



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by Northern Illinois 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 Northern Illinois Food Bank has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:	35% increase
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Local factors impacting changes in demand:	We track participation in the TEFAP programs by compiling quarterly data. In quarter two of last calander year we had just shy 450,000 signatures. In quarter four the number went to 568,000; there was a small dip in quarter one and then in quarter two of this year we hit 578,000 signatures. Slightly less than one-third of our agencies are in the TEFAP program, but it is an excellent barometer of what is happening in our area.
Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs Cost of Health Care
Client trends include:	More requests from existing clients More first-time users More children More employed persons Foreclosed home owners are now showing up as homeless clients
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:	Occasionally
The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:	Occasionally

Additional Comments:

Northern Illinois Food Bank has ten of its 13 counties with double digit unemployment. Five of those counties are in the top fifty in the country for median household income, which means that a lot of people who are without work are from higher paying jobs.

Keep advocating on behalf of the people who now need food. Keep telling the story about the large number of first time pantry clients.



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest*

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