

UNITED WAY
Central Jersey

2025 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

A MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

Little Hands, Big Futures
Middlesex County Alliance for Child and Family Success

2025 was a challenging year that tested our strength, resilience and resources. UWCJ faced the growing need for services created by destructive federal policy changes that threaten to:

- lead to the loss of health care benefits and create higher health care costs.
- decrease SNAP enrollment, narrow SNAP eligibility, and cause children to lose their certification for free or reduced-price school lunch.
- jeopardize the ability of many county residents to pay rising rents, while decreasing funding for public housing, housing vouchers and rental assistance .
- shift the cost of social service programs to the states and beneficiaries.
- reduce or eliminate federal funding for vital nonprofit social service programs.

Call our **Middlesex County Alliance for Child and Family Success** at 732-724-KIDS for help finding benefits, housing, food, childcare and other resources.

Get support from nurses who help first-time expectant mothers in our **Nurse Family Partnership Program.** Fill out the form at **www.uwcj.org/nfp**.

Visit our **Family Financial Opportunity Center** in Perth Amboy or call the FFOC at 201-604-1366 for one-to-one help managing your expenses, building your savings and credit, and financial planning, or if you're looking for a new job, a better job or job training.

Learn whether you qualify for free tax return preparation by calling our **VITA** program at 732-247-3730.

Read about all of UWCJ's services for you and your neighbors in this Community Report, and visit our website at www.uwcj.org. All programs are provided at no cost to participants.

Invest in your community by donating to UWCJ programs. Visit uwcj.org/give.

Lawrence P. O'Connell

Lawrence P. O'Connell
Chair, Chief Volunteer Officer

Gloria Aftanski

Gloria Aftanski
President, Chief Professional Officer

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Nurse-Family Partnership
Helping First-Time Parents Succeed®

The NFP program helps low-income women during their first pregnancy. Clients receive parenting training and support services from the twelfth week of their pregnancies through their child's second birthday. In 2025, our 8 Nurse Home Visitors worked with 235 families, which included 185 infants.



"Through the consistent support of my nurse, I gained the confidence I needed to adjust to the realities of being the mother of triplets while pursuing my bachelor's degree."
~ Aura M.



52 moms graduated from the NFP program in 2025 celebrating their achievement at a ceremony at the YMCA Raritan Bay in Perth Amboy.

UWCJ received a grant from United Way Worldwide to provide financial coaching for a cohort of NFP moms at our Family Financial Opportunity Center. The moms are working closely with a coach to develop action plans to reach their goals, and they receive financial incentives as they progress through the program.

THE MIDDLESEX COUNTY ALLIANCE FOR CHILD AND FAMILY SUCCESS

Little Hands, Big Futures
Middlesex County Alliance for Child and Family Success

The Alliance provides resources for low-income families facing a wide range of issues, from housing, food insecurity and immigration, to childcare and public benefits. Residents can call or text the Alliance at 732-724-5437 (KIDS) for assistance.

In 2025, Alliance staff fielded 1100 calls. All callers receive direct service or referrals to community-based organizations that provide the assistance they need. Over 200 of these callers were within UWCJ's priority area: families with children ages 5 and under. Their questions fell into these categories:



22 inquiries (includes immigration & parenting)

103 inquiries (includes food insecurity)

213 inquiries (includes housing)

Most callers request multiple services.

TENANT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE



UWCJ contracts with the city of Perth Amboy to provide Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) for qualified low-income residents. Covered costs include rent arrears, security and utility deposits, and relocation assistance.

In 2025, over 500 callers to the Alliance needed rental help, and the staff obtained almost $9,000 in TBRA relocation funds for families. Five households received $28,300 to help them avoid eviction.

Applications can be submitted on UWCJ's website at uwcj.org/tbra-english.

"Our client was homeless and had been couch-surfing with her six-month old baby for almost a year. We helped her get **permanent housing, a security deposit, and one month's rent**. We also provided her with a crib and money for household essentials. She then started working with our **Family Financial Opportunity Center** for help managing her money."

~ Janet, Alliance Family Resource Specialist

FAMILY FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER (FFOC)

UNITED WAY Central Jersey
Family Financial Opportunity Center



In 2025, soaring inflation increased the cost of everyday household essentials–food, housing, health care, childcare and energy–leaving many families unable to afford the most basic necessities. Our FFOC gives clients the tools they need to break out of poverty, take control of their financial futures, and build prosperous lives for their families. **The FFOC is in Perth Amboy, and helps all county residents through in person and on the phone one-to-one coaching and workshops.**

The FFOC provides:

- **financial coaching to help stretch the family's dollars**
- **employment counseling to get a new job, a better job, or job training**
- **income support counseling for those seeking benefits**

In 2025, the FFOC served almost 200 clients, most of whom were women aged 35 to 54 with incomes of less than $2,000 per month.

"Tony had exhausted his unemployment benefits and was under pressure to find a job. We explored several options, from food service to getting a commercial driver's license.

We updated his resume, drafted job applications, and kept looking for job opportunities. Soon, he found a full-time supervisory job at a fast food restaurant. He also used funding the FFOC received to pay for his transportation to and from interviews and to his first few weeks of work."

~ Joanne, FFOC Employment Coach

SM SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

New Jersey's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides food assistance to individuals and families with low incomes. Alliance and FFOC staff are trained, bilingual SNAP Navigators. They can be reached at (732) 724-5437.

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (VITA)

VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE

Our year-round free service, staffed by IRS-certified volunteers, provides federal and state tax filing help for low- and moderate-income taxpayers, who can be confident that an accurate return, with all allowable credits and deductions, has been prepared.

over 2,000	**Clients served** during the 2025 tax-filing season.
4,590	**Federal and state refunds prepared** during the 2025 tax-filing season.
$2,618,020	**Refunds taxpayers received** during the 2025 tax-filing season.
$681,000	**Filing fees saved** during the 2025 tax-filing season.
5,000 with a value of $193,000	**Volunteer hours** during the 2025 tax-filing season.

UWCJ VITA sites are located at **Family Success Centers and Middlesex College** and at libraries and community and senior centers in several towns, including our main office in **Milltown, New Brunswick, Carteret, Piscataway, Perth Amboy, Asbury Park and Freehold.**

There are many convenient ways to submit tax documents: upload online, send them by mail to our Milltown office, use a secure dropbox at one of our sites, drop-off and pick-up at a designated time, or self-file using TaxSlayer and MyFreeTaxes. Some sites offer same-day return preparation.

"Thanks to your help, I was able to complete and self-file my tax return this season!"

~ Savannah S.



JAMESBURG HEALTHY FOOD PROGRAM





The pantry regularly serves 80 families with over 200 children. In 2025, 2,880 bags of groceries were distributed to pantry customers.



The Healthy Food pantry opened in September 2024 with funding from the Middlesex County Board of Commissioners. Its clients are low-income families of students at JFK Elementary School, where over 30% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Low-income town residents also receive food from the pantry.

The Jamesburg Elks Lodge No. 2180 hosts the pantry. It is managed by the Family Advocate, who is assisted by a cadre of community volunteers and UWCJ Board members. Replenish, the county food bank, provides many of the groceries, especially fresh fruits and vegetables.

The pantry operated twice a month until September, when county funds were exhausted, but reopened in November after an infusion of funds from the UWCJ Board of Trustees and the PSEG Foundation. In November and December, it operated once a month.

"The pantry doesn't just feed people. It's a social gathering. Thanks to United Way, we all feel part of Jamesburg, and we have been given the opportunity to volunteer."

~Guadalupe C., Pantry Volunteer

FAMILY ADVOCATE AT JFK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN JAMESBURG





An ESL Class in progress.

UWCJ's Family Advocate at JFK Elementary School **helps parents navigate the school system, translates documents and locates free children's supplies for them**. The Advocate facilitates Latino Literacy and ESL classes for parents and community members, operates an in-school bodega and manages the Jamesburg Healthy Food Program.

The Family Advocate also helps students, their families and town residents manage food, health, benefits, employment and other issues. In 2025, immigration and food insecurity were major issues in this community.

RIDE UNITED



A grant from United Way Worldwide enables UWCJ to provide no-cost rides to clients who need help reaching medical appointments, job interviews, and similar meetings. In 2025, over 200 clients, many of whom were in our NFP and VITA programs, used Ride United.



STUFF THE BUS



Back-to-school supplies were requested by 17 local schools and clients in our Alliance, FFOC, VITA and Jamesburg programs. In total, **475 backpacks loaded with pens, pencils, notebooks and craft supplies were distributed**. Stuff the Bus was funded by contributions from 14 corporations.



GIFTS OF THE SEASON





UWCJ's Gifts of the Season program **provided holiday presents for 656 children** nominated/recommended by 28 local social service agencies. Gifts also were provided to participants in UWCJ's direct service programs. The program was supported by donations from 31 companies and families.

Access Healthcare
Amboy Bank
Astera Cancer Care
Banana Republic
Bandeli Family
Best Buy
BMS-Armstrong
CDM Smith
Cintas
CME
Directv
Extensis HR
Federal Business Centers
FNF Family of Companies
Genewiz
GFT Infrastructure Inc.
Hildebrand Gori
Jain Foundation
J&J
Kenvue
Kierman
Lederman
Mott McDonald
Old Navy
Sabert
Target
Tata
Wakefern
Wilson
Zebra Pen
Zipp & Tannenbaum

IMMIGRATION

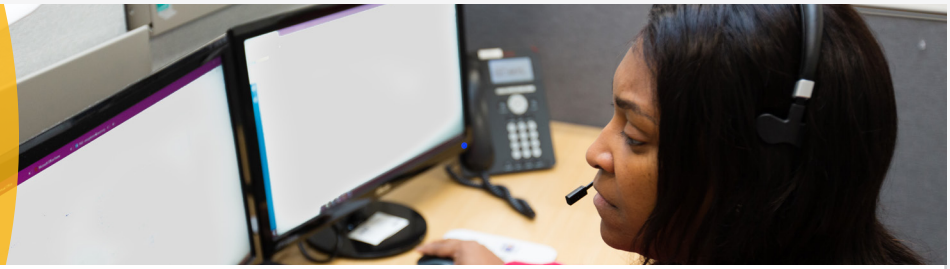


UWCJ supports the DIRE (Deportation and Immigration Response Equipo) hotline and rapid response teams and DIRE Legal Services, which are **lifelines for immigrants and their families in crisis due to arrests, deportations, detentions, family separations, and the need for asylum.**

The urgent need for DIRE services is clear: in just two months during fall 2025, the DIRE hotline received 193 calls–mostly from families of detained individuals seeking legal support and emergency financial assistance.

The DIRE hotline number is 1-888-DIRE-SOS.

211 NJ 211



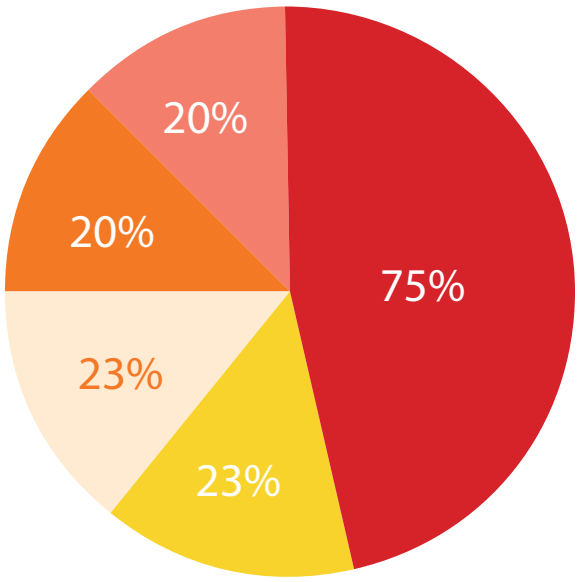
NJ 211 is a free, confidential, multilingual 24/7/365 help line that residents can reach by phone, text, email or chat. New Jersey United Ways provide funding for NJ 211. In 2025, 35,303 Middlesex County residents contacted 211. That marks a 25% increase in call volume compared to 2024.

The top requests for information in our county were:

- **Utilities -** 26,394 calls
- **Benefits -** 8,774 calls
- **Housing/Homelessness -** 8,389 calls
- **General Information/Referrals -** 6,810 calls
- **Housing/Expense Assistance -** 3,677 calls
- **Housing Expense/House Search -** 6,810 calls

Chart showing call %

- **Utilities - 75%**
- **Benefits - 23%**
- **Housing/Homelessness - 23%**
- **Housing/Expense Assistance/House Search - 20%**
- **Information and Referral - 20%**



Most caller questions fall into more than one category.

FEMA





In 2024, through FEMA, the Middlesex County Local Board provided emergency shelter, food, infant supplies, and rent, mortgage and utility assistance for almost 11,000 residents. UWCJ provided administrative support for the Board.

In 2025, however, FEMA work halted while the federal government sought to shift responsibility for disaster relief and emergency programs to the states. This crucial lifeline for many residents – including those who received gift cards from UWCJ to purchase necessities – is in hiatus.

UWCJ'S HEROES



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR VOLUNTEERS!

...who serve on our Board of Trustees and its committees.
...who provide friendly, professional tax preparation assistance.
...who help operate our Jamesburg pantry.
...who mobilize to provide school supplies and holiday gifts for our Stuff the Bus and Gifts of the Season drives.
...who serve as Parent Leaders for the NFP.

For your commitment, hard work and enthusiasm!

THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE WORKPLACE CAMPAIGN DONORS!

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JOHNSON & JOHNSON
C & S WHOLESALE GROCERS
PLYMOUTH ROCK
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ELI LILLY & COMPANY

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR INDIVIDUAL DONORS!

Your support helps UWCJ to continue providing vital community services.

UWCJ'S HEROES



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR BACK TO SCHOOL DRIVE DONORS!

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GFT Infrastructure, Inc.
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PROGRAM FUNDERS



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR FUNDERS!

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Internal Revenue Service

New Jersey Department of Children and Families

New Jersey Department of Community Affairs

Middlesex County Board of Commissioners

Johnson & Johnson

Perth Amboy Office of Economic and Community Development

Woodbridge Township

United States Department of Education

Flagstar Foundation

PNC Bank Foundation

Provident Bank Foundation

Social Finance

Citizens Bank

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Thank you to all of our program investors for your support!

Are you interested in supporting UWCJ?
Please contact Director of Development Adam Cohen at 732-247-3727 ext. 232



UWCJ.org 732-247-3727

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