

Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Peoria Area Food Bank

Feeding America is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, serving an estimated 25 million low-income Americans each year through its network of 205 food banks and their 63,000 charitable feeding agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters.

The current recession and the rise in unemployment are having a profound effect on the nation's food banks. In early September 2009, Feeding America conducted a brief survey of food bank members to learn more about the challenges faced by food banks, their member agencies, and clients served. A total of 176 food banks participated in the survey. What we found was that 99% of all participating food banks reported increases in demand for emergency food assistance over the last year. The average increase in demand across the network from Summer 2008 to Summer 2009 was 30%. However, the increase in need for services over the last year varies across the nation, ranging from 5% in some areas to more than 150% in others. Local economic circumstances, such as plant closings, can have a significant impact on need but it is also clear that high unemployment across the nation – which reached 9.7% in August – is a critical factor in the rising need for emergency food.

It's becoming increasingly more difficult for many food banks and their agencies to meet the needs of their clients, especially when new clients arrive all the time. Despite the fact that the nation's food banks delivered 2.63 billion pounds of food between July 2008 and June 2009 – an increase of 21.4% over the prior year --many are struggling to meet this increase in demand.

Here is a snapshot of what Peoria Area Food Bank has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Local factors impacting changes in demand:

Our agencies are reporting a 35-40% increase in client visits. We have distributed, compared to last year at this time, 800,000 more pounds of food to our service area which consists of eight counties. Our goal is to distribute 3 million pounds by the end of the year. Our pantries report they are serving more "working" people. The problem is by the time they pay their basic bills, such as gas bill, electric, clothing, etc., there is no money left for food.

Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Underemployment Cost of Food
Client trends include:	More requests from existing clients More first-time users More employed persons

Additional Comments:

A manufacturer of construction and mining equipment is in our area and they have laid off numerous employees along with other small business closings.

Our agencies are doing a remarkable job with the growth of their client base. We continue to purchase food and will be expanding our purchase program as funds and opportunities become available.

For further information, please contact:

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