



PRESS RELEASE

## The GCCSA, Inc. COVID-19 Community Action Relief Effort (C.A.R.E.)

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A systemic approach to alleviating the additional challenges posed by a global pandemic

HOUSTON, Texas (October 5, 2020) – The GCCSA, Inc. COVID-19 Community Action Relief Effort (C.A.R.E.) is a system-wide approach the Agency is taking to alleviate the additional challenges posed by the current global pandemic. C.A.R.E. invests in three critical areas that are impacting the Harris County social and economic health – people, places and partnerships.

**People.** Gulf Coast Community Services Association is helping *people*. Through C.A.R.E., economically challenged individuals and households will gain housing affordability, access household essential items (i.e. food, transportation, hygiene products, clothing), and connect with family support and services.

Over 4,500 people completed the GCCSA COVID-19 Assessment detailing the impact of the health pandemic to their home. The Agency has doubled its client services team in size to accommodate the demand, currently processing over 2,300 requests for assistance. COVID-impacted, Harris County households will gain housing stability via monetary support that should cover a two- to three-month period. Gift cards aimed at meeting basic needs – food, water and other household essential items - are being distributed.

GCCSA is closing the digital divide by providing 100 new Chromebooks to K-12 children who have been struggling to transition to an online learning environment. Innovative services such as contactless, curbside pick-up to distribute nutritious food options is now a weekly staple, increasing from twice a week throughout the summer months to 4 days a week in the fall. GCCSA is continuing to provide referrals and linkages to other service providers throughout the Greater Houston area.

**Places (of Business).** Independent entrepreneurs, self-employed and licensed professionals in select industries are receiving support through GCCSA C.A.R.E. Assistance will go toward revitalizing both their existing business and future growth after their doors have been shuttered during this extended period.

Over 300 self-employed, Harris County small business owners have completed the GCCSA COVID-19 Assessment. These professionals, most of whom are state-certified



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technicians, stylists, and aestheticians, have discussed with us the ramifications that the health pandemic has had on their livelihoods. The unfortunate reality is that many micro-businesses have not been able to obtain the small loans and grants provided through the Small Business Administration and other business-resource agencies. GCCSA's support, though small, will help to sustain this vital community.

GCCSA is concurrently working on a partnership with Houston Community College to establish a *virtual learning program*, aimed at providing scholarships and digital marketing expertise to these Harris County business owners.

**Partnerships in Community.** Mission-minded organizations have been invited to participate with GCCSA C.A.R.E. in varying capacities – as formal partners, referral sources, or as a member of a community advisory committee.

GCCSA has established six C.A.R.E. Partners who will operate Community Services Block Grant funded programming for the Houston-Harris County area. These partners have been awarded \$300,000 in grant money to develop and operate community action centered programming that will expand their service offerings for pandemic relief. They are: The Alliance, SER Jobs, Star of Hope, Houston Area Women's Center, Catholic Charities, and Chinese Community Center.

Inter-agency agreements for referrals and priority access are the driving force behind the C.A.R.E. Key Referral Partnership. Houston Community College is the C.A.R.E. training partner, developing virtual workshops and courses that will help self-employed customers who are learning to pivot their business in the age of the novel coronavirus. Lone Star College, Houston North and Texas Southern University are aiding in the identification of their hardest hit student populations, so that funds may be directed to assist them as they focus on their educational pursuits, rather than pandemic-imposed difficulties. The ISD Essential Workers Pilot program will pinpoint essential employees such as bus drivers, food service workers, and custodial staff for assistance.

The C.A.R.E. Advisory Committee will provide on-going community feedback and analysis of Harris County's diverse community needs as COVID-19 recovery continues.

By taking a holistic approach to pandemic disaster relief efforts and pinpointing three fundamental areas – people, places and partnerships – GCCSA will be able to help the greatest number of Harris County's vulnerable and affected residents as possible.

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**About Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc:** As Harris County's Community Action Agency, Gulf Coast Community Services Association, Inc. (GCCSA) engages partners and forges strategic alliances to educate, equip and empower individuals and families in their pursuit of economic independence. Founded in 1965, GCCSA provides diverse programs designed to eliminate the inhibitive conditions of the under-served and un-served populations of Harris County. Through programs such as Head Start/ Early Head Start, Rent and Electricity Assistance, Food Pantry, Adult Literacy and



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Education, and Vocational Training and Education Scholarships, GCCSA is able to assist families in earning a living wage, individuals in the advancement of their education, and communities in gaining economic security. To learn more about GCCSA's programs and services, visit us online: [Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) - @TheGCCSA.

The Corporate office and all Head Start/Early Head Start Centers are closed to the public at this time.

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