

## SAN DIEGO

### Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry (Metro)

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"The resources at Metro were a substitute for the gang activity and all that I could have gotten into. Every day, every chance I get, I recommend the program to my friends. I am a living witness to the opportunities." - Curtis Freitas, age 19

**Mission:** To strengthen the economic position of urban San Diego youth and families to break the cycle that leads to poverty and despair. Our philosophy is driven by a best practices model Metro created, which is reflective of the four primary areas of human development: 1) Workforce development 2) Education 3) Support 4) Development (personal).

**Overview:** All services are streamlined from our "Good Neighbor Center" which provides free food and clothing to indigent families within the empowerment zone of San Diego County. We serve middle school youth ages 12 to 14 through a comprehensive group/individualized mentoring program that encourages academic achievement and provides incentives. Various modules of violence prevention are the basis of our focus on keeping youth from exploring gang activities.

Metro has two workforce development programs, San Diego Youth @ Work and Y.C.H.A.N.G.E. (Youth Choosing A New Generation of Excellence). Metro offers a variety of wraparound services, including:

- Comprehensive, yet culturally sensitive case management
- Support services
- Building sustainable partnerships in community
- Workforce development
- Educational enhancements (Sylvan Learning Center)
- Youth development activities (sports & recording studio)
- Personal development (such as behavioral health)
- Literacy
- Housing
- Court advocacy

**Results:** Metro has enrolled 300 youth since 2003. Currently, 100 youth are in long-term job placements, and 100 have completed educational/vocational placements. The program has an ongoing placement rate of 80 percent.

During the past 18 months, Metro has served 150 youth ages 12 to 14 years in their Mentoring program and 256 youth offenders ages 18 to 24 years.

**Key Elements of Success:**

- Hire caring adults committed to working with community residents as staff.
- Maintain consistency in services and offer incentives for improved behavior
- Place youth in real jobs.
- Understand that housing is a fundamental need.
- Make emergency services available.
- Offer individualized case management services.
- Host recognition/celebration dinners.
- Develop and embrace stabilization and retention processes to facilitate delivery of services.

**Target Population:** Youth 12 to 24 years old and their families.

**Evaluation:** The Department of Labor (DOL) has evaluated Metro contracted services randomly over the past four years without negative findings. High-quality case management and data collection throughout Metro has strongly contributed to our assessment as a viable faith-based social service provider by DOL standards.

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