

Worcester Reaches Out to Help Hurricane Evacuees

The City of Worcester joined forces with United Way in aiding the families that have evacuated from Puerto Rico's Hurricanes, Irma and Maria. They wish to thank Tim Garvin, President and CEO of the United Way of Central Massachusetts for stepping up and putting forth a proposal for grant funding aimed at a Puerto Rico Program Director.

On September 2017, Hurricanes Irma and María made landfall and ravaged the Island of Puerto Rico, leaving desolation, no access to power, food, clean water, gasoline and other key services, including hospitals, pharmacies, and telecommunications. This major event prompted an exodus of thousands of families to the US mainland, looking for resettlement.

Approximately 600 families came to the City of Worcester, looking for the opportunity to stabilize their lives and begin the process of resettling.

In order to coordinate these efforts, the United Way of Central Mass and the City Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Dr. Matilde Castiel, committed to guiding and connecting those affected by this major natural event by hiring Mrs. Locksann Mateo as the Puerto Program Director.

Locksann began her position on February 12, 2018. She has created and maintained meaningful and vital relationships with agencies that are dedicated to supporting the resettlement efforts of these families. She visits the hotels that have registered FEMA and MEMA guests regularly. She has made herself known not only to the families but the hotel staff for in-depth support on all levels for success. Her efforts have included but are not limited to the following:

- Case Management
- Educational Support & Information
- Employment Research & Guidance
- Transportation Assistance through a Volunteer Bank created for these Families thanks to the team efforts of:
 - *City of Worcester, Kathy Esparza Youth Services & Simon Elliot Housing Discrimination Intake Worker*
 - *Central West Justice Center, Gina Plata-Nino Staff Attorney*
 - *Catholic Charities, Maydae Morales Area Administrator*
- Housing Search & Guidance
- Resource Liaison & Advocacy In all areas needed and required
- Written Translation of Information/Documents
- Verbal Translation During Appointments/Meetings

Locksann also coordinates her efforts with the Workforce Central Career Center to further support evacuees with finding employment.

Anyone wishing to contact her regarding these services may call her at (774) 223-3523.



*Locksann Mateo, City of Worcester
Puerto Rico Program Director*

For more information regarding the services available at Workforce Central, please see us online at www.workforcecentralma.org or contact your nearest location:

Workforce Central – Worcester
340 Main Street, Suite 400
Worcester, MA 01608
Tel: (508) 799-1600

Workforce Central – Southbridge
5 Optical Drive, Suite 200
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