



CPPP: NEW FEDERAL REPORT SHOWS ONE-IN-SIX TEXAS HOUSEHOLDS STRUGGLED WITH HUNGER AS RECESSION HIT

Policy Institute Urges State to Fix Eligibility System to Get Help to Hungry Texans

Austin, Texas—The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) today pointed to a new report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to show the urgent need for Texas to fix its system for enrolling needy families in the Food Stamp program. USDA reports 16.3 percent of Texas households struggled to afford food during 2006-2008. Nationally, 12.2 percent or more than 17 million households were food insecure in 2008 – up from 13 million in 2007 and 12.6 million in 2000. The 2008 figures represent the highest level of household food insecurity observed since the survey was initiated in 1995.

“The data for USDA’s report were collected before the full effects of the recession were felt in Texas. The percent of Texas families struggling with hunger today is likely much higher. Food Stamps offer a lifeline to families who can’t make ends meet during tough economic times. Yet, in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, needy Texans often wait months to get their Food Stamp application approved,” CPPP Senior Policy Analyst Celia Hagert said.

“President Obama has committed to ending child hunger by 2015. We won’t meet this goal in Texas unless we fix our broken food stamp eligibility system. Not only does our system fail to protect vulnerable Texans from hunger, but it also costs the state: already we’ve seen lawsuits filed this year to force Texas to meet federal performance standards, and USDA could withdraw federal funding for administration of the program if Texas doesn’t improve its performance. This could cost us millions in financial penalties,” Hagert added.

Among the 16.3 percent of people in Texas households considered food insecure during 2006-2008, 5.7 percent lived in households considered to have very low food security. People in this category had more severe hunger, cutting back or skipping meals on a more frequent basis for both adults and children.

Texas ranked **second** in the nation in the percent of food insecure families. Texas’ high rate of food insecurity is linked to our high poverty rate. Texas’ poverty rate is the eighth-worst in the country, with 15.8 percent, or more than 3.7 million, Texans living in poverty in 2008 compared to a national average of 13.2 percent.

“In the long-term, we can end hunger and poverty by creating good jobs at family-supporting wages and ensuring opportunities are available to all Texans to get the training or education they need to get these jobs. In the short-term, the only way to prevent hunger is to shore up support for programs like Food Stamps and the Child Nutrition Programs,” Hagert said.

USDA's report captures the national hunger situation early in the recession. USDA uses 3-year averages to compensate for limited sample sizes and give a better estimate of the number of households experiencing hunger – thus the state data are an average for 2006-2008. A new survey taken today would undoubtedly show far higher numbers of people struggling to put food on the table.

Hagert noted that more than 250 representatives from advocacy groups, social service providers and federal, state, and local governments will focus on food insecurity at “Texas at the Table: Baylor University Hunger Summit” on Thursday, November 19. Texas Hunger Initiative will host the event at Baylor’s Bill Daniel Student Center on the Baylor University campus. More information on the event can be found at www.texashunger.org.

More Information

- To learn more about the crisis in Texas eligibility system, read CPPP’s recent report, *Texas’ Eligibility System Continues to Fail Needy Texans*, available online at <http://cPPP.org/research.php?aid=918>.
- CPPP’s recommendations to the Obama administration for ending child hunger by 2015 are available online at <http://www.cPPP.org/research.php?aid=919&cid=3&scid=5>.

The Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) is a non-profit, non-partisan policy institute dedicated to improving the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans. You can learn more about CPPP at <http://www.cPPP.org>.

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