
- 160 donors with multiple gifts
- 114 new donors
- 116 reactivated donors
- 56% donor retention rate