



FOOD JOURNAL

Volume XIX Number 11 - November 18, 2005

NUMBER OF FOOD INSECURE AMERICANS INCREASES IN 2004

Since 1995, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), using data from surveys conducted annually by the Census Bureau, has released estimates of the number of households that are food insecure – broken into “food insecure with hunger” and “food insecure without hunger.” Food insecure households are those not able, for financial reasons, to access a sufficient diet at all times in the past 12 months. Households labeled hungry are those where one or more household members experienced hunger due to lack of financial resources at some time in the past 12 months.

The report for 2004, released in October, reveals that eighty-eight percent of American households were food secure throughout the entire year in 2004, meaning that they had access, at all times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. The remaining households were food insecure at least some time during that year. The prevalence of food insecurity rose from 11.2 percent of households in 2003 to 11.9 percent in 2004 and the prevalence of food insecurity with hunger rose from 3.5 percent to 3.9 percent.

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) notes that the new USDA report shows the fifth consecutive annual increase – and by far the worst increase since 2000 – in the number of

food insecure Americans. The total number of people living in food insecure households in this country went up to 38.2 million in 2004. This number included 24.3 million adults (11.3 percent of all adults) and 13.9 million children (19 percent of all children).

FRAC notes that this number grew by nearly two million in 2004 and has grown by seven million in five years. It compares to 36.3 million in 2003, 34.9 million in 2002, 33.6 million in 2001, 33.2 million in 2000, and 31 million in 1999. Of the 11.9 percent of food insecure households (13.5 million households), 10.7 million of these individuals lived in households that experienced outright hunger. Black (23.7 percent) and Hispanic (21.7 percent) households experienced food insecurity at approximately double the national average.

The USDA report also included food insecurity and hunger rates for every state, based on three-year averages. (The analysis uses three-year averages because the survey sample size for each state is too small to give accurate numbers for each individual year). The ten states with the highest food insecurity rates, in order, were Texas, New Mexico, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Utah, South Carolina, Arkansas, Idaho, North Carolina, and Arizona, all with rates at or above 12.7 percent of households.

According to the report, more than 16 percent of Texas households were food insecure between 2002 and 2004. In nearly five percent of Texas

households, at least one family member went hungry at least one time during that period because they could not afford enough food.

FRAC notes that the federal nutrition programs are keeping the food insecurity numbers from getting even worse. But the very high levels of hunger and food insecurity in this country also point to the still inadequate reach of key supports like food stamps (which reach only 56 percent of eligible people), child nutrition programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, unemployment, and health insurance, as well as the problem of stagnant wages and shrinking workplace benefits.

“Food insecurity and hunger have gone up for virtually every region of the country and every type of household,” said Lynn Parker, FRAC’s Director of Child Nutrition. “This increase in hunger and food insecurity will mean more children who have trouble at school, more illness among children and adults, and less ability to purchase a balanced and nutritious diet.”

The USDA study shows food secure households typically spent 31 percent more for food than food insecure households of the same size and household composition.

***To view the report, go to
www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err11/.***

NUMBER OF AMERICANS WITH DIABETES INCREASING

Diabetes now affects nearly 21 million Americans, and more than 6 million of those people do not know they have diabetes, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Another 41 million people are estimated to have pre-diabetes, a condition that increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes – the most common form of the disease – as well as heart disease and stroke.

“Diabetes is a leading cause of adult blindness, lower-limb amputation, kidney disease and

nerve damage. Two-thirds of people with diabetes die from a heart attack or stroke,” said Dr. Frank Vinicor, director of CDC’s diabetes program.

Highlights of the fact sheet:

- Diabetes continues to be the sixth leading cause of death in the United States.
- In 2005, 1.5 million people aged 20+ years will be newly diagnosed with diabetes.
- Compared to non-Hispanic whites, diabetes continues to be more common (1.7 to 2.2 times more common) among American Indians and Alaska Natives, non-Hispanic blacks, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- The risk of diabetes increases with age. About 21 percent of Americans aged 60+ years have diabetes, compared to approximately 2 percent for people 20 to 39 years old and about 10 percent for those aged 40-59 years.
- The United States spends approximately \$132 billion each year on diabetes – \$92 billion in direct medical costs and \$40 billion in indirect costs because of missed work days or other losses in productivity.

The 2005 National Diabetes Fact Sheet, a report summarizing the latest estimates of Americans with both diagnosed and undiagnosed diabetes, is being issued to coincide with National Diabetes Month in November. The fact sheet is a collaborative effort involving CDC and the National Diabetes Education Program and other organizations in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The American Diabetes Association, the American Association of Diabetes Educators, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International, and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are also partners in the National Diabetes Fact Sheet.

***The 2005 National Diabetes Fact Sheet is
available at www.cdc.gov/diabetes.***

HURRICANE KATRINA'S IMPACT ON PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY

Hurricane Katrina has forged a strong consensus among America's major racial and ethnic groups to eliminate poverty in America, according to a new multilingual poll. The storm and its aftermath also shook public confidence in the U.S. government's capacity to handle catastrophes, including a terrorist attack.

The poll, conducted in six languages by Sergio Bendixen for New California Media, surveyed 1,035 Hispanics, Asians, African Americans and non-Hispanic whites on Katrina's impact.

The poll found clear majorities of Asians, Hispanics, African Americans and whites believe fighting poverty is now more important than fighting terrorism or establishing democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan. All four groups agreed that Katrina has eroded trust in the U.S. government's capacity to handle natural disasters, let alone protect Americans from a terrorist attack. Significant percentages of immigrants from Asia and Latin America believe their country of birth could have done a better job in responding to a similar disaster.

The one issue on which America's major ethnic and racial groups disagreed was the role of racism in the Katrina catastrophe. Most African Americans blamed racial discrimination, but a majority of whites said it was not a factor. Hispanics and Asians were evenly divided.

"All Americans witnessed Katrina and we wanted to know what they thought across the racial and ethnic spectrum," says Sandy Close, executive director of New California Media. "What we found was a remarkable unanimity on issues of poverty, government incompetence and climate change."

To view the poll results, go to media.ncmonline.com/images/polls/lessons_katrina.pdf.

MAJORITY OF WORKERS LACK DECENT WAGES, BENEFITS

Only 25.2 percent of American workers have a job that pays at least \$16 per hour and provides health insurance and a pension, according to a new study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). The report, *How Good is the Economy at Creating Good Jobs?*, found that between 1979 and 2004, the share of American workers in good jobs remained unchanged at about 25 percent, despite strong economic growth over that period. (The report defines a "good job" as one that offers at least \$16 per hour, employer-paid health insurance and a pension.) In the last quarter century, the U.S. workforce has become older, more experienced and better educated, but 75 percent of workers have jobs that do not provide health insurance, a pension and solid middle-class wages.

"The U.S. economy has failed to convert long-term economic growth into better jobs," said John Schmitt, CEPR economist and author of the report. Since 1979, inflation-adjusted Gross Domestic Product per person increased 60 percent, but the percentage of workers in good jobs remained unchanged at about 25 percent. If the workforce had not experienced dramatic improvements, the share of good jobs would have fallen 25 to 30 percent, despite large increases in the capital stock per worker and significant technological progress over the period.

The study also found that 26.6 percent of the workforce is in a job that pays poorly and offers neither health insurance nor a pension. This is close to the share of Americans in bad jobs in 1979 (27.9 percent).

This report, based on analysis of data from the March Current Population Survey, is the first in a series to explore recent trends in job quality in the U.S. economy.

For the entire report, go to www.cepr.net/publications/labor_markets_2005_10.pdf.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD STAMP HOUSEHOLDS IN FISCAL YEAR 2004

A recent report released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) examines the characteristics of households receiving food stamps in federal fiscal year (FY) 2004 (October 1, 2003 to September 30, 2004). On average, about 23.9 million people living in 10.3 million households received food stamps in the United States each month in FY 2004.

The total cost of the program over FY 2004 was \$27.2 billion, \$24.7 billion of which was for food stamp benefits. The number of food stamp program participants increased by almost 40 percent between 2000 and 2004. Compared with FY 2003, the number of participants increased by 12 percent and benefit costs increased by 15 percent.

The report reveals that 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.

The average food stamp household received a monthly food stamp benefit of \$196 and had a gross monthly income of \$643. The average household size was 2.3 people. Additional demographic and economic circumstances of food stamp households include:

- **Most food stamp recipients are children or elderly.** Over half (50 percent) are children and another eight percent are age 60 or older. Working-age women represent 28 percent of the caseload, while working-age men represent 13 percent. By comparison, in Texas, 65.6 percent are children and another 18.3 percent are elderly.
- **Many food stamp recipients work.** Over one fourth (29 percent) of food stamp

households have earnings, up from 19 percent in 1990. For these households, earnings are the primary source of income.

- **The majority of food stamp households do not receive cash welfare benefits.** Less than one in six (16 percent) received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits, down from 42 percent in 1990. Twenty-seven percent received Supplemental Security Income. Almost one quarter (23 percent) received Social Security benefits.
- **Food stamp households have little income.** Just over 12 percent are above the poverty line, while 40 percent have incomes at or below half the poverty line. Thirteen percent had no cash income of any kind. Nearly one-fourth of monthly funds (cash income plus food stamps) available to a typical household came from food stamps.
- **Food stamp households possess few resources.** The average food stamp household possesses only about \$143 in countable resources (including the nonexcluded portion of vehicles and the entire value of checking and savings accounts and other savings).
- **Most food stamp households are small.** Households with children averaged 3.3 members. Households with elderly members tended to be smaller, with an average size of 1.3 people.

View the full report at www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/FSP/FILES/Participation/2004Characteristics.pdf.

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USDA GRANTS \$4.8 MILLION FOR COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Mike Johanns announced the award of \$4.8 million from the competitive grants program to 27 organizations in 19 states to provide nutritious foods to low-income people.

Created in 1996, the Community Food Project (CFP) program is designed to meet the food needs of low-income people while increasing the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food, farm and nutrition issues and needs. The grants are administered through USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Services.

These grants are intended to help eligible private, nonprofit entities that need a one-time infusion of federal assistance to establish and carry out multipurpose CFPs. Projects are funded for one to three years, and amounts range from \$10,000 to \$300,000 and require a dollar-for-dollar match in resources. Funds have been authorized through 2007 at \$5 million per year.

Descriptions of all grantees can be found online at: www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/releases/fs/cfp_fs.doc

PARTNERSHIP TO FIGHT CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a joint initiative of the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association, announced that it has entered into a partnership with Nickelodeon's award-winning "Let's Just Play" pro-social campaign to combat the spread of childhood obesity. The three organizations are combining forces on a comprehensive media and public awareness campaign, encouraging young people to engage in healthy and active lifestyles.

Nickelodeon will utilize its multimedia platforms and the "Let's Just Play" campaign to reach mil-

lions of young people across the country and to spread the message of the Healthiest Generation movement. The network will also produce a series of public service announcements featuring former President Clinton and Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, as well as young people and other individuals.

"Our vision of a healthier generation relies on more than just a public awareness campaign," said American Heart Association President Robert Eckel. "It relies on a movement that inspires kids – all kids, not just overweight ones – to make this issue their own and to find their own solutions. We need to empower kids to make healthy choices because it will make them run faster, jump higher and think smarter. Not because a bunch of adults told them it's good for them. Nickelodeon's involvement will bring us closer to realizing our vision."

***For more information, visit:
www.healthiergeneration.org***

TEENS FARING BETTER IN TEXAS; CHILDREN WORSE OFF OVERALL

After many years of worsening conditions, teens are faring better in Texas, according to *The State of Texas Children 2005*, a report by the Center for Public Policy Priorities examining the status of children across all of Texas' 254 counties. "Teens are doing better in Texas in many areas," said Frances Deviney, Texas KIDS COUNT director. "However, when looking at children overall, many conditions have actually gotten worse."

Some Conditions Improving for Teens:

The most encouraging trend in the report is that, statewide, teens are doing better across a variety of indicators:

- Texas' dropout rate declined by 46% from 2000 to 2004, a 68% drop since 1996.
- Texas' teen birth rate is down by 10% from 2000 to 2003.

- The rate of teen violent death has declined by 9% from 2000 to 2003.

Overall Conditions Worsening:

Despite some gains for teens, few conditions for Texas' children overall have improved. In many cases, they have become worse.

- After drops in the late 1990s, the percentage of kids living in poverty is on the rise. Just over one in five Texas children (over 1.3 million) lives in poverty (2002).
- Since 1998, Texas has had the highest rate of uninsured children in the nation. Currently, 21% of Texas' children have no health insurance (average from 2002-2004).
- Nearly 2,500 Texas infants died before their first birthday in 2003, a 17% increase since 2000.

For specific county-level data, visit www.cppp.org/factbook05/.

WIC ELECTRONIC CARDS

After a year of testing and evaluation in the El Paso area, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is expanding the use of an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) smart card for purchases made by clients of the state's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. The card replaces a paper voucher system to purchase WIC-eligible foods.

Use of the WIC EBT smart card was expanded to the Grayson County area. The Collin County area will follow in February 2006 as part of a phased statewide implementation of the system.

"The card is loaded for each client at a WIC clinic," said Hank Lundberg with the DSHS WIC EBT Development project. "Computer systems of WIC-authorized grocers read the cards at a checkout terminal and match the information to items as they are scanned." Store computers identify WIC-

approved items based on scanned product codes. Each card contains food benefit information covering three months, calculated on a month-by-month basis. As items are purchased, the card is automatically updated with the remaining balance.

As the new WIC EBT smart card is implemented throughout Texas, grocery store managers and cashiers will receive training and technical assistance in redeeming food benefits.

For more information, see page 2 of www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd/gi/wicnews/Oct_Nov2005.pdf.

FEDERAL REGISTER

- **Department Of Agriculture (USDA), 11/2/2005, p. 66247.** USDA issues an interim rule addressing and implementing amendments made by Section 201 of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. The rule amends the School Breakfast Program (SBP) regulations to eliminate the requirement that a school's costs exceed the rate of reimbursement as a criterion for receiving the higher severe need funding available in the SBP. This rule also allows State agencies to provide severe need reimbursements to certain new schools that are beginning participation in the school feeding programs and therefore have no historical second preceding year participation information, as previously required. This rule is intended to simplify eligibility for severe need reimbursements by removing previous restrictions on receipt of those payments and does not impose new administrative requirements on State or local governmental entities. The effective date is 12/02/05. Comments on this rule must be postmarked by 05/01/06, and addressed to Robert Eadie, Chief, Policy and Program Development Branch, Child Nutrition Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Rm. 640, Alexandria, VA 22302-1594. E-mail comments to CNDPROPOSAL@FNS.USDA.GOV. The subject line must contain the phrase "School

Breakfast Program Regulations: Severe Need Assistance". E-mail submissions must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. on 05/01/06.

FEDERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of USDA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced a joint public meeting to discuss and solicit public comment on a consistent regulatory approach concerning the jurisdiction over certain food products that contain meat and poultry. The meeting will be held 12/15/05 in Rosemont, IL.

By law, FSIS has authority over meat and poultry products. FDA has authority over all foods not under FSIS' jurisdiction. FSIS and FDA formed a working group to examine jurisdictional issues for food categories that contain meat and poultry ingredients. The group concluded that past decisions involving certain product categories are no longer consistent, largely due to marketplace changes, e.g., FSIS regulates corn dogs, while FDA regulates bagel dogs. The working group has recommended an approach that will utilize defined conditions and factors when making jurisdictional decisions for existing and future food products containing meat and poultry. Food products that primarily contain meat and poultry ingredients, such as bagel dogs, meat and poultry-based sandwiches, and natural casings, are recommended to be regulated by FSIS. Those food products that contain meat and/or poultry as ingredients for the purpose of accentuating flavor only and do not contribute to the identity of the food product, such as pizza, are recommended to be under FDA's jurisdiction.

The meeting invites public input on the approach recommended by the working group, and to help determine what, if any, administrative, operational, marketing, or labeling costs may be associated with the contemplated regulatory changes. To attend, register online at www.cfsan.fda.gov/~comm/register.html. Public comments on the

notice containing the working group's recommendations may be submitted to Docket No. 05-013N, by any of the following methods: Federal eRulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov, Agency Web site: www.fsis.usda.gov/regulations/2005/Notices/Index/index.asp, or via e-mail: RegulationsComments@fsis.usda.gov.

TEXAS ANNOUNCEMENT

- **Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)** intends to post a Request for Proposal (RFP) on 12/01/05 for the development, deployment, and production operations of a biometric fingerprint imaging system in support of the HHSC Food Stamp and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs to detect and deter fraud at eligibility. The current Lone Star Imaging System (LSIS) prevents duplicate client participation by comparing the electronic fingerprint images on file in the LSIS database and detecting finger image matches. Services include supplying finger imaging workstations and biometric hardware, software, and application support, as well as database hardware, software, and storage, system training, help desk services, and all other services needed to successfully operate the LSIS. The contract with the current vendor expires 04/30/06. HHSC will post all official communications regarding this procurement, including the RFP, on the Electronic State Business Daily (ESBD) (<http://esbd.tbpc.state.tx.us>) and on HHSC's website (www.hhsc.state.tx.us). HHSC reserves the right to amend the RFP release date at any time. Vendors should check the ESBD and HHSC websites for notice of matters regarding this Intent to Post an RFP.

CALENDAR NOTICE

- **Feb. 26-28, 2006:** Mark your calendar. The Food Research and Action Center will hold its National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference in Washington, DC. See www.frac.org/Conference/2006/index.html for more information.



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The TACAA Food Journal is published monthly by the Texas Association of Community Action Agencies, Inc. (TACAA). Funding for the newsletter is provided under a contract with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) under the Community Food and Nutrition Program. Opinions expressed are those of TACAA staff and do not necessarily represent views of TDHCA, TACAA, or its members. TACAA provides the Food Journal at no cost to readers throughout the state, and encourages readers to submit articles and comments for review and publication.