

# LEO Partner Spotlight:

## Kathy Donahue

*Kathy Donahue is senior Vice President for Program Development and Evaluation at Catholic Charities Chicago (CCC). LEO is partnering with CCC to evaluate two programs: the WIC Food and Nutrition Centers and the Homelessness Prevention Call Center (opposing page).*



**LEO: Tell us a little about the services that Catholic Charities Chicago provides and the clients that you serve.**

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago covers Cook and Lake Counties in the Chicagoland area. One of the largest Social Service Providers in the Midwest, the agency serves more than 1 million persons annually with 155 programs at 163 locations. Programs are organized into 5 service areas that cover human needs from “cradle to grave” and every point in between. Services include: Pregnancy programs, 16 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Food and Nutrition sites, 20 affordable housing buildings with wrap-around services, Senior Health and community based services, and basic human needs like shelters, rental assistance, and food pantries.

**LEO: What are some of the greatest challenges that your clients face?**

In the Chicagoland area a person must earn \$17.00 per hour to afford housing, transportation, food, etc. Most low wage earners or persons on fixed incomes need supports to make the economics of living in an urban area possible. The concentration of poverty persists in many communities with blight, boarded up buildings, lack of local employment, and lack of access to robust grocery stores. All of this contributes to generational poverty that needs high intervention touch points.

**LEO: How has the evaluation of the WIC Food and Nutrition Centers impacted that program and how your agency assesses and/or operates programs generally?**

The evaluation of the WIC Food and Nutrition Centers gave us stunning information that helped us target our future efforts. We learned that low-income teen mothers have a very low WIC coupon redemption rate. We started brainstorming about counteracting that. We learned our locations are well placed in food deserts and close to the right communities. We also were able to present the benefits of our service model to a new Governor and to Illinois WIC staff. Having a well-respected evaluator lends credibility and transparency.

**LEO: Is there a new program you are developing or an existing one you’re adapting to fill an urgent need in Chicago?**

Catholic Charities is making a great impact in reducing readmission rates for hospitalized seniors, reducing Medicare spending, and minimizing penalties for hospitals. Building on the success of the Hospital Transition Program, we are developing a model for the Medicaid population. These programs affirm the value of comprehensive social service that Catholic Charities brings to all of our projects.