



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by City Harvest

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 City Harvest has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

<p>Local factors impacting changes in demand:</p>	<p>Our agencies are reporting what we have termed the “new face of hunger” – people who have never had to access emergency food before and people who recently lost their jobs and are turning to emergency food as a last resort. While many experts are saying that the economy is beginning to reach a bottom, that does not mean that the people we serve will see their fortunes improve any time soon. Unemployment and wage declines that are forcing many New Yorkers to turn to emergency food will take longer to turn around than the broader economy. The rate of joblessness in New York City is at 9.6% (July figures) -- higher than the national rate. Our staff check in with a representative group of agencies throughout the five boroughs on an ongoing basis to monitor shifts in demand. Since the fall, these agencies have cited increases in people seeking food. They are serving food until it runs out and are turning more people away than before.</p>
<p>Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:</p>	<p>Unemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs Inadequacy of SNAP (formerly Food Stamp) Benefits</p>
<p>Client trends include:</p>	<p>More requests from existing clients More first-time users More children More employed persons</p>
<p>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to turn people away:</p>	<p>Frequently</p>
<p>The frequency with which the food bank or its agencies had to reduce the amount of food available per person or household:</p>	<p>Frequently</p>

Additional Comments:

The closure of some of the more prominent corporations has had a ripple effect on the New York employee base. Closings have left senior executives, middle level staff and even those who provided services to these employees (chauffeurs, delis) to suffer.





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