



Economic Impact Survey 2009: Food Bank Response

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

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

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| Estimated increase in demand or need for emergency food assistance: | Our member food pantries have experienced a 7% increase in families receiving groceries comparing July 2008 to July 2009. In real numbers: July 2009 - 10,465 families; July 2008 - 9,775 |
| Critical trends contributing to increased need for emergency food: | Unemployment Underemployment Cost of Food Mortgage/Rent Costs Cost of Fuel Inadequacy of SNAP (formerly) Food Stamp Benefits Cost of Health Care |



Formerly named
America's Second Harvest®

| Client trends include: | More first-time users |
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| 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:

From one of our SNAP Outreach workers: Mr. S called us to ask for help as he had transportation problems. Our schedules couldn't quite coordinate for the week and we decided that a home visit would be a good idea. When we walked up to the door, he was standing there holding it open for us. Who knows how long he had been waiting for us; we had arrived early. It seemed odd to see a book by Friedrich Nietzsche on the floor next to the couch, so I wasn't sure what to expect. I hadn't seen anyone reading Nietzsche since college. Before we got started, he showed us the food that the pantry had given to him. "Can you believe it?" he said. "They gave me a rotisserie chicken, some canned vegetables, and this rising crust pizza . . . really good stuff! I was just making the pizza for myself. Would you each like a piece? There isn't much, but I'm happy to share." His eyes seemed to sparkle while he looked at the food. I could tell just by watching him that it had been a while since he had eaten. He was so thankful for everything he had. I proceeded with the food stamp application at his kitchen table. Mr. S gave me the information about his situation and I typed it into the computer. The details of his case were not unlike what I had seen before. The bank account was empty, the car was in need of expensive repairs, and he couldn't afford to pay his rent. For a brief moment, I wondered if his smile was a nervous smile. He didn't seem to know what to expect and he was hoping that he could qualify for help. Mr. S was in the same situation as so many others that we had seen this month. He had recently lost employment and was shying away even at the thought of asking for help. "I went to the pantry and they helped me. Then they told me about SNAP Outreach. I didn't want to ask for more help, but I think I need to." Mr. S was under the poverty guidelines and we gave him a copy of the application that we were going to be faxing into Job and Family Services for him. We also gave him a checklist of all of the items that he needed to take up with him when he applied. As we finished explaining the process to him, he thanked us over and over again. He also asked us again if we would like to share his pizza. With hard times upon us, we are seeing an increased number of individuals seeking food and food assistance. Maybe you haven't experienced going without food like Mr. S, but it is hard to overlook the fact that so many people are going without. Nietzsche said "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger." But why would we want anyone to suffer and go without food. Friedrich Nietzsche also said, "What else is love but understanding and rejoicing in the fact that another person lives, acts, and experiences otherwise than



we do?" By supporting programs that support services for people like Mr. S, you can make their lives a little easier.

For further information, please contact:

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