



## Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

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

**Local factors impacting changes in demand:**

**Some of our agencies report significant increases, ranging from 10-30%. Anecdotally, all agencies are reporting an increase in clients and in types of clients (working poor, people with hours cut back, etc). The rate at which we distribute food has been increasing dramatically. In 2009, we are currently 24% ahead of last year in pounds distributed. If the trend continues, this will be our third record year in a row.**



<b>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</b>	<b>Underemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs Cost of Fuel</b>
<b>Client trends include:</b>	<b>More requests from existing clients More first-time users More children More employed persons</b>
<b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>
<b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>

**Additional Comments:**

*One of our counties is experiencing unemployment much higher than the state average due to recent manufacturing plant closures. We have had some natural disasters in several counties over the past year (floods, storms) but not on a massive level. Underemployment is probably the most significant factor.*

*It continues to be a challenge to meet demand. At mid-year, we had distributed 124% more purchased food. Community food drive collections have been up significantly, but the food lasts a much, much shorter period of time. NALC used to last us through the summer. This year it was gone by July. Holiday food collections used to last into spring - now they are gone by February. We're purchasing as much as we can to keep up.*

**For further information, please contact:**

Julio Alonso  
 Executive Director  
 Hoosier Hills Food Bank  
 Bloomington, IN  
 812-334-8374



[julio@hhfoodbank.org](mailto:julio@hhfoodbank.org)

National Office  
35 E. Wacker Drive  
Suite 2000  
Chicago, IL 60601

tel 312.263.2303  
fax 312.263.5626  
[feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)