



## CASA's Solidarity Fund (A Response to the COVID – 19 Health Crisis)

**Statement of Need:** During this period of evolving crisis, we recognize that our community needs us now more than ever. While no one is immune to the effects of this global pandemic, immigrants are particularly vulnerable due to language and cultural barriers, coupled with a mistrust of government due to the hostility of the federal administration and experiences in their home countries. Already scarce resources are now more limited and difficult to access. Furthermore, due to a confluence of long term systemic health and economic disparities, the immigrant and Latino community across CASA's multi-state footprint face an enormous challenge. A challenge that was only exacerbated by the willful negligence of the federal government, which specifically excluded large segments of our community in their economic stimulus relief package.

This relief restricts benefits to those having previously filed a tax return utilizing a valid Social Security Number and prohibits any ITIN filer from qualifying for benefits regardless of the number of years of tax returns they have evidence of filing. Consequently, undocumented individuals and mixed-status families of our community are disqualified from receiving any "stimulus" relief. Given that large numbers of these individuals are employed in the construction, hospitality, and restaurant industries, which are severely impacted by the COVID crisis, omitting this population specifically will be incredibly damaging to our local economies and communities. Conversely, our government will deliver stimulus checks to many individuals who thankfully remain gainfully employed, working from home.

As the needs of our families continue to intensify and priorities shift to accessing the most basic needs, maintaining safe shelter and access to food become increasingly vital at this time. CASA response, a *Solidarity Fund*.

**Solidarity Fund:** CASA will raise funds from internal CASA staff and the public, private, and individual donor community to establish a Solidarity Fund to distribute cash benefits to those community members who have been excluded by the federal stimulus program, which can be used at local small businesses, and which will have a positive impact on the local economy. The goal of the Fund is to help members address their most immediate, basic needs in an effort to reduce increased levels of stress associated with this crisis, including, loss of income and progressive decline of employment opportunities. Disbursements will be made throughout CASA's multi-state footprint. Additionally, we are creating a set of criteria to determine how to prioritize and identify community members in need and create specific benefit amounts per category of identified beneficiaries. CASA will determine eligibility for other known benefit programs, such as the Federal Stimulus payout and other local funds, like the \$5 Million Montgomery County community fund, for example, and will consider those when determining Solidarity Fund eligibility. CASA will create an oversight committee, composed of CASA member leaders, who will provide feedback on the criteria and work with staff to help oversee the use of the funds.

- **Distribution:** CASA is considering multiple options for distribution. Primarily to contract with a provider that would load various cash amounts onto Debit Card/ATM or other card forms and distribute as needed. Cards may be distributed directly to the beneficiary via USPS by provider at a cost of \$0.55 or, directly by CASA staff, from any of our centers, nearly free of cost. ATM cards may also be purchased through the provider; however, the cost could increase to nearly \$4.00 per card. Delivery of cards can be achieved within 10 - 14 days according to the vendor.
- **Selection of Beneficiaries & Implementation:** CASA will create a set of criteria to determine how to prioritize and identify community members in need and create specific benefit

amounts per category of identified beneficiaries. An application will be developed, which will include information, such as benefit amount and criteria under which the applicant fits (employment loss, food or medical need, for example). CASA will track payments disbursed and be able to provide a rough indicator of the impact of the benefits.

- Phase 1 - April 1 - 17. CASA will identify priority individuals and families who have already presented a critical need for these funds. Examples of folks in this category are day laborers -CASA members active in our centers who have been without work opportunities in a significant period of time, parents of Mi Espacio program participants that have demonstrated dire situations, health program participants in medical need, and families surveyed by organizing that display extraordinary need. By April 11, 2020 we will plan an initial emergency distribution based on the funds available at that time and move forward with selecting candidate recipients from the composed priority lists, making sure we distribute equitably throughout all of our jurisdictions.
- Post Phase 1 - CASA will continue with the program, but produce disbursements at regular intervals depending on the availability of funds and continue to prioritize individuals and families that fit the identified phase 1 priorities. Assuming we fund all those priority cases, a second category will be funded. These include:
- Phase 2 - Selection criteria at this category level may be broad, limited to 1 beneficiary per household, restricted to CASA members, and require that applicants provide a description of the direct impact COVID-19 has had - this could include general reduced job opportunities, any COVID-19 related additional expenses incurred (eg. taking rideshare service to work instead of public transport, etc.), a family with increased dependency on food donations, etc.

*\*Unique cases - Additional funding may be requested above and beyond these categories, but would be subject to additional oversight. These special cases for benefit amounts beyond these categories may be taken to the oversight subcommittee of CASA's Leadership Council*

*\*\*Oversight - Recommended selection criteria and benefit amounts will be vetted through and approved by an oversight subcommittee convened for just this purpose from within the Leadership Council. Unique cases or any requests not fitting within the parameters of the set categories will be presented before the subcommittee and through a majority vote will approve or deny the requests for funding.*

**General Administrative support needs and support:**

- Funds to support dedicated staff to administer the program – responsible for communicating with cash card distributor/vendor, submitting payments, delivery of names, etc.
- IT support – staff, technology – inc., internet, phone, other items to carry out program.
- Vendor/Provider fees.
- Additional admin. & support.

**Budget and Fundraising Goal:** The total budget for this program is \$1,220,000. \$1M of this will be distributed to beneficiaries and 220K is to support the above-mentioned items associated with the administration of the program.