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REPORT INDICATES HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS ON THE RISE IN CITIES

Hunger and homelessness continued to rise in major American cities over the last year, according to the new U.S. Conference of Mayors-Soxexho Hunger and Homelessness Survey, released at the Conference of Mayors Headquarters. As the overall economy remained weak, requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 17 percent over the past year, and requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of 13 percent in the 25 cities surveyed.

"This survey underscores the impact the economy has had on everyday Americans," said Conference of Mayors President and Hempstead (NY) Mayor James A. Garner. "The face of homelessness has changed and now reflects who we least suspect."

Hunger:

Twenty participating cities reported that unemployment and various employment-related problems were the leading causes of hunger. Other causes most likely contributing to hunger include low-paying jobs (13 cities), and high housing costs (11 cities).

As need increased, 56 percent of the cities surveyed reported that people in need were turned away due to lack of resources. Over 14 percent of the requests for emergency food assis-

tance are estimated to have gone unmet during the last year. For families, 15 percent of the requests for assistance have gone unmet. Just over half the cities surveyed indicated that emergency assistance facilities have had to decrease the number of bags of food provided and/or the number of times people can receive food. Of these cities, 48 percent have had to significantly limit food provided.

The survey finds that 59 percent of those requesting emergency food assistance were members of families with children and their parents, and that 39 percent of the adults requesting such assistance were employed.

"These are not simply statistics," said Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell, who co-chairs the Conference's Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness. "These are real people who are hungry and homeless in our cities."

Homelessness:

Twenty-three participating cities reported that lack of affordable housing was the leading cause of homelessness. Other causes most likely attributed to homelessness include mental illness or lack of needed services (18 cities), low-paying jobs (17 cities), and substance abuse or the lack of needed services (17 cities).

Participating cities were most likely to attribute homelessness to a lack of affordable housing (21 cities), mental illness and the lack of need-

ed services (20 cities), substance abuse and the lack of needed services (19 cities), and low-paying jobs (17 cities). The survey documents significant unmet need for shelter in the cities surveyed. Eighty-four percent of the cities reported that emergency shelters have turned away homeless families due to lack of resources.

Cedar Rapids Mayor Paul Pate and co-chair of the Conference's Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness, said "These survey results indicate, as they have in past years, that there is still a great deal to be done to address the serious issue of homelessness in America."

People remained homeless for an average of five months in the survey cities. Sixty percent of the cities said that the length of time people are homeless increased during the last year. Single men comprised 41 percent of the homeless population, families with children 40 percent, single women 14 percent, and unaccompanied youth five percent.

It is estimated that substance abusers account for 30 percent of the homeless population in the survey cities and persons considered mentally ill account for 23 percent. Seventeen percent of the homeless in survey cities are employed and 10 percent are veterans.

Outlook:

- Eighty-seven percent of the cities surveyed expect that requests for both emergency food assistance and shelter will increase again over the next year.
- Ninety-one percent expect that requests for emergency food assistance by families with children will increase next year.
- Eighty-eight percent expect that requests for emergency shelter will increase next year.
- Eighty percent expect requests for shelter by homeless families will increase in 2004.

Even with an improving economy, city officials believe that economic conditions will continue to have a negative impact on the problem of hunger and homelessness.

"The data released is consistent with the increased demand for emergency food assistance we've seen throughout our national network of hunger-relief agencies," said Robert Forney, President and CEO of America's Second Harvest. "We are hopeful that this will spur the President and Congress to renew and strengthen our national fight against child hunger in America."

The mayors of the 25 cities included in the survey are members of the Conference of Mayors Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness. They include Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin, Philadelphia Mayor John Street, Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza, Portland Mayor Vera Katz, San Antonio Mayor Ed Garza, San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, and Washington Mayor Anthony Williams.

Some researchers have criticized the Mayor's report. Melissa Pardue, the Weinberg fellow in social welfare policy and Robert Rector, a senior research fellow in domestic policy at the Heritage Foundation, wrote an op-ed, published in the *Washington Times*, questioning the findings from the study. Their critique states: "Over the past 17 years, the mayors have reported food-bank use in U.S. cities has grown on average 17 percent per year. If that were true, there would be 14 times more people receiving emergency food aid today than in 1986. Since about 21 million people receive emergency food today (judging from USDA data) that means fewer than 1.5 million people received aid in 1986. There's simply no way that's true."

The complete survey can be downloaded at www.usmayors.org. The op-ed article can be found at www.washtimes.com/commentary/20031228-104219-5441r.htm.

GOVERNOR ISSUES A TEXAS-SIZE FITNESS CHALLENGE

Texas Governor Rick Perry launched a health and fitness campaign called the *Texas Round-Up*. The governor's statewide initiative is designed to encourage all Texans to incorporate daily physical activity and healthy choices into their lives.

"Routine physical activity is essential to living a longer and healthier life," Perry said. "By exercising for merely 30 minutes a day a few days each week, Texans can reduce the odds of disease and illness, lower the cost of health care and live more productive lives."

Perry noted that a lack of fitness costs Texas taxpayers and businesses \$10 billion each year due to increased use of the health care system and lost productivity in the workplace, according to statistics from the Texas Department of Health (TDH). Five out of eight Texas adults are considered overweight or obese according to TDH, and only one in four Texans participates in the recommended amount of physical activity, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

"The goal of the *Texas Round-Up* is to help Texans get in shape and live healthier and more productive lives through the development of a physical activity routine and fitness habits that are part and parcel to their daily lives as reading the morning newspaper or going to work," Perry said.

During a formal kickoff announcement at the YMCA in Austin, Perry announced that TDH has partnered with the Governor's Office on this statewide fitness initiative. Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, Texas Commissioner of Health, called the *Texas Round-Up* an important effort to address an epidemic of obesity.

"*Texas Round-Up* is an excellent initiative to get our citizens headed in the right direction by increasing their levels of physical activity," Sanchez said. "It is a strong example of Governor Perry's determination to address over-

weight and obesity in Texas."

The *Texas Round-Up* program includes:

- An online activity training program that provides suggestions and recommendations for making fitness a part of a daily routine. Participants can get guidelines and support on the web site at www.texasroundup.org.
- A scheduled 10K and fitness festival event on April 17, 2004. The fitness celebration, complete with live music on the State Capitol grounds, will follow the festival.
- A Governor's challenge designed to encourage all Texas communities to participate. The competition is based on participation in the program as well as the April 10K. The city and/or region with the highest participation rate will be awarded the Governor's Cup.

More than 50 Texas communities have already endorsed the goals of the governor's fitness initiative. In addition, private sponsors are part of the effort to promote the goals of the *Texas Round-Up* program.

Texas Round-Up is the latest in a series of efforts the governor has made to improve Texans' health through physical fitness. In 2001, he issued an executive order creating the Governor's Advisory Council on Physical Fitness to promote physical activity and good nutrition. Last year, Perry launched a new Diabetes Education Initiative to provide healthy eating and physical fitness guidelines to prevent and control diabetes, which affects more than one million Texans.

For more information, visit the web site at www.texasroundup.org.

The Food Journal welcomes your comments and ideas for stories. To contact us, please call 462-2555 ext. 203, or e-mail comments and suggestions to foodjournal@tacaa.org.

WHO RECEIVES FOOD STAMPS?

Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2002

On average, 19.1 million people living in 8.2 million households received food stamps in the United States each month in FY 2002. Food stamp households are a diverse group. Because food stamps are available to most low-income households with few resources, regardless of age, disability status, or family structure, recipients represent a broad cross-section of the nation's poor. This report provides summary information about the demographic and economic circumstances of food stamp households.

Most food stamp recipients are children or elderly. Over half (51 percent) are children and another nine percent are age 60 or older. Working-age women represent 28 percent of the caseload, while working-age men represent 12 percent.

The majority of food stamp households do not receive cash welfare benefits. Just over one in five (21 percent) received TANF benefits, down from 42 percent in 1990. Nearly 30 percent received Supplemental Security Income. Almost one quarter (24 percent) received Social Security benefits. Eleven percent had no cash income of any kind.

Many food stamp recipients work. Over one fourth (28 percent) of food stamp households have earnings, up from 19 percent in 1990. For these households, earnings are the primary source of income.

Food stamp households have little income. Only 12 percent are above the poverty line, while 36 percent have incomes at or below half the poverty line. The typical food stamp household had gross income of \$633 per month and received a monthly food stamp benefit of \$173. Over one-fifth of monthly funds (cash income plus food stamps) available to a typical household come from food stamps.

Food stamp households possess few resources. The average food stamp household possesses

only \$134 in countable resources (including the non-excluded portion of vehicles and the entire value of checking and savings accounts and other savings).

Most food stamp households are small. The average food stamp household size was 2.3, but varied considerably by household composition. Households with children were relatively large, averaging 3.3 members. Households with elderly members tended to be smaller, with an average size of 1.3 people.

The overall economic conditions of the average food stamp household worsened slightly from 2001 to 2002. After adjusting for inflation, average gross income fell by -1.6 percent for households, while the average household benefit increased by 4.3 percent. The percentage of households receiving the maximum allotment rose from 22 percent to 24 percent.

This December 2003 report released by the Food and Nutrition Service of USDA can be viewed online at www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/FSP/FILES/Participation/2002Characteristics.htm.

FRAC CONFERENCE

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) will hold their 2004 National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference in Washington, D. C. on February 22-24, 2004. The Conference will be held at the Washington Court Hotel, Capitol Hill 525 New Jersey Ave., NW Washington, DC 20001, Telephone: 202/628-2100. Conference Workshop and Plenary Topics Include: Building child nutrition reauthorization strategies; Elevating the hunger issue in America's politics and media; Learning about successful grassroots advocacy efforts; Developing food stamp outreach strategies and identifying key emerging issues; and Exploring the future of federal commodities.

Register Online at <http://frac.org/conference2004/>.

PEDIATRICIANS SUPPORT A BAN ON SOFT DRINKS IN SCHOOLS

In a new policy statement, "Soft Drinks in Schools," the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that school districts should consider restricting the sale of soft drinks to safeguard against health problems that result from overconsumption. The AAP is an organization of 57,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.

The policy points out that sweetened drinks constitute the primary source of added sugar in the daily diet of children, and that each 12-ounce serving of a carbonated, sweetened soft drink contains the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar. Sugared soft drink consumption has been associated with increased risk of overweight and obesity, currently the most common medical condition of childhood. Additional health problems associated with high intake of sweetened drinks are dental cavities and potential enamel erosion.

According to the policy, between 56 and 85 percent of school-age children consume at least one soft drink daily. As soft drink consumption increases, milk consumption decreases, and milk is the principal source of calcium in the typical American diet. With soft drinks and fruit drinks being sold in vending machines, in school stores and at school sporting events, their availability is ubiquitous. While soft drink sales can be a substantial source of income for school districts, nutritious alternatives such as water, real fruit juices and low-fat milks are available for vending, and can help preserve school revenues.

The policy recommends that pediatricians work to eliminate sweetened soft drinks in schools. This entails educating school authorities, patients and parents about the health ramifications of soft drink consumption.

The statement also recommends that:

- Pediatricians advocate for the creation of a school nutrition advisory council as one means of ensuring that the health and nutritional interests of students form the foundation of nutritional policies in schools.
- School districts should invite public discussion before making any decision to sign a vended food or drink contract. If a school district already has a soft drink contract in place, it should be adapted so that it does not promote overconsumption by students.
- Consumption or advertising of sweetened soft drinks within the classroom should be eliminated.
- As part of the effort to reduce consumption of soft drinks in schools, the policy recommends that vending machines not be placed within the cafeteria space where lunch is sold, and that soft drinks not be sold as part of, or in competition with, the school lunch program.

STUDY SAYS DISABILITY RATES RISE, FINDS LINK TO OBESITY

The obesity epidemic caused disability rates to rise sharply in the last two decades among Americans younger than 60, according to a new study by RAND Corporation researchers.

The study was published in the January edition of the journal *Health Affairs*. The study found that the number of people ages 30-49 who were disabled in their ability to care for themselves or perform other routine tasks increased by more than 50 percent from 1984 to 2000.

For people ages 30-39, the number reporting disabilities rose from 118 per 10,000 people to 182 per 10,000 people from 1984 to 1996. For those ages 40-49, the numbers rose from 212 per 10,000 to 278 per 10,000 during the same period. In addition, researchers found smaller

but still significant increases for those aged 18-29 and those aged 50-59.

In contrast, disability declined by more than ten percent for people ages 60-69, the study found.

The study results surprised researchers, who warn that the increase in the disability rate could have severe consequences for the nation's future health costs. "People who are disabled generally use a lot more medical services so in the long run this trend could add a lot of costs to the nation's health care bill," said Dana Goldman, a study co-author and director of health economics at RAND Health.

Some portion of the rise in disability may be explained by disability insurance incentives and advancing medical technology that saves the lives of people who even a few years ago might have died, according to the study. But the only factor researchers could identify that would explain such a large jump in disability is obesity.

"Obesity is the only trend that is commensurate in size with what we found happening with disability," said Darius Lakdawalla, lead author of the report and a RAND economist. "It's the only suspect. We found that there is something going on with people's health and that the increase is not just a case of people dropping out of the workforce and going on the public dole."

Musculoskeletal problems (such as chronic back pain), which are linked to obesity, are one of the nation's leading causes of disability, along with mental illness. Obesity also is a major factor in the development of diabetes, which accounts for a small number of disability claims.

The number of disability cases attributed to musculoskeletal problems (primarily back problems) and diabetes grew more rapidly than those from other problems during the study period, with the proportion of diabetes-related disability doubling.

Since 1984, disability among the nation's older population has dropped, even though this group was considered most at risk for disabilities, the study found.

Researchers found that disability rates rose for all demographic groups not in the age 60-69 category: for whites and non-whites, for those who worked and those who did not, and for people with all levels of education.

Researchers conducted the study by examining information collected from 1984 to 2000 by the National Health Interview Survey, a nationwide survey that collects a wide array of information from about 36,000 households annually. Beginning in 1984, the survey asked participants a variety of questions about whether they needed help with personal care or other routine needs, the information was analyzed by RAND Health researchers.

***For additional information, go to
www.rand.org.***

USDA ACCEPTING 2004 BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE AWARDS APPLICATIONS FOR CACFP

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service is now accepting nominations for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) 2004 Building for the Future Awards. The purpose of the biannual awards is to identify and recognize State agencies and non-profit CACFP sponsoring organizations for innovative practices or methods that have improved program efficiency, integrity, or outreach, or effectively facilitated implementation of the new integrity regulations published in June of 2002. The Awards will continue to recognize outstanding organizational practices that go beyond basic requirements and have led to highly efficient, effective and accessible nutrition programs. Nominations, which go through state and USDA regional offices, are due at USDA headquarters no later than February 20, 2004.

***For additional information, and to download the application, go to
www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/CACFP/Awards_2004.htm.***

RESOURCE

Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses brings the business planning process alive to help today's alternative and sustainable agriculture entrepreneurs transform farm-grown inspiration into profitable enterprises. Sample worksheets illustrate how real farm families set goals, determined potential markets and evaluated financing options - and help the reader develop a detailed business plan. To order Building a Sustainable Business, send \$14 plus \$3.95 s/h to Sustainable Agriculture Publications, 210 Hills Building, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405-0082. Credit card and discounted volume orders may be placed by calling 802/656-0484. Preview it online at www.sare.org/publications.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) is funded by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), USDA, and works with producers, researchers, and educators to promote farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound, and good for communities.

For more information about grants and resources available through SARE, visit the web site at www.sare.org, call 614/306-6422, or e-mail at outreach@sare.org.

FEDERAL REGISTER

• **Department of Agriculture (USDA), 12/17/03, p. 70193.** This rulemaking proposes to amend Food Stamp Program (FSP) regulations to implement provisions of Section 4120 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002. This section authorizes the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to award bonuses to States that demonstrate high or improved performance in administering the FSP. This rule proposes performance measures for these bonuses for fiscal year (FY) 2005 and beyond. It also proposes the data that will be used to measure the identified performance. The per-

formance bonuses are meant to act as an incentive for State agencies to improve or maintain high performance in administering the FSP. Comments must be received on or before 02/17/04. Mail comments to the Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22302, Attention: Program Design Branch. FAX comments to 703/305-2486, Attention: Program Design Branch. For further information contact: Moira Johnston at 703/305-2515, or via the Internet at Moira.Johnston@fns.usda.gov.

- **USDA, 1/6/2004, p. 619.** USDA informs the public of the annual adjustments to the reimbursement rates for meals served in the Summer Food Service Program for Children (SFSP). These adjustments reflect changes in the Consumer Price Index and are required by the statute governing the SFSP. The effective date is 01/01/04. For further information contact: Robert M. Eadie at 703/305-2620.

The 2004 reimbursement rates, in dollars, for all States excluding Alaska and Hawaii:

Administrative costs		
Operating costs	Rural or self-preparation sites	Other types of sites
<i>Breakfast</i>		
\$1.38	\$.1375	\$.1075
<i>Lunch or Supper</i>		
\$2.41	\$.2525	\$.2100
<i>Supplement</i>		
\$.56	\$.0675	\$.0550

The total amount of payments to State agencies for disbursement to SFSP sponsors will be based upon these SFSP reimbursement rates and the number of meals of each type served. The above reimbursement rates, for both operating and administrative reimbursement rates, represent a 2.2 percent increase during 2003.



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