

Dallas shelter plans cancelled, but needs continue along border

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A federal agency has cancelled plans to provide shelters in Dallas County for unaccompanied children who entered the United States from Central America, but family ministries to immigrants continue in Laredo and McAllen.

Judge Clay Jenkins had offered to house up to 2,000 child immigrants at three shelters in Dallas County. However, he announced recently the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services determined no additional temporary shelters will be opened, due to a reduction in the number of unaccompanied minors crossing the border into the United States.



Unaccompanied minors from Central America detained by the Border Patrol sleep at a facility in Brownsville. (Public Religion Research Institute Image) Dallas Baptist Association and the Baptist General Convention of Texas had been involved in plans to provide ministries as needed for the Dallas-area

shelters, and the BGCT established a [For the Children fund](#) to support the effort.

Contributions to that fund will help finance ongoing ministries of [Laredo Baptist Association](#), [Calvary Baptist Church in McAllen](#) and [Rio Grande Valley Baptist Association](#).

In Laredo Baptist Association, Director of Missions Mario Garcia provides immigrant mothers with children transportation to a relief center supported by Catholic Charities, United Methodists and local Baptists. The mothers and children remain at the center until they are able to travel by bus to join family in the United States.

TBM shower unit

At the center, the immigrants can clean up in a [Texas Baptist Men](#) disaster relief mobile shower unit, discard their old clothing and receive new clothes. In three months, the center has ministered to 1,650 people.

“We feed them and try to arrange for them to get bus tickets to where they have family in the United States. If they don’t have the money, we will try to provide it,” he said. “We extend the plan of salvation to everyone. We’ve given away some Bibles, but we are down to our last box.”

Garcia provides transportation to and from the bus station in his car, making about 20 trips a day at his own expense, and he is praying for a van to become available.

Many needs

The relief center in Laredo needs diapers, travel-size hygiene items, packable snacks, walking shoes for women (size 5-7), new undergarments for women (sizes 0-6) and children, backpacks or tote bags, wipes and first aid supplies to provide the mothers and children. For more information,

call Garcia at (956) 693-1136 or lbalaredo@gmail.com, or contact Gerald Davis with Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery at (214) 924-6401. Contributions to the For the Children fund will be used to purchase these items and provide Bibles.

Calvary Baptist in McAllen also is ministering to immigrant families—mostly mothers with small children. Texas Baptists in the McAllen area are collecting new undergarments and walking shoes for women and children, backpacks, some toiletries, cleaning supplies and other items for the ministry. For more information about donations, call Vanessa Quintanilla at (956) 279-5515.

Texas Baptists' Disaster Recovery office is coordinating volunteer teams to help sort donations and work with families in McAllen and Laredo. Spanish-speaking volunteers particularly are needed. For details, call Marla Bearden at (214) 537-7358.

Buckner collecting shoes

Buckner International is collecting shoes for immigrant families in McAllen and Laredo through its Shoes for Orphan Souls program. The greatest need is for children's sizes 7 to 13 and youth sizes 1 to 3, particularly for children ages 3 to 6. Shoes need to be lace-up, Velcro-strapped or slip-on with closed toes. Buckner already has donated more than 8,000 pairs of children's shoes to McAllen and Laredo.

"Buckner officials are in regular contact with government officials and partners in the faith-based community to determine if there other ways to help," said Scott Collins, Buckner's vice president of communications.

To donate shoes, drop off or send shoes to the Buckner Center for Humanitarian Aid, 5405 Shoe Dr., Mesquite 75149. The center is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call (214) 939-7179 or [click here](#).

Christian attorneys who can offer pro-bono legal assistance and bilingual speakers who can serve as interpreters also are needed. Lawyers should contact the [Human Rights Initiative](#), [Catholic Charities](#) or [Justice for our Neighbors](#). Interpreters should contact Deborah Balyeat at Spanish with a Mission at deborahbalyeat@yahoo.com.