

# Wind of the Spirit (WOTS) – Morristown, New Jersey

# SNAPSHOT

## Overview

Wind of the Spirit is a faith-based organization for all immigrants and non-immigrants who are moved by the tradition of hospitality. We strive to create an environment free of discrimination. At our core, we are motivated to act by the challenges that immigrants in the United States continue to face. Wind of the Spirit works with immigrant communities to ensure their access to information that will strengthen their leadership abilities and will also allow them to realize their power as social and political actors.

## Mission

- *Organize and train the community for social change.*
  - *Help immigrants and non-immigrants so that they can meet and enrich each other.*
  - *Educate members of the immigrant community about their rights and responsibilities.*
  - *Promote activities to celebrate the cultural diversity of the Community in New Jersey.*
  - *Advocate for human rights and dignity of all people regardless of immigration status.*
  - *Establish a deeper understanding of global conditions that relate to immigration.*
  - *Working together in solidarity for a world where justice and peace there.*
- Wind of the Spirit website



## Constituency

- All ages (0-64)
- African American
- Latino (Guatemalan, Honduran, Ecuadoran, Colombian, Mexican, Costa Rican, Salvadoran, Dominican)
- Native American (indigenous from Latin America)
- LGBTQ
- Relative caregivers
- People with disabilities (learning, physical, or mental)
- Immigrant
- Undocumented
- Formerly incarcerated
- Muslim

## Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Morristown, NJ

### Undocumented immigration status

“From the detentions and deportations, there’s a lot of stress in the community. I’d say that that’s one thing...where the kids are the ones that are suffering. Every morning before going to school without knowing if their parents will be there when they get back. Last week I was talking with a girl who...wakes up all night to check if her mom and dad are there because she doesn’t know if they’re sleeping. So they’re worried that ICE is coming for them.” —Diana Mejia, Co-director

**Poverty and the high cost of living**—16.4% of children live below the poverty line in Morristown, NJ compared to 14.3% of children living in poverty, statewide.<sup>1</sup>

“In terms of economics, making a living is something that worries [adults in our community]. We are in a very rich district, the rent is very expensive...I know when they talk about obesity, for example, they keep giving talks and all that, but even when looking at something as simple as exercise. Going to a gym is very expensive. It’s a luxury.”

## Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Morristown, NJ

# 61.6%

of all emergency room visits were due to suicide attempts or self-harm among youth (ages 10-19).<sup>3</sup>

# 18%

of low-income preschoolers in Morris County are obese.<sup>2</sup>

## Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

**Alternatives to violence program**—helps youth and their parents identify abuse (whether as the victim or the abuser)

### Occupational health and safety training

“We work a lot with parents [to teach them] how things they bring from work can make their kids sick ...making them conscious of the practices they should take after work to not bring home (asbestos, lead, bacteria)—when we arrive and hug our kids with our work clothes and we make them sick.”

## WOTS's Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

- **Led a campaign to gain access to higher education for undocumented students**
- **Led a campaign to prevent immigration and local police from collaborating**

*“That’s important because the local police don’t collaborate with immigration means more children are protected, which means more family are protected, which means that the community has less risk of being detained or deported.”*



### Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health

- **Seeing ourselves as agents of change**

*“We—the people that are affected by the problem—are the agents of change. We’ve deeply believe that.”*

## Allies/Partnerships Working on Children’s Health

- ACLU – New York, NY <https://www.aclu.org/>
- New Jersey Alliance for Immigration Justice – New Jersey <http://www.njimmigrantjustice.org/>



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**the praxis project**

1. City-data. (2016). Morristown, New Jersey Poverty Rate Data. Retrieved from <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Morristown-New-Jersey.html>
2. North Jersey Health Collaborative. (2016). Community Health Needs Assessment. Retrieved from [http://www.njhealthmatters.org/content/sites/njhc/Morris\\_County\\_CHNA\\_Final\\_1.pdf](http://www.njhealthmatters.org/content/sites/njhc/Morris_County_CHNA_Final_1.pdf)
3. North Jersey Health Collaborative. (2016). Community Health Needs Assessment. Retrieved from [http://www.njhealthmatters.org/content/sites/njhc/Morris\\_County\\_CHNA\\_Final\\_1.pdf](http://www.njhealthmatters.org/content/sites/njhc/Morris_County_CHNA_Final_1.pdf)