



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

How current economic conditions are impacting the emergency food system served by The Food Bank for Westchester

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 The Food Bank for Westchester has witnessed and reported over the past year in the community it serves.

Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance:	15% increase July 2008 to July 2009
Local factors impacting changes in demand:	Each agency has a different range of increase in service.....the overall increase based on all agencies reports is 15%...however in some high need areas of Westchester member agencies report increases of 100% and as low as 3 %



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food:	Unemployment Underemployment Mortgage/Rent Costs Inadequacy of Food Stamp Benefits Cost of Health Care
Client trends include:	More requests from existing clients More first-time users More employed persons
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:

Westchester has very high housing costs and a lack of adequate public transportation. A person must own a vehicle to get to work many low wage /service jobs such as landscaping, retail etc. Many of the support businesses in Westchester due to decrease in jobs with large employers have also seen a decrease in business, thus, a decrease in jobs.

For further information, please contact:

Christina Rohatynskyj
 Executive Director
 The Food Bank for Westchester
 Millwood, NY
 914-923-1100
ceroha@foodbankforwestchester.org