

10/31/15

3rd Greater Delaware Valley Muslim Leadership Meeting
Al-Hidaya Masjid/Muslim American Society

Community Presentation ~ Proposal: Philadelphia Muslim Health & Social Services Alliance

On 10/12/15 Michael Jones his pregnant wife Angelique, 2yo son Jeremiah and 4yo daughter settled in for the night, in a cardboard box home behind Love Park, located in Center City Philadelphia. At around midnight, little Jeremiah crawled out of their makeshift home and wandered barefoot away from his family. He was reported missing and police and DHS were contacted. Thankfully, he was found unharmed and the family has received an incredible outpouring of support from organizations such as 300 Ministries and United Ummah of Philadelphia. Unfortunately, not all of our families have been able to secure the resources that they need.

A. Background:

- In 1/2014, 84,291 individuals and 15,143 people in families were chronically homeless. 94.1 percent of people living on the street have behavioral health challenges: 12.1% mental health, 12% substance use, 70% dual diagnosis.
- Philadelphia has the worst poverty rate of the ten largest U.S. cities. 28% of Philadelphians—between 430,000 and 440,000 people—live below the federal poverty level (\$11,490 for 1, \$23.5K for a family of 4).
- This includes 39% (135,000) of our children, 27% (265,000) of our working age adults and 17% (32,000) of our seniors. Some 1,500 families become homeless every year, including over 3,000 children.
- By 2030, an estimated 600,000 Philadelphians, nearly 39% of the current total population, will not have the skills to secure the types of jobs that will be available in Philadelphia.
- Despite high poverty, above-average unemployment, and low wages, eligible Philadelphians are under-enrolled in the federal benefits designed to boost income and ameliorate the effects of poverty. About 39,000 Philadelphians eligible for the earned income tax credit (EITC) do not even apply. Nearly 500,000 city residents receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, but 180,000 qualified Philadelphians are not enrolled. Fifteen percent (15%) of adult Philadelphians live without health insurance, despite the availability of public options like Medicaid, Medicare, Medical Assistance, or Veterans Affairs (VA) Healthcare.
- Of the city's 35 lower performing schools, 23 (66 percent) are clustered in or very near neighborhoods with the highest rates of incarceration

<http://www.naacp.org/pages/philadelphia>
<https://projecthome.org/about/facts-homelessness>
<http://sharedprosperityphila.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/SharedProsperityPhilaPlan-2013.pdf>

What are some causes of homelessness? Poverty, lack of adequate supports/public benefits, lack of affordable healthcare, transportation and housing, inadequate housing assistance, domestic violence, mental health and addiction challenges?

B. Our obligation:

Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: "The example of the Believers in their affection, mercy and compassion for each other is that of a body, When any limb aches, the whole bod reacts with sleeplessness and fever..."

"The one who cares for an orphan and myself will be together in Paradise like this," and he held his two fingers together to illustrate." - Sahih Bukhari 5659

“He is not a Muslim who goes to bed satiated while his neighbor goes hungry”.

“And they are those who give food – in spite of their own need, to the needy, and the orphan, and the captive, [saying in their hearts], ‘We only feed you for the sake of God, and we desire nothing in return from you, not even a word of thanks’ (Quran 76:8-9)

Philadelphia is home to one of the largest and most diverse Muslim communities in the country. Therefore, it is safe to assume that of the numbers of individuals and families affected by the challenges mentioned above, many are Muslim. How are we prepared as an Ummah to work collectively to begin to address some of these challenges?

- **Behavioral Health: Mental Health/Counseling/Domestic Violence/Addiction Services**
- **Homelessness/Homeless Outreach**
- **Emergency/Transitional/Safe Housing**
- **Poverty**
- **Hunger/Food Deserts/Food Distribution**
- **Domestic Violence**
- **Education/Literacy**
- **Legal Services**
- **Employment/Job Training & Placement**
- **Addiction**
- **Fostercare/Adoption**
- **Incarceration/Returning Citizens**

C. Existing Muslim-led organizations/Initiatives:

Feed Philly – American Muslims for Hunger Relief

Sadaqah 4 You

Baabun Nasr

United Ummah of Philadelphia

Islamic Social Services Association-Philadelphia

Al-Shifaa Health Screening and Counseling

Family-Centered Therapy Outpatient Services

Muslim Wellness Foundation

Fountain Medical Associates, PC

While this is not a comprehensive list (as it does not include the efforts of many masjid to address various crises), there is a need for **greater coordination of effort** and the **creation of a referral or network system** so that individuals who are receiving assistance from one organization can be seamlessly connected to others for services.

D. Preliminary Recommendations:

- **Philadelphia Muslim Health & Social Services Alliance** – a coalition of organizations that are addressing need in identified areas to communicate, share resources and coordinate effort
- **Philadelphia Community Resource Guide** – Muslim Wellness Foundation is in the process of developing a resource guide which contains list of resources in the city that are Muslim led or “Muslim-friendly”. To include your organization in this guide, please go to this link: Philadelphia Community Resource Guide: <http://bit.ly/1ShsQ8X>
- **Community Needs Assessment**
- **Identification of Resources/Sources of funding** to increase sustainability of current efforts/initiatives



For more information and to join the Philadelphia Muslim Health & Social Services Alliance:

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