



# FOOD JOURNAL

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## **USDA ISSUES WAIVERS TO SUPPORT THE USE OF ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN AREAS AFFECTED BY HURRICANE KATRINA**

Special disaster policies for the nutrition programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been issued. These waivers, summarized below, of regular program requirements are designed to allow maximum use of resources to provide nutrition assistance to people who were living in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina.

### **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Waivers:**

- State agencies can designate any appropriate facility as an emergency shelter, waive institution application requirements when necessary, and provide reimbursement for these facilities to serve up to three meals each day to children through age 18. (The CACFP reimbursement for three meals is \$5.91 per day per child in homeless shelters.)
- In those areas, and in areas where evacuees have relocated, states can approve sites to serve snacks during the week, weekends, and holidays and suspend the requirement for enrichment activities.

- In areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina, and in other areas where there are significant numbers of persons displaced by the disaster, income determination is streamlined.
- In these areas, paperwork deadlines for sponsoring organizations are extended.
- Flexibility in meeting meal pattern requirements is allowed.

### **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Waivers:**

- Suspend WIC documentation of residency, income, and identity requirements when necessary.
- Allow evacuees from Hurricane Katrina to use their WIC vouchers to purchase foods in grocery stores in other states.
- Modify WIC food package components to accommodate disaster conditions such as loss of refrigeration or unsafe drinking water by issuing for example, ready-to-feed infant formula, Ultra Heat Treatment milk, or smaller packages of other food items.
- Replace lost unredeemed WIC food vouchers (prorated for the remainder of the month). WIC does not replace WIC food lost in a disaster.

### **National School Lunch Program (NSLP) Waivers:**

- Schools in the disaster area unable to maintain normal accountability systems and which are able to operate will be allowed to serve all meals free to attending children.
- Meal pattern flexibility is allowed.
- Households certified for emergency food stamps are automatically eligible for free school meals.
- In cases where a household from a designated disaster area moves in with another household, the displaced individuals may be considered homeless and consequently automatically eligible for free meals.
- For those areas not immediately affected by the hurricane, but which have individuals displaced by the disaster, if a free and reduced price meal application cannot be obtained from the household, school officials may complete the application on behalf of the child based on the best available knowledge of the household's economic circumstances.

### **Food Stamp Program (FSP) Waivers:**

The Food Stamp Program is implementing a new, one-month policy for certifying evacuees who have left Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi because of Hurricane Katrina. This policy applies in all states, the District of Columbia, and the territories only for September 2005. The policy provides for a one-month maximum food stamp benefit for any evacuee household. Eligibility is based simply on evacuee status. States with unusual needs based on their volume of evacuees may work with USDA for additional relief.

This policy applies to an applying household that meets all four requirements:

1. The household lived in a county or par-

ish in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi on August 29, 2005; and

2. The President declared the applicant's county or parish to be a disaster area; and
3. The household has moved to another state. This policy does not apply to a household that did not move or moved within a state; and
4. The household applies by October 31, 2005.

### **FSP Benefits Amounts:**

- The household will receive the maximum allotment for its household size
- The state will not prorate the allotment.
- One monthly allotment may be issued (for September or October) based on these rules.
- There are no income or resource eligibility tests. There are no other non-financial tests.
- The state will not ask about deductible expenses, because an entitled household will receive the maximum allotment for its household size.
- These cases are not subject to quality control reviews.

***For additional information about USDA's policies for Hurricane Katrina evacuees, go to [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).***

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### NEW CENSUS BUREAU REPORT ON 2004 INCOME AND POVERTY

The Census Bureau recently released its annual report on income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States for 2004. Real median household income remained unchanged between 2003 and 2004 at \$4,438 with the number of Americans living in poverty increasing to 37 million compared to 35.9 million in 2003. The number of people with health insurance increased by two million to 245.3 million between 2003 and 2004, and the number without such coverage rose by 800,000 to 45.8 million.

#### Poverty

- There were 37 million people in poverty (12.7 percent) in 2004, up from 35.9 million (12.5 percent) in 2003.
- There were 7.9 million families in poverty in 2004, up from 7.6 million in 2003. The poverty rate for families remained unchanged at 10.2 percent. The poverty rate and the number in poverty showed no change for the different types of families.
- As defined by the Office of Management and Budget and updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, the average poverty threshold for a family of four in 2004 was an income of \$19,307; for a family of three, \$15,067; for a family of two, \$12,334; and for unrelated individuals, \$9,645.

#### Race and Hispanic Origin (Race data refer to people reporting a single race only.)

- In 2004, the poverty rate declined for Asians (9.8 percent in 2004, down from 11.8 percent in 2003), remained unchanged for Hispanics (21.9 percent) and blacks (24.7 percent) and rose for non-Hispanic whites (8.6 percent in 2004, up from 8.2 percent in 2003).
- The poverty rate of American Indians and Alaska natives did not change when comparing two-year averages for 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. The same was true of native

Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.

#### Age

- For all children under the age of 18, both the 2004 poverty rate (17.8 percent) and the number in poverty (13 million) were unchanged from 2003.
- The poverty rate increased for people aged 18 to 64 years old (from 10.8 percent in 2003 to 11.3 percent in 2004), but declined for those age 65 and older (from 10.2 percent in 2003 to 9.8 percent in 2004).

***To access the report "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004" go to [www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p60-229.pdf](http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p60-229.pdf).***

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Analysis on the Census Bureau report, "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004" are available from the following sources:

#### Center for Public Policy Priorities

"Texas Poverty 101"

[www.cppp.org/files/8/BRP%20poverty101\\_Sep%2005.pdf](http://www.cppp.org/files/8/BRP%20poverty101_Sep%2005.pdf)

#### Children's Defense Fund

"Defining Poverty and Why It Matters for Children"

[www.childrensdefense.org/familyincome/childpoverty/definingpoverty.pdf](http://www.childrensdefense.org/familyincome/childpoverty/definingpoverty.pdf)

#### OMB Watch

"Despite Recovering Economy, Poverty On the Rise for Fourth Straight Year"

[www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/3083/1/382](http://www.ombwatch.org/article/articleview/3083/1/382)

#### Food Research and Action Center

"New Census Bureau Report on 2004 Income and Poverty"

[www.frac.org/news/poverty\\_sum.html](http://www.frac.org/news/poverty_sum.html)

#### Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

"Economic Recovery Failed to Benefit Much of the Population in 2004"

[www.cbpp.org/8-30-05pov.pdf](http://www.cbpp.org/8-30-05pov.pdf)

### **U.S. HOUSING PRICES RISE 20 PERCENT NATIONWIDE, WHILE WAGES FOR COMMUNITY WORKERS REMAIN FLAT**

The median price of a home in the United States rose 20 percent in just a year and a half, while at the same time wages for key community workers remained weak, even stagnant, in comparison, according to a new study released by the Center for Housing Policy, the research affiliate of the National Housing Conference.

The study, *Paycheck to Paycheck: Wages and the Cost of Housing in America*, found that from fourth quarter 2003 to first quarter 2005 the cost of a median priced home increased from \$186,000 to \$225,000, or 20 percent. While at the same time, the annual income needed to qualify to purchase a home grew from \$54,855 to \$71,354. Yet, the wages for key community workers such as elementary school teachers, police officers, licensed practical nurses, retail salespersons and janitors in the majority of cities nationwide remained flat and, in some metropolitan areas, are still significantly below the amount needed to purchase a home.

In addition to providing data for the overall nation, the report compares homeownership and rental affordability findings with median community wages for nearly 200 metropolitan areas and more than 60 occupations. These latest detailed findings for the nation's metropolitan areas are of particular significance since many experts often focus attention on the Northeast and West as the regions experiencing affordable housing concerns. However, based on the new data, cities in Florida and other areas nationwide, reveal a growing disparity between housing costs and the often sluggish wages of key community workers.

For example, in West Palm Beach, FL, the median home price has risen from \$185,000 in 2003 to \$245,000 this year, nearly 32 percent. Meanwhile the amount needed to qualify for a

mortgage has subsequently increased from \$57,600 to \$77,697 annually, but the wages for key community workers there have remained dramatically low over the same time period.

Specifically, although not strictly comparable because of changes in methodology, a licensed practical nurse in West Palm Beach, FL, earned a median salary of \$35,790 in 2003, but not much more in 2005 at just \$36,568. In addition, a retail salesperson there could expect to earn \$20,060 annually in 2003 compared to \$23,611 this year. These increasing disparities between home prices and wages also hold true in other Florida cities such as Orlando, Pensacola, Sarasota, Tallahassee and Tampa, as well as numerous cities nationwide.

On the rental side, when comparing 2003 and 2005 data, the metropolitan area findings reveal that, based on median income, retail salespersons and janitors must pay an excessive portion of their income in order to rent a one- or two-bedroom apartment in the majority of U.S. cities studied.

"Across the nation we are seeing a growing disparity between the skyrocketing home prices of recent years and the minimal increase, if not flattening, in wages for our nation's community workers," said Barbara Lipman, research director for the Center for Housing Policy. "Additionally, the disturbing trend of retail salespersons and janitors, and those in similar wage groups, paying in excess of what is considered affordable in order to rent a one- or two-bedroom apartment continues in metropolitan areas throughout the country."

The study is provided in an online, interactive format that allows users to select and then identify housing affordability for the wide-range of occupations outlined.

***For a copy of the report, go to  
[www.nhc.org/index/News-PR-  
Center05P2P-080905](http://www.nhc.org/index/News-PR-Center05P2P-080905).***

### NEW STUDY FINDS TV ADS MARKET JUNK FOOD TO KIDS

For young Americans, the “food landscape” in television advertising is packed with junk food, according to a new study. The study by researchers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is the first to explore the nutritional composition of foods advertised to children using Nutrition Facts labeling. Nutrient-poor, high-sugar foods such as candy, sweets and soft drinks dominate (nearly 44 percent) the foods advertised during the most watched TV programs by children ages six to 11, the analysis found. Convenience/fast foods made up 34.2 percent of the advertisements during the programs.

There are not yet any recommended daily values (RDVs) for sugar, but these two groups of foods “exceed the RDVs of fat, saturated fat and sodium, and fail to provide the RDVs of fiber and certain vitamins and minerals,” said Kristen Harrison, the lead author of the study. A 2,000-calorie-a-day diet of foods in the child-audience ads “would exceed the RDV for sodium and provide nearly a cup of sugar,” said Harrison, a professor of speech communication at the University of Illinois and an expert on media effects on children and adolescents.

“How many kids actually eat a diet like that, I can’t say,” she said. “But it’s important to note that this is the nutritional composition of the diet being marketed to kids and their families, and research shows that the more they are exposed to such advertising, the more likely they are to buy the advertised foods. So, heavy TV viewers probably follow a diet more similar to the TV-advertised diet than do lighter viewers.” Given the food industry’s heavy marketing of convenience/fast foods and other refined, high-calorie products, Harrison said, “It is becoming increasingly difficult for parents to maintain the moderation necessary to preserve their children’s health.”

Findings of the study appear in the September

issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* in an article titled, “Nutritional Content of Foods Advertised During the Television Programs Children Watch Most.” Harrison’s co-author was Amy Marske, a graduate student at the time of the study and now a high school teacher in Chicago.

#### Other Findings Include:

- Snack-time eating in TV advertising is depicted more often than breakfast, lunch and dinner combined. More than half of all eating is depicted in locations “rarely associated with mealtime eating” such as in cars or outdoors.
- Junk-food ads dominated, with far fewer ads for breads and cereals. The ads offered “little representation” of fruits and vegetables, dairy foods, meats, poultry and fish.
- Child actors’ body size was unrelated to their eating behavior, “suggesting, erroneously, that eating and body weight are not related,” Harrison said.
- Most ads featured no health-related messages. Of the few that did, the most common message was that advertised foods contained “some natural ingredients.”

Harrison and Marske also evaluated the nutritional content of food advertised to adults during the most popular TV shows. They found that those ads were dominated (57.1 percent) by convenience/fast foods, fat and sodium. “An individual eating a 2,000-calorie diet composed of the general-audience foods would consume considerably more than the RDVs of fat, saturated fat and sodium, while ingesting only a fraction of the RDVs of fiber, vitamin C, calcium and iron.”

Harrison said kids’ consumption of TV ads that tout poor food choices is especially troubling because childhood obesity is on the rise, TV advertising influences children’s food purchases and purchase requests, and kids see so many TV food ads a day. Harrison and Marske tallied an average of 10.65 food advertisements per

hour in their sample. Other research has found that preteens watch on average nearly three hours of television a day, meaning that “the typical child aged six-11 years would be exposed to approximately 11,000 food advertisements each year.”

The researchers taped 40 hours of TV programming that aired in north-central Illinois between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. for five weeks. Programs were rated most popular nationwide among viewers aged six-11 years according to Nielsen Media Research. The sample consisted of the ten most-viewed hours from each of four sources:

- cable programs such as SpongeBob SquarePants;
- Saturday network programs such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles;
- syndicated programs such as Everybody Loves Raymond; and
- network primetime programs such as American Idol.

The sample yielded 1,424 advertisements, 426 (or 29.9 percent) of them for food products. The researchers then coded each ad as being aimed at a child or an adult audience; foods by type; verbal or visual health-related messages; and characteristics of all human characters.

The second part of the analysis focused on the nutritional breakdown of the advertised foods using data obtained from Nutrition Facts labels. Heavily advertised foods included Burger King Kids Meal chicken tenders, Jell-O Pudding Bites (chocolate and vanilla), McDonald’s Happy Meal french fries, Post Fruity Pebbles cereal and Wendy’s Kid’s Meal crispy chicken nuggets.

Despite the heavy marketing of such foods, Harrison and her co-author say, “Parental involvement is the most important factor in the determination of the family diet. Parents can work to maintain the integrity of the family pantry not only through selective shopping, but also through efforts to instruct their children about

food and nutrition.”

Also, because research demonstrates a connection between TV viewing and obesity for children and adults alike, parents could curb eating in their household by limiting their children’s (and their own) television viewing. Other adults should join parents in the “food fight” to combat childhood obesity, Harrison said. The food industry and advertisers, for example, “bear some responsibility for peddling nutritionally inadequate foods so aggressively to kids. Also, the continued investment of the medical and public health communities will be needed if parents are to be successful in helping their children resist the influence of commercial food advertising.”

***For further information about this article, access the on-line press release at [www.news.uiuc.edu/news/05/0824junkfood.html](http://www.news.uiuc.edu/news/05/0824junkfood.html).***

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### **KEEPING “BROWN-BAG” LUNCHES SAFE**

School children have returned to the classroom and for many kids that means brown-bag lunches. Last year, the American Dietetic Association (ADA) and ConAgra Foods Foundation conducted a study revealing the home food safety pitfalls that can occur after the brown-bag leaves your kitchen.

A majority of kids (83 percent) surveyed for the study reported bringing their lunch to school at least once or twice a week, while more than half (55 percent) “brown-bag it” up to five times a week. The ADA warns that each of these lunches could put a child at risk of foodborne illness if it’s not packed or handled correctly. For instance, while many lunches contain popular perishables such as meat or cheese sandwiches (72 percent), pre-packaged lunch kits (47 percent), string cheese (41 percent) and yogurt (40 percent), most kids’ lunches are not packed properly to prevent these foods from spoiling before

noon. In turn, almost a quarter of kids admit to having felt sick after eating their lunch.

“The information that kids provide can be especially insightful because they haven’t yet learned to be cautious,” says Jackie Newgent, registered dietitian and national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety® It’s in Your Hands® program. “Although parents may have the best intentions when it comes to packing their child’s lunch, our survey results show most parents are unaware of the home food safety hazards that can happen once the lunch is out of their hands and in their child’s.”

Nearly every child (99 percent) reported that at least three to four hours pass from the time their lunch is packed at home until they eat it at school, while in some cases (12 percent), as many as five to six hours can pass until the lunch bell rings. Yet, perishable foods should not remain unrefrigerated for longer than two hours, the point at which harmful bacteria begin to multiply rapidly. In hot weather (90°F or above), this window is reduced to one hour. More than nine out of ten kids reported keeping their lunches on a classroom shelf or in their locker, backpack, or desk until it’s time to eat. In addition, 40 percent of all lunches did not include an ice pack to help keep perishable foods properly chilled.

“Since most kids don’t have access to a refrigerator at school, including a frozen ice pack is an easy way to help prevent perishable foods from spoiling,” advises Newgent. “Another alternative is to use a frozen juice box, water bottle or single-serve plastic milk container because it works just as well and does double duty as a cold lunchtime drink.” Newgent also recommends using a well-insulated lunch bag or lunch box instead of a paper or plastic bag to help protect perishables.

When including a frozen ice pack or beverage isn’t possible, guarantee kids’ lunchtime safety by choosing foods that stay safe when left unrefrigerated. Consider substituting the following shelf-stable foods in school lunches and for

after school snacks:

- Breads & Grains: single-serving boxes of cereal, trail mix, energy bars, granola bars, cereal bars, bagels and popcorn;
- Fruits and Vegetables: carrot and celery sticks and other cut-up raw vegetables, grapes, single-serve applesauce, whole fruit (apples, peaches, bananas, oranges), dried fruit mix and juice boxes. *(Note: In addition to washing vegetables and ready-to-eat fruits like apples and peaches, it’s also important to wash peel-and-eat fruits including bananas and oranges to eliminate harmful bacteria that can spread during peeling or cutting.)*;
- Dairy/Dairy Alternatives: fortified soy/rice milk and pudding cups; or
- Meat and Other Protein Sources: cans/pouches of tuna or tuna salad, peanut butter (for sandwiches or with celery and apples), nuts and single-serve packages of peanut butter and crackers.

The ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety® It’s in Your Hands® program educates consumers that home food safety is a serious issue and provides solutions so Americans can easily and safely handle food in their own kitchens. This program complements government-sponsored food safety initiatives that speak to the leading critical food-handling violations by emphasizing the following four key messages:

- 1) Wash hands often;
- 2) Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate;
- 3) Cook to proper temperatures; and
- 4) Refrigerate promptly below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

***For more information, visit [www.homefoodsafety.org](http://www.homefoodsafety.org) or call the ADA’s Consumer Nutrition Information Line at (800) 366-1655, where recorded messages (in both English and Spanish) are available 24 hours a day.***



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