

The background features a stylized illustration of four human figures in shades of light green. The figures are composed of simple shapes: circles for heads and rounded, blocky shapes for bodies. They are arranged in a group, with some overlapping, suggesting a community or congregation.

# Congregational Resource Guide



**Our vision**

Uniting the community through service.

**Our mission**

Supporting the independence of vulnerable seniors and families in crisis through high-impact programs.



## Congregational Resource Guide

MIFA was founded in 1968, several months after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., through an unparalleled alliance of clergy and lay leaders of different faiths and races. Their efforts built upon those of many others, starting as early as 1929, who believed that faith communities should lead the way in addressing the problems of poverty, racism, and injustice in the Mid-South. They knew that the health of our city, and of every individual, depends on our willingness to come together, focusing on the things that can unite us, and celebrating the contributions that diverse groups can make. MIFA's founders spoke and acted at a time when championing justice and dignity for all was anything but popular, and since that day we have all benefited from their courage.

MIFA began as an all-volunteer agency whose purpose was to coordinate the efforts of local congregations, but by the early 1970s, it had initiated programs of direct service and greatly strengthened its financial stability. Now, after 49 years, MIFA has evolved into a broad-based, professional, community-wide nonprofit agency serving more than 50,000 people a year. MIFA's vision is to unite the community through service, and its mission is to support the independence of vulnerable seniors and families in crisis through high-impact programs.

Spiritual commitment lies at the heart of MIFA. *Serving individuals and our community as an act of faith* is one of our five core values. Former board chair Steve Montgomery, pastor of Idlewild Presbyterian church, puts it this way: "Compared to other large cities, in Memphis we live right with the poor, they are right with us, we interact with them more. Because we see what poverty looks like, it becomes more than just an issue. It becomes a person."

MIFA's programs target the critical needs of the community, such as food for homebound seniors, shelter and permanent housing for homeless families, and emergency assistance for families suffering a sudden crisis in employment or health.

## Emergency Services

MIFA's Emergency Services program coordinates several efforts to assist individuals and families during temporary, unavoidable financial crises. Even stable families can be devastated by a sudden loss of employment, the prolonged illness of a child, or an unexpected catastrophe such as a fire. Emergency Services' goal is to stabilize those families by assisting them with food, clothing, rent and mortgage payments, utilities, and other necessities.

## Rapid Rehousing

MIFA's Rapid Rehousing program helps eligible homeless families quickly obtain permanent stable housing. This program is for families with minor children in the household who are literally homeless by the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of homelessness.

Shelby County families with minor children who meet HUD's definition of literal homelessness and have no other resources to prevent homelessness may be eligible for assistance if funds are available. This service is only provided to families with children; single person assistance is not available.

## Emergency Shelter Placement

MIFA's Emergency Shelter Placement program helps prevent any child from sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation through mediation, diversion, or referral to an appropriate emergency shelter or transitional program.

Although efforts will be made to keep families intact, couples with children must be willing to separate if necessary for shelter placement (males to the men's shelter and females with the children to a family shelter). The same consideration will be given to combined families with more than one head of household.

## Homeless Hotline

The hotline is a phone-based screening to determine whether callers are homeless according to HUD's definition (literally sleeping on the streets, in a car or abandoned building) and in need of shelter, or at imminent risk of homelessness and in need of prevention or shelter services. This 24-hour hotline helps connect homeless families with minor children in Memphis and Shelby County to shelter.

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## How MIFA's Emergency Services program can assist your congregation

In recent years, many congregations have seen requests for basic, essential services increase drastically. MIFA's Emergency Services works with churches, synagogues, and other faith communities to provide assistance to those persons with valid and verifiable requests.

**Please refer people to MIFA's Emergency Services.** Experienced social service workers are on staff at MIFA to assist applicants. When a person is screened for services, his/her situation and needs are handled with care and consideration. If MIFA is unable to assist, staff members are well-versed in services offered by other community agencies and will make appropriate referrals. Even if MIFA cannot provide assistance directly, MIFA staff can be an invaluable resource for an individual seeking assistance.

One of Emergency Services' key funding sources is **CASES (Churches and Synagogues Emergency Services)**. Funded through gifts from individuals and the area's religious community, CASES increases our ability to help those in desperate situations. This special resource is a testament to the Mid-South faith community's willingness to combine its efforts to make an impact.

Since MIFA's Emergency Services has a comprehensive and well-developed system of screening applicants for assistance and an extensive network of community agencies, our program is able to implement effective strategies for meeting specific emergency needs. **Congregations are usually not equipped to screen, prioritize, or process these requests.**

**Therefore, we encourage congregations to utilize Emergency Services by:**

- **contributing** a portion of their benevolence budgets to CASES and
- **referring** individuals with benevolence requests to Emergency Services. You are welcome to contact us with information about individuals and families whom you refer. You may also request that we inform you of any assistance granted in those referral cases.

For more information on the benefits of partnering with MIFA through the CASES fund, contact:

**Linda Marks**  
Inter-Faith and Community Outreach Officer  
(901) 529-4560 or [lmarks@mifa.org](mailto:lmarks@mifa.org)

## Congregational Clearinghouse

Emergency Services has a comprehensive client screening service that allows MIFA to store records of assistance provided by congregations. This system allows Emergency Services to verify information and avoid duplicated services, and other congregations may also access this resource.

The form on page 11 can be completed and faxed to MIFA when your congregation assists someone. Feel free to duplicate this form and use it often.

For more information, call (901) 527-0226 for the Emergency Services receptionist.

## Screening for people seeking assistance

Below are suggested guidelines for screening clients, if your congregation chooses to do so:

- **Always** ask for identification.
- Record the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and social security numbers for all adults.
- Require documentation of the financial crisis (examples include late rent letter from landlord, utility cutoff notice, work separation letter, medical receipts, etc.).
- **Never** give the client cash or a check. Checks should be written to vendors only; mailing the check to the vendor provides additional security.
- If possible, make arrangements with a nearby gas station for gasoline vouchers. MIFA cannot assist with gasoline.
- Inform those requesting assistance that you work with MIFA's Emergency Services Congregational Clearinghouse and will report the assistance you provide to MIFA.
- **Call MIFA's Emergency Services at (901) 527-0226 to:**
  1. see if the person has received assistance and/or make a referral to MIFA or
  2. report the assistance you granted to the Emergency Services Congregational Clearinghouse.
- **All churches and synagogues should have a security plan for the protection of staff and volunteers.**

# Available Services

## Emergency Services

MIFA's Emergency Services program coordinates several efforts to assist individuals and families during temporary, unavoidable financial crises. Even stable families can be devastated by a sudden loss of employment, the prolonged illness of a child, or an unexpected catastrophe such as a fire. Emergency Services' goal is to stabilize those families by assisting them with food, clothing, maintenance or restoration of shelter, utilities, and other necessities.

Emergency Services is not an income-based entitlement program, nor is it designed to serve those who are chronically unable or unwilling to provide for their own needs. Clients must be able to demonstrate the recent, unanticipated and/or unavoidable circumstance which precipitated their current financial emergency. Because large numbers of requests for assistance are processed by MIFA staff every day, preference is given to those who have not been previously assisted.

Emergency Services offers various types of assistance to qualified individuals and families in need. Emergency Services is open to screen applicants for financial assistance and vouchers **Monday through Friday from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m.** No appointment is necessary.

- **Rent/mortgage:** For clients in danger of being, or who have been, evicted.
- **Utility:** For those with cut-off notices or whose utilities have been terminated.
- **Food:** MIFA provides screening and vouchers for a five-day supply of food; clients retrieve their food items from pantries sponsored and stocked by congregations and other agencies. Currently, there are over 30 food pantries operating in various congregations, United Methodist Neighborhood Centers, and Catholic Charities.

Records of assistance granted by MIFA's Emergency Services, other community agencies, and local congregations are professionally maintained to increase efficiency and prevent duplication of services. For more information about how you can participate in the Congregational Clearinghouse and report any assistance your congregation provides, please refer to page 6.

## Contact Us

Client screening, (901) 527-0226

Client hotline, (901) 529-4561

Phyllis Phillips, Program Director  
(901) 529- 4583, pphillips@mifa.org

Dorothy Tuggle, Receptionist  
(901) 529-4533, dtuggle@mifa.org

Onetha Sullivan, Food Pantry Coordinator  
(901) 529-4581, osullivan@mifa.org

## Rapid Rehousing

MIFA's Rapid Rehousing program helps eligible homeless families quickly obtain permanent stable housing. This program is for families with minor children in the household who are literally homeless by the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of homelessness.

Shelby County families with minor children who meet HUD's definition of literal homelessness and have no other resources to prevent homelessness may be eligible for assistance if funds are available. This service is only provided to families with children; single person assistance is not available.

Rapid Rehousing offers a few types of service for families in need. Families in need can call the **Homeless Hotline at (901) 529-4545** to be screened. Eligibility is decided based on one of the following:

- **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Prevention Assistance:** Prevention assistance helps imminently homeless families remain stably housed and avoid shelter. It is for families for whom no other resources have been identified and who have a court-ordered notice of eviction.
- **ESG Rapid Rehousing Assistance:** The ESG rapid rehousing program is for families with minor children in the household who are literally homeless by HUD's ESG definition (can include those in transitional housing).
- **Continuum of Care Rapid Rehousing Assistance:** The CoC rapid rehousing program is for families with minor children in the household who are literally homeless by HUD's definition (NOT to include those in transitional housing).

## Homeless Hotline

The hotline is a phone-based screening to determine whether callers are homeless according to HUD's definition (literally sleeping on the streets, in a car or abandoned building) and in need of shelter, or at imminent risk of homelessness and in need of prevention or shelter services. This 24-hour hotline helps connect homeless families with minor children in Memphis and Shelby County to shelter.

## Contact Us

Call the Homeless Hotline at (901) 529-4545 for screening.

## **Emergency Shelter Placement**

MIFA's Emergency Shelter Placement program is intended to prevent any child from sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation through mediation, diversion, or referral to an appropriate emergency shelter or transitional program.

Although efforts will be made to keep families intact, couples with children must be willing to separate if necessary for shelter placement (males to the men's shelter and females with the children to a family shelter). The same consideration will be given to combined families with more than one head of household.

- **Emergency lodging:** In the event the family is homeless with no family or financial resources and shelter beds are unavailable, the family can be lodged at the identified motel (currently Lamplighter Motor Inn) until the following business day. The family must report to the ESP office the following business day for reassessment of the availability of shelter placement.

## **Contact Us**

Alexander Lewis, Program Director  
(901) 529-4524, alewis@mifa.org

Wilma Hughes, Emergency Shelter Coordination Manager  
(901) 529-4552, whughes@mifa.org

## Assistance Guidelines

Emergency Services exists to assist families who have had a **recent, temporary, and unavoidable** loss of income which has prevented the payment of rent, mortgage, or utility debts.

MIFA has limited funds and cannot help all who apply. Preference is given to applicants who have not been assisted before, as well as to families with children, individuals over the age of 60, DHS Protective Services clients, and those who receive SSI, SSD, or veteran disability, or who have had one for the following crises:

- **Medical crisis:** A medical crisis in the past three months has resulted in the client's loss of income and/or extraordinary expenses. (Only at-risk pregnancies qualify as medical crises.)
- **Employment-related loss of income:** Clients who have experienced a job loss in the past three months, with preference given to victims of layoffs who have been with their employers for more than six months. Individuals who have been terminated, have resigned, or are on labor strike will be reviewed by the Director of Emergency Services and decided on a case-by-case basis.
- **Other loss of income:** Client has experienced a verifiable theft of income or temporary, unavoidable loss, reduction, or delay in receiving benefits. Wage-earner and/or bankruptcy costs, court costs, fines, bail, and bonds are not included.
- **Income pending:** Client has begun work, but a paycheck is pending, or disability benefits are pending within 31 days.
- **Domestic crisis:** Clients who have experienced recent divorce, verifiable separation, incarceration of a family wage-earner, or the death of an immediate family member resulting in a loss of income and/or funeral expenses.
- **Disaster:** Clients who have experienced a recent fire or robbery/theft in which household necessities or funds were lost. The event must have been reported when it occurred.
- **Unusual expenses:** Expenses may be related to recent, major, necessary house repairs or the re-establishment of a home after living in a shelter or a condemned house. The applicant must demonstrate the means to maintain the residence.
- **Other crises:** Individuals with extraordinary situations will be reviewed by the Director of Emergency Services and decided on a case-by-case basis.

**To be considered for emergency rent/mortgage or utility assistance:**

- Your household cannot have received MIFA Assistance within the **last 2 years**.
- You will need to document a temporary, unavoidable loss of **working income** or a crisis in your household that prevented you from paying your bill such as: a job lay-off, off work ill without pay, reduction in salary, house fire or etc.
- The loss/crisis should have occurred within **the last 90 days**.
- In most cases MIFA **cannot pay** your entire bill; be prepared to pay or make arrangements on your balance.
- Losses of benefits or reduction in hours **are not** qualifying reasons for MIFA assistance.

**To apply for emergency assistance, applicants can:**

- Visit MIFA's Family Services offices at 910 Vance Ave., Memphis, TN 38126 or,
- Visit <http://www.mifa.org/emergencyassistanceapplication> online and follow the instructions to fill out the form.

*Please be aware that not everyone who completes this form will receive assistance. The information provided will help us determine applicant eligibility.*

*Please note that the following circumstances will not be considered by the Emergency Services department: damages to utilities or property, accounts in the name of a nonprofit agency, utility bills in a name other than the applicant's due to a delinquent bill, households headed by minors under 18 years of age, and misrepresentation on the part of the applicant.*

## Required Documentation

### **For rent/mortgage or utility assistance:**

- Picture ID for all adults (this does include children 18 and older)
- Social security cards for all in the household
- Verification of children's ages (shot record, report card, birth certificate, etc.)
- Proof of address
- Proof of loss/crisis (layoff notice, doctor bills, etc.)
- Proof of all household income
- Cutoff notice or late rent or mortgage notice
- Please note that MIFA cannot pay old utility bills from previous addresses

### **For food pantry vouchers:**

- Picture ID for all adults (this does include children 18 and older)
- Social security cards for everyone in the household
- Verification of children's ages (shot record, report card, birth certificate, etc.)
- Proof of address

### **For food pantry assistance, please note the following.**

- You must bring your documents each time you apply for a voucher
- Your household is eligible for four vouchers a year.
- Request for vouchers must be five days apart with a verifiable crisis
- Non-perishable food will be provided at a food pantry as close to your address as possible

### **For Rapid Rehousing:**

- Picture ID for all adults (this does include children 18 and older)
- Social security cards for all in the household
- Verification of children's ages (shot record, report card, birth certificate, etc.)
- Proof of address
- Proof of loss/crisis (layoff notice, doctor bills, etc.)
- Proof of all household income

### **For Emergency Shelter Placement:**

- Picture ID for all adults (this does include children 18 and older)
- Some proof of social security number and date of birth for each family member (food stamp letter with the SSN and DOB, etc.)
- Proof of homelessness such as eviction notice or letter from host
- If available, proof of income and/or benefits (child support, Families First, food stamps)
-

## How to make a referral to MIFA

When referring clients to Emergency Services, choose the most convenient method:

- Instruct the person seeking assistance to **call MIFA at (901) 527-0226** for information. Please ask him/her to call before stopping by to ensure that he brings all the necessary paperwork to the appointment.
- On your congregation's stationery, write a note verifying that you have met this person and referred him to MIFA for assistance. Ask him to include it with his other documentation when he visits Emergency Services. In your note, you may also ask MIFA's social service workers to inform you of the outcome of a client's request for assistance.
- If you wish to speak with a social service worker at MIFA when a client comes to you for assistance, **call (901) 529-4533 for the Emergency Services** receptionist. You may also call to advocate for an individual requesting assistance, but all clients are subject to eligibility requirements.
- Refer the person to [mifa.org/emergencyassistanceapplication](http://mifa.org/emergencyassistanceapplication) and have them follow the instructions to fill out the form.

If you have questions about handling a request for assistance, feel free to **call Emergency Services at (901) 527-0226**.

Fax: (901) 527-3202  
To: MIFA Emergency Services  
From: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Emergency Services referral form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP code: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief explanation of need for assistance:

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Action taken:

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## How your congregation can help

### Care Packages

When clients come to MIFA's Emergency Services, they often need help getting back on their feet after a setback or disaster. MIFA keeps a small inventory of care packages for the families who come to Emergency Services for assistance.

Please assemble items in a tote, an 11" x 14" decorative paper bag, or backpack for portability, and deliver to MIFA Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. The receptionist will accept your donation and provide a gift receipt.

*Note: While all items are not required, we request that each gift bag contain at least eight of the items on the list.*

#### Baby Care Package

- Disposable diapers
- Bib or burp cloth
- Socks, hats
- Small blanket
- Ready-to-use formula in screw-cap container
- Infant juice or juice boxes
- Jars of cereal, fruits, vegetables with small spoon
- Finger foods
- Baby bottles or sippy cup
- Travel sizes of baby lotion, baby wipes, diaper cream
- Vaseline
- Small toys or books

#### Senior Care Packages

- Socks (regular or non-skid)
  - Stationary
  - Pens/pencils
  - Postage stamps
  - Winter caps
  - Sweaters, blankets
  - Tee shirts
  - Mittens or gloves
  - Games (cards, puzzles, crossword puzzles)
  - Lotion
  - Flashlights
  - Toiletries
  - Tissues
- No candy or razors*

#### Adult Care Package

- Canned protein (Vienna sausage, tuna, chicken, beans, almonds, peanut butter)
- Fruit cup or applesauce
- Granola bars or other individually wrapped treats
- Toothbrushes, toothpaste
- Soap
- Deodorant
- Feminine hygiene products
- Shampoo
- Shaving cream
- No razors

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Food Pantry Coordinator at (901) 529-4581.

### Food

Donations of food can be made through **Mid-South Food Bank at (901) 527-0841.**

### Food pantries

MIFA partners with congregations across the city to provide food pantry services for individuals and families in crisis. MIFA's Emergency Services department screens clients for eligibility and refers qualified individuals and families to the pantries. Participating pantries are responsible for providing food and volunteers to assist with distribution.

For more information or to start a food pantry, contact the Food Pantry Coordinator at (901) 529-4581.

# Community Resources

## 24-hour services

Homeless Hotline	(901) 529-4545
Child Protective Services	(901) 947-8800
Adult Protective Services	(901) 320-7220
American Red Cross	(901) 726-1690
Crisis Center Telephone Hotline	(901) 274-7477
Crisis Stabilization Unit (Emergency Mental Health)	(901) 577-9400
Family Link (Runaway Shelter)/Youth Villages	(901) 251-5000
Salvation Army	(901) 543-8586
YWCA Abused Women Services	(901) 725-4277

## Multiple services

**Library Information Center (LINC)** (901) 415-2700 *or* 2-1-1

**LINC TTY** for the hearing impaired (901) 415-2701

This information and referral service provided by the Memphis Public Library and Information Center is a valuable resource for available services in the community: [memphislibrary.org/linc-2-1-1/](http://memphislibrary.org/linc-2-1-1/).

## Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS)

170 N. Main (901) 543-7351

- Provides welfare and food stamps for eligible clients
- Investigates and assists cases of abused or neglected children and adults
- Works in cooperation with MIFA to screen clients and provide assistance.

## Shelby County Community Services Agency (CSA)

100 N. Main (901) 222-4200

Rent assistance	(901) 535-2200
Utility assistance	(901) 222-4315
Homeless program	(901) 416-7275
Food commodities	(901) 545-4526
Case management	(901) 523-7518
CSA Information and Referral services	(901) 523-7554