



ESTABLISHING A RURAL EMERGENCY VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR CATHOLIC CHARITIES AGENCIES

“Yes, We Can Help You!” Many rural communities may have at least a food bank but not a local organization to help residents pay for gas, utilities or prescriptions in emergencies. The Emergency Voucher System offers rural communities a flexible tool for assisting their neighbors financially. Follow these four steps to set one up.

Gather Parish Input to Identify Unmet Needs

- 1** Consult with the parish priests and secretaries in your diocese to ascertain whether there is a need for an emergency assistance tool. If the parish is not best situated to dispense the vouchers, research other partners, such as community action agencies or St. Vincent de Paul Societies.

Allocate Funds

- 2** Budget the vouchers annually to provide parishes and partners with a predictable resource. Include line items for the emergency fund, fiscal staff time to process vouchers and occasional postage and voucher printing. Designate funds as unrestricted to allow for unusual needs, from work boots to well pumps.

Create Triplicate Voucher

- 3** Create the voucher tool to authorize and track payments. Three entities will need a copy of the voucher: the parish/partner, the agency, and the business. Triplicate works because many rural parishes and businesses do not have the technology to fax or email documents. See the reverse for a sample voucher form.

Report Quarterly to Parishes and Partners

- 4** Maintain open communication with the parish/partner about the fund balance. Send quarterly reports detailing how much of the budget has been spent, in which communities, on what goods and services, and for how many clients.

HOW THE VOUCHER PROCESS WORKS

The voucher system is straightforward. The local Catholic Charities funds the program and local parishes/partners develop relationships with local businesses and utilities. When a client knocks on a parish or partner's door:

- 1** The writer verifies their need and sends them to the vendor with the **1st** and **2nd copies** of the voucher. The writer mails the **3rd copy** to Catholic Charities.
- 2** The client "pays" the vendor for their needed service by providing the **1st** and **2nd copies** of the voucher.
- 3** The vendor maintains the **2nd copy** for its records and obtains payment from Catholic Charities by mailing them the **1st copy** of the voucher and an invoice.
- 4** Catholic Charities cuts a check to the vendor upon receipt of voucher & invoice.

SAMPLE VOUCHER FORM

DATE ISSUED: _____
NAME OF MERCHANT: _____
NAME OF CLIENT: _____ # ADULTS & CHILDREN: _____
TOWN: _____
ID#: _____
CHECK ONE: GAS/OIL___ UTILITIES___ RENT___ GROCERIES___ MEDS___ OTHER___
TOTAL NOT TO EXCEED: _____
AUTHORIZED BY: _____
RECIPIENT SIGNATURE IN PRESENCE OF ISSUER: _____
RECIPIENT SIGNATURE IN PRESENCE OF VENDOR: _____
MERCHANT SIGNATURE: _____
MERCHANT MAILING INSTRUCTIONS: _____