



## Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

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

<p><b>Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:</b></p>	<p><b>June 2008: 24,969 households (not unduplicated) served by pantries, 145,643 hot meals served June 2009: 42,131 households (not unduplicated) served by pantries, 164,622 hot meals. So this year demand has increased 168% increase for pantries and 121% for meals sites.</b></p>
<p><b>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</b></p>	<p><b>We've been noting lately that our food pantries have already provided more food to families this year than for the entirety of 2008.</b></p>



Formerly named  
America's Second Harvest®

<b>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</b>	<b>Unemployment Underemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs Inadequacy of SNAP (formerly Food Stamp) Benefits Cost of Health Care</b>
<b>Client trends include:</b>	<b>More first-time users More children</b>
<b>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:</b>	<b>Rarely</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>Rarely</b>

**Additional Comments:**

*Las Vegas has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the nation, and Nevada now has the third highest unemployment rate of all the states. Vegas's is slightly higher than the state overall (we just topped 13% as of July of 2008). Much of the housing assistance that has been passed doesn't help homeowners here unless they are in the direst of straits--more than half of homeowners are underwater on their mortgages, and home values are down something like 60%. For a family to lose a job, then not be able to pay for the mortgage, then lose the house (because it's not likely they can sell it and move to a cheaper place when it's worth substantially less than what's left on the mortgage)...all these factors can be crippling to families who otherwise would be getting by. Additionally, Nevada has one of the highest rates of uninsured people as well.*

*The situation is just very bad here. Unemployment continues to rise, property tax values are poised to go down (reducing revenue for county social services), the expected wave of commercial property foreclosures has yet to hit, construction will soon be finished on the last major Strip property undergoing work, there's talk of a special State Legislative Session to cut the budget yet further...we keep going here at the food bank, and we're increasing our distribution and looking to SNAP outreach as a cost-effective option to help people in need, but it's hard to see all that is going on all around us.*





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