

As Fall River's economy worsens, so do our resident's problems.

Project ASSIST (Assisting Serving Supporting In Stressful Times) has launched several new programs to help the community weather the crisis. These include the Fall River Job Club, job coaching, new case management, and a Parenting Program.

"The economic reality in which we find ourselves is unprecedented, and so are the efforts through which we are dealing with it. Project ASSIST is constantly evolving to respond to residents and community needs," said Nancy Paull, CEO of SSTAR.

Project ASSIST is a four-year federally funded initiative launched by the City of Fall River and SSTAR to help residents cope with stress related to unemployment. Case Managers conduct screenings in locations throughout the city and at Project ASSIST offices to determine whether they are at potential risk for problems such as increased worry, depression, anxiety or substance abuse due to the economy. Those who screen positive are provided with "case managers" who provide them with six-months of services, and have access to any of the groups and programs at SSTAR or Project ASSIST.

Since the program was launched in January, 842 residents have been screened and 40 have enrolled in the program. Staff anticipates screening 10 percent of the city's population over the course of the program.

The project is also informed by steering committee meetings with Mayor Will Flannagan, members of the local police force, school boards, and social service organizations.

At Project ASSIST offices residents are given tools to better identify barriers they may be facing to getting help. We provide resources for unemployed people who are facing more extreme stress than usual which may contribute toward problems they never before experienced. This may include anyone from mothers dealing with anxiety who are finding parenting more difficult, to elders who need to apply for food stamps for the first time in their lives.

Current Services Include:

The Fall River Job Club: Open to all Fall River residents, regardless of whether or not they are enrolled in the program. The Club meets Monday's from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Residents struggling with unemployment meet in an informal, relaxed environment to discuss job strategies, practice interviewing skills, build resumes and cover letters, browse job ad's and offer each other support. Free coffee and breakfast treats. Location: 1700b President Avenue (behind the Newport Creamery). Please call for more specific directions.

Job Coaching: Job Preparation Specialist Katie Beth Wright can help clients enrolled in Project ASSIST to identify job skills and career goals; write resumes and cover letters; perform job searches; and identify new training or educational programs. The position allows her to draw on skills she developed working as a manager for technical support at a Boston Publishing Company interviewing people applying for jobs and training new hires.

Case Management: Unemployment tends to be rougher on people than it was in the past—as there are not as many job openings to pursue after the checks run out.

As a result many people are finding themselves strapped for resources from food to utility payments, and unsure where to turn for help.

Project ASSIST case managers help clients maneuver through social services and non-profit resources to help them through stressful times. This could include various services including: providing Portuguese to English translation to residents trying to apply for food stamps or utility assistance; to going to these offices to advocate for client's needs; applying for insurance; and accessing counseling or GED tutoring.

Parenting Wisely: Parenting is never easy. During stressful economic times, it can get even tougher. This interactive computer programs teaches mothers and fathers new parenting skills. Film clips show some common children's behaviors (example, not wanting to go to bed) and several means parents have used over the years to deal with them. The program is private, and can be completed according to each individuals pace.

In the future, Project ASSIST will launch additional programs including those targeted towards domestic violence and community violence, and veteran's needs. We always appreciate input from the community.

For More info please contact:

Project ASSIST

Phone: 508-837-6957

<http://www.sstar.org/site/ASSIST.asp>

www.facebook.com/ProjectAssist

Email: PBeaulieu@SSTAR.ORG