

# CATHOLIC CHARITIES of CENTRAL TEXAS

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## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

### INTRODUCTION

Catholic Charities of Central Texas is a nonprofit, faith-based organization that is dedicated to strengthening families and communities throughout the Diocese of Austin by offering effective health and human service programs. Current services are available through **Parish Social Ministries, Office of Immigrant Concerns** and the **Emergency Assistance and Disaster Response Program**.

The **Parish Social Ministry** office supports the establishment of a structured social ministry in each parish, provides information and referral to existing social services, promotes networking between parishes for mutual support and information sharing, provides ongoing support and spiritual renewal for parish coordinators, works closely with other diocesan offices to integrate the social teachings of the Church into all diocesan activities, works with local, national and state social action organizations to gather resources and provides practical models of social ministry development in parishes.

The office also promotes education and involvement in social issues impacting the dignity of individuals and families, such as domestic violence, AIDS and substance abuse. Conferences and resource materials are made available to parishes on these and other issues.

The **Office of Immigrant Concerns** works to keep families together and reunite those who have been separated due to complications involving the immigration process. Immigrants who attain legal resident status are able to shed the fear of persecution and deportation. In many cases, individuals become citizens, participate in the political process and contribute to the betterment of their communities.

The **Emergency Assistance and Disaster Response Program** works to ensure that people in need who are living within our diocese have access to the basic necessities of life – such as food, clothing and shelter.

For more information about the services available through Parish Social Ministries, Office of Immigrant concerns, or the Emergency Assistance and Disaster Response Program visit the Catholic Charities website at [www.austindiocese.org/ccctx](http://www.austindiocese.org/ccctx).

The 25 counties served by Catholic Charities of Central Texas are:

Bastrop	Burnet	Hamilton	Llano	Robertson
Bell	Caldwell	Hays	Mason	San Saba
Blanco	Coryell	Lampasas	McLennan	Travis
Brazos	Falls	Lee	Milam	Washington
Burleson	Fayette	Limestone	Mills	Williamson



To carry out its work, Catholic Charities collaborates with a broad range of partners including Catholic parishes, clergy, schools and youth, existing human service organizations and the business community. Programs administered by Catholic Charities are provided to everyone without regard to religion, race, age or economic status.

Making a difference through service, advocacy and collaboration, Catholic Charities develops strategies and partnerships to address the needs of the most vulnerable. In order to identify the needs that are the most critical within the Diocese and to aid in future planning of new or expanded programs, Catholic Charities has partnered with The Earley Group, an Austin-based communications firm, to complete the following assessment.

## **PURPOSE**

By utilizing this assessment to identify and document the most pressing human service needs within the Diocese of Austin, Catholic Charities will be able to implement or expand those programs that will have the most immediate beneficial impact on the targeted communities. Catholic Charities will also have the ability to set priorities when planning for future expansion or program development. These priorities do not only include the needs that should be addressed, but also the geographic regions that would benefit most from specific services.

This assessment is also meant to function as a resource for other organizations interested in addressing the health and human service needs of Central Texans and to raise awareness of the services provided by Catholic Charities. By functioning in this capacity, this report may encourage future collaborative efforts with other service organizations or assist Catholic Charities in obtaining support from other entities.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

Collection of data for this project required three key steps: analysis of demographic data, evaluation of community surveys, and confirmation through anonymous interviews with county officials and information from past county forums.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

Demographic data was compiled using government sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the Texas Department of Health. The purpose of this data was to draw a concrete statistical picture of the service area and each county using approximately 23 key indicators. These key indicators provide a snapshot of the conditions in each community and often exhibit direct relationships with many potential social problems. Some examples are Population Growth, Race Distribution, Persons Living Below Poverty, and Substance-Related Arrests.



The demographic data rendered these initial considerations for the Diocese of Austin:

- There are approximately 2,397,028 residents living within the Catholic Charities service area, a population that is growing slightly faster than the Texas population in general.
- As of 2001, there were 252,487 people living below poverty in the Diocese, 36% of which were children under the age of 17.
- Those living in the 25-county Central Texas region actually had a per capita income that was \$5,000-6,000 less than the Texas population as a whole in 2002. This means that there is not only a large number of Central Texans living below poverty, but that there are many more who could be financially unstable and do not qualify for government assistance, a situation that often causes people to remain underinsured, to do without some basic needs, or to put off necessary services altogether.
- In 2003, there were 6,153 confirmed cases of childhood abuse/neglect within the Diocese's 25-county service area.
- The same year, 11,194 incidents of family violence took place within the Diocese.
- The Diocese of Austin is extremely diverse in terms of urban and rural populations, serving communities with population densities as high as nearly 844 people per square mile in Travis County and as low as 4 people per square mile in Mason County. Six counties qualify as urban while the other 19 are considered rural.
- Of the 25 counties within the Catholic Charities service area, all are designated as at least partially Medically Underserved. This means that there is a shortage of acute care hospitals and nursing homes throughout the Austin Diocese.

It should be noted that, while this information is statistically accurate, the assumptions drawn from it are simply that – assumptions. While these key indicators are typically correlative with many existing social problems, they are not necessarily causal. Although it is possible that these relationships are merely circumstantial, they do provide a reliable geographic reference and assisted in the composition of relevant survey questions.

The subsequent section provides Demographics at a Glance for the entire service area followed by Quick Facts by County, which provides demographic highlights for each of the 25 counties. For more complete documentation of the key indicators, see the Demographic Charts in the appendix and their corresponding graphs. The sources for each set of data are also listed in the appendix.



# Demographics at a Glance

## Diocese of Austin

**Population (2004):** 2,397,028

% Growth since 2001: 5.8%

**Area in Sq. Miles:** 21370.2

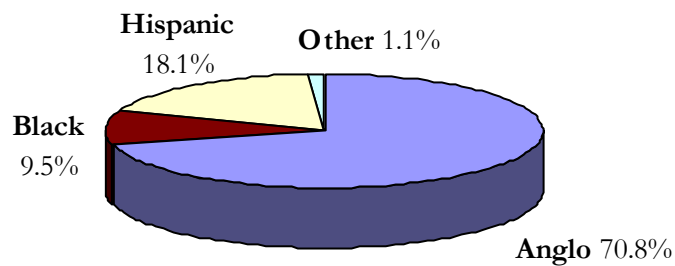
**Pop. Per Sq. Mile:** 112.2

### **Gender:**

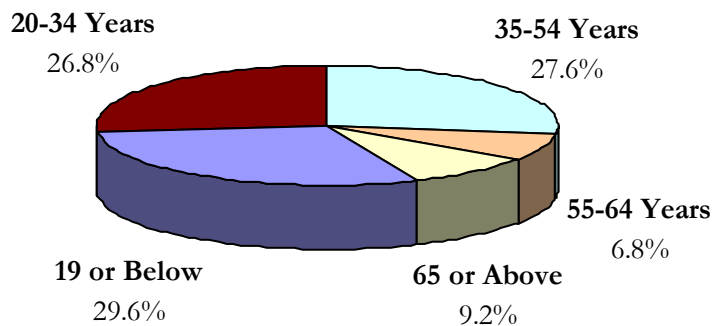
Male: 50.3%

Female: 49.7%

### **Race and Ethnicity:**

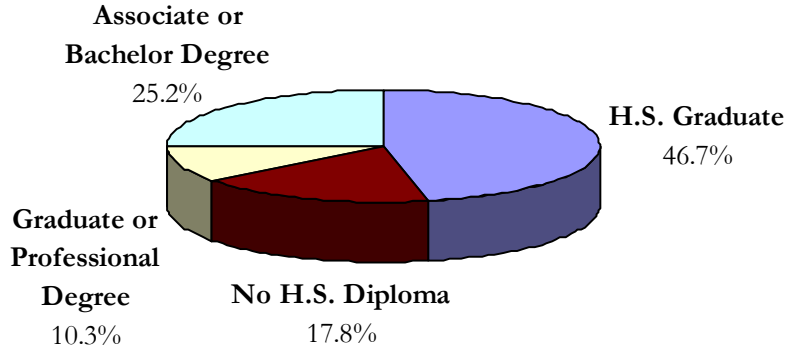


### **Age Distribution:**



**Educational Attainment:**

Pop. (Age 25+): 1,322,136  
No College Degree: 64.5%



**Dropouts: 926**

Received GED: 866  
Continued H.S.: 1,861  
Number in Class: 25,486

**Dropout Rate (Class of 2003): 3.6%**

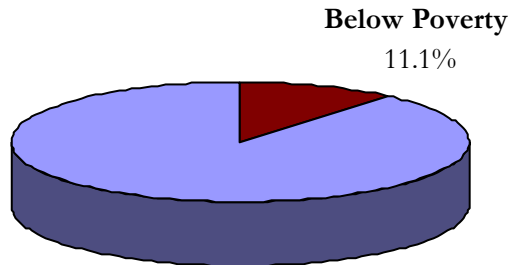
Received GED: 3.4%  
Continued H.S.: 7.3%

**Adolescent Mothers (<18): 1,670**

% of Births: 4.5%

**Commute to Work: 25.4 minutes**

**Persons Living Below Poverty: 252,487**



**Unemployment Rate: 4.7%**

**Per Capita Income: \$ 23,785**



**Medicaid Enrollment:** 210,875

% of Population: 8.8%

% of Enrollees Age 0-18: 65.7%

**CHIP Enrollment:** 25,141

% of Population (<20 years old): 3.9%

**Avg. Monthly TANF Recipients:** 20,650

% of Population: 0.9%

**Avg. Monthly Food Stamp Participants:** 183,325

% of Population: 7.6%

**Family Violence (# of Incidents 2003):** 11,194

**Confirmed Victims of Child Abuse/Neglect:** 6,153

Confirmed Victims Per 1,000 Children: 10

Child Population: 600,347

**Medical Facilities:** 39 (Acute Care Hospitals); 142 (Nursing Homes)

Classification: Medically Underserved

**Substance-Related Arrests:** 30,239

DWI: 11,779

Public Intoxication: 10,112

Possession: 8,348

**Substance-Related Deaths:** 1,357

Alcohol-related: 1,090

Drug-related: 267



## Quick Facts by County:

### Bastrop County

- Large rural population (68,608 people; 8<sup>th</sup> in pop. density)
- Rapid population growth (10.6%, ranked 5<sup>th</sup>)
- High percentage of Hispanics (24.7%, ranked 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Highest percentage of those age 35-54 and large number of young people (30.45% age 19 or below)
- Longest work commute (37.1; 12 minutes above average)
- Located near Travis County (large population center with organizational networks and media outlets)

### Bell County

- Large population (250,324; 3<sup>rd</sup>) and high population density (229.7/sq. mile; 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Most incidences of family violence (2,584)
- High numbers of substance-related arrests (2,765) and deaths (151)
- High percentage of children (32.30%) and young adults (27.03%)
- High unemployment rate (5.3%, 4<sup>th</sup> highest)
- Population centers in Temple and Belton; large military contingent at Ft. Hood near Killeen

### Blanco County

- Small population (9,101) and low density (12.2)
- 83% Anglo (4<sup>th</sup> highest percentage)
- High percentage of adults age 35-54 (30.91%, 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest percentage living below poverty (9.5%)
- Tied for 2<sup>nd</sup> in longest commute for workers (31.4)
- Lowest percentage using food stamps (3.6%)
- Fewest victims of child abuse (4.2 per 1,000 children)
- Zero acute care hospitals

### Brazos County

- 5<sup>th</sup> highest population (156,275) and 2<sup>nd</sup> highest density (265.4/sq. mile)
- Highest percentage in age group 20-34 (37.42%) and lowest in 35-54 (20.05%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest percentage in age groups 55-64 (5.19%) and 65+ (6.71%)
- Tied for 3<sup>rd</sup> for lowest unemployment rate
- Highest percentage with a graduate or professional degree (17.3%)
- Shortest work commute (16.7 minutes)

### Burleson County

- Small population (17,057) and low population density (25.0/sq. mile)
- Highest percentage of dropouts (6.4%)



### Burnet County

- Small population (40,286) growing at the 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest rate (13.5%)
- 4<sup>th</sup> highest percentage of births to adolescent mothers (6.6%)

### Caldwell County

- Rapid population growth (9.5%, 6<sup>th</sup>)
- Highest percentage of Hispanics (40.9%)
- Relatively high percentage of young adults (20.02%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest per capita income (\$20,223)
- Above average unemployment (5.2%)
- Small population (36,498) and low population density (61.1/sq. mile)

### Coryell County

- Large rural population (75,074; 71.5/sq. mile)
- Lowest percentage in age groups 55-64 (5.17%) and 65+ (5.70%)
- Highest unemployment rate (6.5%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest per capita income (\$20,235)
- Lowest percentage of children enrolled in CHIP (1.9%)

### Falls County

- Highest percentage living in poverty (20.9%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest unemployment rate (6.4%)
- Highest percentage of births to adolescent mothers (8.9%)
- Highest percentage without a college degree (85.7%) or a high school diploma (33.8%)
- Highest percentage of blacks (27.3%)
- Tied for highest percentage receiving TANF (1.7%)
- Small population (17,765, 17<sup>th</sup>) and low population density (24.1/sq. mile, 17<sup>th</sup>)
- Most rapidly declining population (-4.1%)

### Fayette County

- Small population (22,513) and low density (23.6/sq. mile)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest per capita income (\$27,662)
- High percentage without a college degree (81.7%)

### Hamilton County

- Small, declining population (8,115; -1.9%) and low density (9.9/sq. mile)
- Predominantly Anglo (91.6%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage in age group 65+ (23.57%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage of births to adolescent mothers (7.4%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage of children enrolled in CHIP

### Hays County

- Small urban population (119,359; 154.7/sq. mile)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> fastest population growth (13.8%)



- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of Hispanics (29.8%)
- High percentage of young adults (28.33%, 4<sup>th</sup>)
- Population center in San Marcos
- Located near Austin and Travis County as well as rapidly growing Caldwell County

#### Lampasas County

- Small, rapidly growing population (20,718; 12.9%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest number of child abuse victims per 1,000 children (20.9)

#### Lee County

- Small population (16,536)
- Lowest percentage of age 20-34 (5.74%)
- High percentage without a college degree (82.7%)
- Zero acute care hospitals

#### Limestone County

- Small population (22,763)
- 4<sup>th</sup> highest percentage living below poverty (18.0%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage without a college degree (83.9%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage enrolled in Medicaid (16.0%)
- High number of substance-related arrests (470)

#### Llano County

- Small population (18,143)
- Highest percentage of Anglos (93.7%)
- Lowest percentage age 19 or below (17.53%) and highest percentage in age groups 55-64 (16.43%) and 65+ (30.65%)
- Highest percentage of children enrolled in CHIP (9.7%)
- High incidence of family violence (117)
- Highest number of child abuse victims per 1,000 children (31.4)

#### Mason County

- Smallest population (3,844) and lowest density (4.0)
- High percentage in age groups 55-64 (13.46%) and 65+ (23.51%)
- Lowest unemployment rate (3.7%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage of children enrolled in CHIP
- Zero acute care hospitals and 1 nursing home

#### McLennan County

- Large population (222,439; 4<sup>th</sup>) and high density (206.9; 5<sup>th</sup>)
- High percentage living below poverty (15.5%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of family violence incidences (2,312)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest birth rate for teens (8.0%)
- Large number of arrests (2,847) and deaths (151) related to drugs and alcohol
- Population center in Waco



### Milam County

- Small population (25,204)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage without a college degree (84.5%)

### Mills County

- 2<sup>nd</sup> smallest population (5,130)
- Low percentage age 20-34 (11.16%) and high percentage age 65+ (23.10%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest unemployment rate (3.8%)
- Zero acute care hospitals

### Robertson County

- Small population (16,136)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest black population (24.0%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage living in poverty (19.8%)
- High percentage without a college degree (83.6%)
- Highest percentage enrolled in Medicaid (16.2%)
- Highest percentage using food stamps (16.9%)
- Tied for highest percentage receiving TANF (1.7%)
- Zero acute care hospitals

### San Saba County

- 3<sup>rd</sup> smallest population (6,086) declining rapidly (-3.8%)
- Highest percentage age 19 or below (32.56%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage living in poverty (18.3%)
- 4<sup>th</sup> lowest per capita income (20,666)
- High percentage without a college degree (81.4%)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of child abuse victims per 1,000 children (28.2)
- Zero acute care hospitals

### Travis County

- Largest population (869,868; 3 times the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest pop.) and highest density (843.5/sq. mile)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage of Hispanics (29.1%)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> highest percentage age 20-34 (30.94%) and 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest ages 55-64 (5.95%) and 65+ (6.75%)
- Highest number of people living in poverty (82,249)
- Highest per capita income (\$35,492)
- Highest number receiving all forms of public assistance
- Largest number of social service organizations and services offered

### Washington County

- Small population (31,248)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest per capita income (\$29,443)
- Lowest dropout rate (1.6%)



### Williamson County

- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest population (317,938) and 3<sup>rd</sup> highest density (241.3/sq. mile)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest percentage 19 or below (32.48%)
- Lowest percentage living in poverty (5.2%)

### **COMMUNITY SURVEY**

Using the demographic data as a reference, a list of 36 potential services was compiled and organized into five sections. Survey respondents were asked to rate each service according to the level of urgency with which it was needed in their community by indicating whether it was a Low Priority, Priority, or High Priority. The option Don't Know was also provided for each service. Respondents were also asked to list the three services that they consider to be the most critical to their community and to list any important needs that were not included in the survey.

The community survey was offered online in both English and Spanish as a link through the Catholic Charities website and hard copies were made available through the Parish Social Ministry at each church. To encourage participation in the survey process, Catholic Charities placed several articles in the monthly publication, *Catholic Spirit*, and appealed to priests to inform their congregations about the survey's importance.

The survey was active from April 29 – August 19, 2005, and received 1,115 visits resulting in 773 submitted surveys. 23 of the 25 counties were represented by at least one response with the highest volume of respondents coming from Burnet (26%) and Travis (25%) counties. 62% of the surveys were submitted by women and 87% were submitted by Catholics. The least represented age group was 19 and below (2%) while ages 31-54 had the highest percentage of participation (44%).

Some obvious weighting problems do exist in the evaluation of these surveys. Participants were not restricted from completing multiple surveys, they were not required to answer all questions, and, because Central Texas parishes were specifically targeted, participants were not selected at random. And, while one would expect a high turnout from population dense areas such as Travis County, it is possible that the large number of respondents from Burnet, as well as Lampasas (9%), could skew the results in favor of rural communities.

### **COMMISSIONER INTERVIEWS & COUNTY FUTURES FORUM**

In order to reinforce the conclusions indicated by demographic analyses and survey evaluation, and to reconcile any weighting discrepancies, members of the Catholic Charities Board of Directors conducted anonymous interviews with County Commissioners and Judges throughout the 25-county service area. The goal of these interviews, which consisted of four open-ended questions, was to identify the most pressing needs in each community as perceived by local elected officials. For those cases in which direct contact could not be made with county officials or the information obtained was not sufficient, the Texas County Futures Forum, administered by the Texas Cooperative Extension in 2004, was used as a substitute. A copy of the interview questions can be found in the appendix.



## SURVEY ANALYSIS

In evaluating the survey results, the The Earley Group's objective was to identify the 10 highest service priorities throughout the Diocese. To begin to narrow the field of 36 services, those that did not receive at least 66% of the vote in the combined priority and high priority categories were eliminated. However, this criterion only removed 14 services. Even when the bar was raised to include only those services that received 33% of the vote or greater in the high priority category, 17 services were still designated as high priority, before taking respondents' open-ended recommendations into consideration. Despite indications that nearly every service seemed to qualify as a high priority, some distinct themes became apparent among the remaining choices. Instead of being forced to continue to eliminate seemingly qualified services, The Earley Group recognized those that were either interchangeable or could be easily combined. This process clearly highlighted the 10 most critical needs (in alphabetical order), including the additional recommendations made by respondents:

- **Affordable and Accessible Health Care**  
Respondent comments pointed to the high cost of medical insurance and the need for both primary care physicians and doctors specializing in fields such as dentistry and eye care. Health Education Programs and Information and Assistance with Public Health Programs were viewed as priorities by survey respondents. And, although it may be too ambitious an undertaking for Catholic Charities at the moment, Community Health Clinic received high marks in the survey.
- **Affordable Housing Opportunities**  
Another high vote-getter related to this service was Rent and Utility Assistance.
- **Affordable, Quality Child Care**  
This service is listed in combination with After-School Care and Activities.
- **Emergency Shelter**  
This service received the second highest percentage in the high priority category with 43% of the vote. Although it was listed as a service for victims of domestic violence, many respondents stressed the need to include homeless families (specifically those with young children) as well.
- **Family Strengthening Services (At-Risk Youth, Life Skills, Financial Literacy)**  
This category includes several needs from both the survey and comments by respondents. They include Parenting Education, Mentoring for At-Risk Youth, ESL and Literacy Training, and Financial Education.
- **Immigration Services**  
This service was not listed in the survey because Catholic Charities already offers a program that addresses these types of needs. However, it was the most recommended service in respondent comments. It is also essential that these services include ESL (English as a Second Language) classes which were voted a high priority by 40% of respondents.



- **Job Opportunities**  
This service received 46% of the vote in the high priority category, the highest percentage for any service in the survey.
- **Legal Assistance**  
Legal Assistance received a high percentage of high priority votes under the domestic violence category, but many respondents requested that Legal Assistance be expanded beyond the scope of a single issue. Many also cited the need to include legal assistance for immigrants.
- **Mental Health Services**  
While this service did not receive a particularly high percentage of votes, it was listed quite frequently as one of the top three priorities for respondents. Curiously enough, Counseling/Support for Victims of Domestic Violence and Drug/Alcohol Abuse Prevention and Treatment, both considered types of Mental Health Services, were voted very high priorities. Perhaps, if this type of service is selected, it should be tailored in those directions.
- **Senior Support Services (Meals for Homebound Seniors/Transportation for Grocery Shopping or Doctor Visits/Food Pantry and Grocery Assistance)**  
These services are all related in that they deal with the availability of and access to basic needs.

It is important to understand that this is only a list of the most high priority needs in the Diocese of Austin and in no way constitutes a commitment by Catholic Charities to implement any particular programs. When making decisions in regard to future program implementation, the Board of Directors will consider possible partnerships with active organizations and will make every effort to avoid overlapping or duplicating existing programs. It should also be noted that these results were consistent with the interview responses from county officials and the Texas County Futures Forum.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the sheer size of Catholic Charities' service area, there are obvious logistical barriers that exist when delivering services throughout the Diocese from a single location. For this reason, without including considerations for budgetary constraints, The Earley Group recommends the establishment of four satellite offices strategically placed in the North, South, East, and West regions of the service area. This would provide for increased accessibility to the programs being offered and would give Catholic Charities a greater presence within each community.



The suggested breakdown of regions by county would be:

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>
Bell	Bastrop	Brazos	Blanco
Coryell	Caldwell	Burleson	Burnet
Falls	Hays	Fayette	Hamilton
Limestone	Travis	Lee	Lampasas
McLennan	Williamson	Milam	Llano
		Robertson	Mason
		Washington	Mills
			San Saba

The same regions categorized by deanery:

<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>
Northern (7)	Austin Central (1-3)	Brazos Valley (4)	Western (10)
Temple (9)	Austin North	Part of Central (5)	
	Austin South	Eastern (6)	
	Part of Central (5)		
	Southern (8)		



Demographic similarities were taken into consideration, along with geographic location, when grouping the counties into regions.

Because the counties in each region share many of the same demographic characteristics, establishing a system of satellite offices would also help Catholic Charities address the diverse nature of its service area. While most of the aforementioned services would be universally beneficial to counties in every region, this approach would allow each office to tailor its programs to the particular needs of the community it serves.

For instance, rapid population growth and a high percentage of Hispanic residents may warrant an immigration office in the southern region, perhaps in San Marcos, while the northern region may offer a greater benefit by addressing the high levels of drug abuse and domestic violence in Bell and McLennan Counties with an office in Waco, Temple or Belton.

Regional differences may be important even when the same service is being offered. Due to the rural makeup of the eastern and western regions, the majority of these areas lack adequate health care choices. The age distribution in the eastern region is indicative of many families with adolescent children while demographic data for the western region point to a larger elderly population. It would be wise to distribute health care resources with these facts in mind.

While many of the needs listed in this report are undoubtedly urgent, the recommendations that have been made would entail considerable long-term planning. It is unrealistic to expect the four satellite offices to be established at once. The final decisions in regard to the services offered, the location of each office, and the planning timeline will be made by the Catholic Charities of Central Texas Board of Directors.

