



## Funds helped 477,000 recover from Ike

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*Author: Amanda Casanova*

GALVESTON - A \$35 million federal program provided medicine, food, rent and utility assistance and other services to more than 477,000 Galveston and Brazoria county residents who lost their homes or jobs to Hurricane Ike, according to a report released this week.

Released three years after the storm, the Return on Investment report detailed the impact thus far of social service block grants in the Houston and Galveston area. The program ends Sept. 30.

"Without this funding, many of our vital social service agencies would not have survived Ike - leaving thousands of families in need without the essentials to move forward," said Dr. Ben Raimer, senior vice president of the University of Texas Medical Branch.

Four lead agencies administered the funds, working with smaller agencies to help families pay for groceries, prescription medication, debris removal, roof repairs and other rental assistance expenses.

Catholic Charities, the lead agency overseeing housing construction, served about 10,000 people with a roughly \$10 million award dedicated to repairing homes that took a hit during the storm.

The Gulf Coast Center Mental Health Consortium, a lead agency in charge of mental health services, spent nearly \$7 million to serve some 30,000 people, above a goal of 20,000.

"With the funds we received, we were able to help women access substance abuse treatment, fund a licensed chemical dependency counselor at the Galveston County Jail and assist women whose income after substance abuse treatment was not sufficient to make ends meet," said Ellen Hanley, of the ADA Women's Center, one of the agencies in the program.

The University of Texas Medical Branch, the lead agency that handled medical direct health and services, helped 425,000 people, a jump from a goal of 108,000. The agency received a \$6.7 million award.

Figures from Lutheran Social Services, the lead agency for housing needs, are not available yet, a spokeswoman said.

The federal program also created 255 jobs, the report said. Catholic Charities, the Gulf Coast Center and UTMB each hired between 80 and 100 employees.

"Our collaborating organizations exceeded their contractual obligations, however, we understand that there is ongoing need," said Joe Compian, of Gulf Coast Interfaith. "We will continue to advocate and identify financial resources to at long last overcome Ike."

In 2010, a federal deadline threatened to end the assistance program, shutting down funding and eliminating jobs. Funds were supposed to be spent from September 2009 to September 2010, but paperwork stalled allocation of the money until February 2010.

With only months to spend the money, the agencies requested an extension and in November, after the September deadline lapsed, the U.S. House of Representatives granted the extension.

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