



FOOD JOURNAL

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NEW PUBLICATION LOOKS AT STATE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM PARTICIPATION RATES FOR 2003

Are the people who need food stamp benefits getting them? While just over half — 56 percent — of eligible people in the United States received food stamp benefits in 2003, a new policy brief from Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., finds that participation rates varied widely from state to state — 22 states had rates that were significantly higher than the national rate and 16 had rates that were significantly lower. “Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2003,” by Laura A. Castner and Allen L. Schirm, was prepared for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

Some states were in the top or bottom of the distribution of rates in both 2002 and 2003. In those two years, Oregon, Tennessee, Missouri, the District of Columbia, Maine, Louisiana, West Virginia, Hawaii, and Kentucky had significantly higher participation rates than two-thirds of the states, and Maryland, Texas, Florida, Colorado, Utah, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Wyoming, Nevada, and Massachusetts had significantly lower rates than two-thirds of the states.

The Food Stamp Program is the largest of the domestic food and nutrition assistance programs administered by USDA’s FNS. It is a central component of American policy to alleviate hunger

and poverty. Its participation rate — the percentage of eligible people who actually participate in the program — has been a widely used standard for assessing how well the program meets its goals.

During fiscal year 2005, the program served over 25 million people in an average month at a total annual cost of over \$28 billion in benefits, excluding disaster assistance provided as a result of hurricanes in September 2005.

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USDA ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION IN FOOD STAMP OUTREACH GRANTS

USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) plans to award at least \$1 million to community and faith-based organizations or public agencies, other than state and local food stamp agencies, to conduct outreach to potential food stamp participants to improve awareness of the Food Stamp Program. Grantees will implement community-based outreach strategies that educate people about the nutrition benefits of food stamps and how to apply. The solicitation includes checklists, templates, tools and lists of resources to assist potential applicants complete their proposals.

***The solicitation can be found online
at www.grants.gov or on the
FNS website at www.fns.usda.gov.***

HARDSHIP INDICATORS

A variety of measures suggest that tens of millions of American families will confront significant hardships this holiday season, with many unable to meet their basic food, health, and shelter needs. Government data show that:

- Poverty has now risen for four straight years; 37 million people were poor in 2004 (3,625,000 or 16.6% in Texas).
- Since 1999, food insecurity and hunger have trended upward. More than one in six households with children experienced hunger or risk of hunger in 2004 (16.4% of Texans were food insecure and 4.9% with hunger).
- The number of people lacking health insurance reached an all-time recorded high in 2004 (5,478,000 or 24.8% in Texas).

During the last two years, the number of jobs has increased modestly but wages have fallen, with the downward trend in wages being especially marked for low-wage workers. Similarly, other data show that high-income households are gaining the most from the recovery, and that the already wide gaps between rich and poor are becoming still greater.

Over 11 million low-income households pay more than half of their income for housing, up by 23 percent in a four-year period. Further, home heating prices are projected to increase significantly this winter. High housing and heating costs make it difficult for millions of low-income families and senior citizens to heat their homes, pay their rent, and still afford other necessities. (In Texas, there were nearly 138,000 homeless children enrolled in public schools during the 2003-2004 school year — a figure certain to increase in 2005-2006 due to the hurricanes of 2005.)

For the full report on hardship indicators by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, go to www.cbpp.org/11-21-05pov.htm.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NUTRITION AND ORAL HEALTH

In a recent article entitled *Dental Caries and Obesity in Children: Different Problems, Related Causes*, Carole A. Palmer, EdD, RD, professor of general dentistry at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, shares insights about possible relationships between obesity and dental decay in children.

“When children watch a lot of TV, they tend to snack more frequently, particularly on foods that are high in fat and/or sugar,” Palmer, also a professor at Tufts’ Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, explains. “This not only increases their overall caloric intake, which we know can lead to obesity, but it also increases their risk of developing tooth decay because the amount of time food is in contact with the teeth increases.”

Childhood obesity and dental decay result from complex interactions among several factors rooted in evolving changes in lifestyle and environment, including changes in physical activity and school food services. “A number of schools have reduced their physical activity programs,” Palmer observes. “And parents are hesitant to allow their children to play outdoors because of concerns about safety. As a result, children are spending more time engaged in sedentary indoor activities, especially television viewing.”

Soft drinks and fruit juices, consumed in many households and readily accessible in many

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school vending machines, represent another high sugar source that may contribute to the potential for tooth decay. Palmer cautions that even diet soft drinks, when consumed frequently, can pose a risk because the acid content of these beverages can damage tooth enamel, making teeth more vulnerable to decay.

"The dental team should be in the forefront in promoting good nutrition for general health and oral health by informing caregivers and parents about the importance of integrating healthful snack and meal patterns into their oral hygiene practices," Palmer concludes.

For more information, visit nutrition.tufts.edu/news/notes/2005-11.html.

CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES INCREASING

Overall fruit and vegetable consumption is on the rise for the first time in nearly 15 years, with a combined increase of one percent in annual servings per capita (number of times the average person consumes a fruit or vegetable item annually; does not measure quantity consumed) between 2002 and 2004, according to a report issued by Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH). The report details results from two comprehensive research studies conducted by ACNielsen and NPD Foodworld® Research. Both studies found upward trends in combined fruit and vegetable consumption, although limited in its increase. According to a study of nearly 2,600 households, the number of Americans claiming to eat five or more daily servings was 18 percent in 2004, up 50 percent from 2003.

Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables is also important because it helps to provide a broad range of nutrients and phytochemicals responsible for their health promoting benefits.

For a copy of the State of the Plate 2005, call (302) 235-2329, ext. 326.

ADVOCACY GROUP URGES STRONGER RESTRICTIONS TO REDUCE TRANS FAT

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) warns that many of the biggest restaurant chains still fry French fries, chicken nuggets, and other fast foods in trans-fat-laden, partially hydrogenated oils.

Trans-fat labeling on packaged foods becomes mandatory on January 1, 2006. That looming deadline has been an incentive for supermarkets and food manufacturers to switch to healthier oils, but in a survey they conducted, CSPI found that the lack of any nutrition labeling or disclosure requirements for restaurant chains has caused them to lag behind. CSPI's survey included 38 major food manufacturers, 100 restaurant chains, and 25 supermarket chains.

While several major restaurant chains, including Yum! Brands, corporate parent of KFC, Taco Bell, and Pizza Hut, told CSPI they are testing healthier oils, only a few chains have already taken action.

Processed food manufacturers have made much more progress than restaurant chains. According to CSPI's survey, seven of the 10 top-selling cracker brands have been reformulated to contain zero grams of trans fat per serving.

Although small amounts of trans fat occur in meat and dairy foods, 80 percent of trans fat in the diet comes from partially hydrogenated oils. Trans fat is the most harmful of fats in the food supply, since it both raises LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, and lowers HDL, or "good" cholesterol. Dr. Walter C. Willett, professor of nutrition and epidemiology at the Harvard School of Public Health, and his colleagues estimate that trans fat in food causes at least 30,000 premature deaths in the U.S. each year.

For more information, contact CSPI at (202) 332-9110 or www.cspinet.org.

NEW SURVEY SHOWS GREATER NEED FOR HELP

A new survey of Catholic Charities agencies shows that the nation's most vulnerable populations — the working poor, homeless and seniors — increasingly need financial assistance to pay for basic commodities such as food, housing and utilities. The survey, conducted by Catholic Charities USA in early November 2005, drew information from more than 70 agencies from across the United States. Key findings include:

- 81 percent of agencies report an increase in need from the working poor;
- 64 percent of agencies cited an increase in the number of families seeking help;
- 52 percent of agencies are seeing more seniors in need; and
- 49 percent are seeing more homeless seeking help.

Areas of service with significant increases in 2005 in the number of requests for help include:

- 82 percent of agencies have experienced an increase in financial assistance requests;
- 69 percent of agencies found an increase in requests for aid in making rent or mortgage payments;
- 59 percent of agencies reported an increase in the need for food;
- 48 percent cited an increase in the need for temporary housing; and
- 39 percent reported an increase in the need for prescription assistance.

Overall, nearly three out of four agencies (74 percent) believe it will be more difficult to meet the needs of the people they serve this holiday season because the need for service is greater than in the past.

According to the survey, the greatest needs of Catholic Charities' clients this holiday season

continue to be financial assistance, food, and housing. In addition, more than nine out of 10 (93 percent) of local Catholic Charities agencies said their greatest need during the 2005 holiday season will be for financial contributions to help them address the growing demand for services.

One particular concern as winter approaches for Catholic Charities agencies is the rising cost of utility bills. More than two out every three agencies (68 percent) have already seen an increase in requests for assistance to pay utility bills because of higher natural gas or heating oil bills. Another 23 percent of the remaining agencies said it was too early to tell in November how bad the problem would be, but others are already planning special fundraising drives in an effort to be able to respond going into the winter months.

The increased need comes at a time when many agencies are experiencing a decrease in funding from key sources of support. The survey found:

- 31 percent of agencies reported a decrease of government funding, which is expected to have the biggest impact on the agencies' ability to provide resources;
- 38 percent of agencies reported a decline in United Way support;
- foundation and corporate support remained generally flat, with about 20 percent of agencies reporting increases, roughly half reporting no change and 20 percent showing declines; and
- donations from individuals have been mixed, with 37 percent of the agencies reporting increases from individuals and another 31 percent reporting a decline.

To date, Catholic Charities USA has raised more than \$116 million to help respond to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and 87 percent of the local Catholic Charities agencies surveyed are currently providing assistance to the victims of these hurricanes. The survey also shows some

concerns that the response to the victims of those two recent catastrophes may detract from donations to support the ongoing needs resulting from everyday disasters such as hunger, homelessness and financial issues facing so many Americans throughout the country. One-fifth of the agencies reported donor fatigue as one of the key reasons that overall giving may be down.

**For additional information, contact
Bill Sullivan at (703) 945-1852 or
bsullivan@catholiccharitiesusa.org.**

ADA URGES BALANCE IN FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS

The American Dietetic Association (ADA) believes children would better be able to learn healthy behaviors and make healthy choices if they received more balanced messaging related to food and nutrition. ADA has recommended to the Federal Trade Commission that food advertising aimed at pre- and school-age children include a science-based nutrition education message about the food product.

Food messages for children often are not filtered through parents and thus have a direct impact on children's food and beverage requests. While research is needed to determine whether more stringent regulation of TV food advertising to children would result in more healthful food choices and eating behavior, some things are clear:

- Younger children are developmentally unable to understand the intent of advertisements.
- The increasing rates of excess weight and obesity among youth threaten to jeopardize our nation's future health and productivity.
- Parents and schools play a vital role in nutrition education and modeling healthy behaviors.

Visit ADA at www.eatright.org.

RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS

- *Feeding Young Minds: Hands-on Farm to School Education Programs*, is a publication of the Community Food Security Coalition. Focusing on educational activities that complement local purchasing for school meals, this booklet highlights farm to school experiential education programs from around the country. A resource section is also included. The publication can be ordered at www.foodsecurity.org for \$10 + shipping.
- USDA launched the Spanish-language version of MyPyramid.gov, an online guide designed to help Americans live healthier lives. *MiPirámide: Pasos Hacia Una Mejor Salud*, translated, "MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You," will make it easier for Spanish-speaking Americans to find nutrition information vital to good health. MiPirámide can be found at www.MyPyramid.gov.
- The National Center for Children in Poverty of the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at The University of Texas, and the Center for Public Policy Priorities have released The Family Resource Simulator, an interactive, web-based tool that calculates family resources and expenses as earnings increase, taking public benefits into account. To view this new resource, go to <http://nccp.org/modeler/modeler.cgi>.
- The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) has published *An Advocate's Guide to the School Nutrition Programs*, the first complete reference manual for advocates, school administrators, educators, lawyers and paralegals, state and local officials, parent groups, and community organizations. The guide features advocacy tips and suggestions, and explains the policies, laws, and best practices governing the federal school nutrition programs. Published in a 3-ring binder format so it can be updated, the guide can be ordered

for \$35 through FRAC at www.frac.org/pdf/advguide_school.pdf.

TEXAS REGISTER

- **Department of State Health Services (DSHS)**, 12/09/05, p. 8276. The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), on behalf of DSHS, proposes amendments to §§31.11, 31.12, 31.21 - 31.23, 31.25 - 31.37 and the repeal of §31.24, concerning the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. The earliest possible date of adoption is 01/08/06. For more information, call: (512) 458-7236.
- **HHSC**, 12/09/05, p. 8319. HHSC announces its intent to submit an amendment to the Texas State Child Health Plan under Title XXI of the Social Security Act. The purpose of this amendment is to expand the age of eligibility for the Children's Health Insurance Program to include the period from conception to birth. The proposed amendment is effective 09/01/06. To obtain copies of the proposed amendment, call Kyna Belcher at (512) 491-1884 or email at kyna.belcher@hhsc.state.tx.us.
- **HHSC**, 12/09/05, p. 8319. HHSC seeks public comments on its methodology for determining the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) caseload reduction from federal fiscal year (FFY) 1995 to FFY 2005. This methodology will be submitted to the Administration for Children and Families for use in calculating the caseload reduction credit used in determining compliance with TANF work participation rates for FFY 2006. The methodology will be posted on the HHSC web site, www.hhsc.state.tx.us/research, by 12/09/05. To obtain copies, contact Ross McDonald at (512) 424-6843. Public comment ends 12/23/05; submit to HHSC, Center for Strategic Decision Support, Ross McDonald, MC 1950, P.O. Box 13247, Austin, TX 78711-3247 or email ross.mcdonald@hhsc.state.tx.us.

FEDERAL REGISTER

- **Department of Agriculture (USDA)**, 11/21/05, p. 70031. This interim rule implements legislative provisions to prohibit direct or indirect restrictions on the sale or marketing of fluid milk on school premises or at school-sponsored events in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program. This rule is effective 12/21/05. Submit comments, referencing "Marketing and Sale of Fluid Milk in Schools," by 05/22/06: email to cndproposal@fns.usda.gov; fax to: (703) 305-2879, attn. Robert Eadie; mail to Robert Eadie, Chief, Policy & Program Development Branch, Child Nutrition Division, FNS, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 640, Alexandria, Virginia 22302-1594; or Federal eRulemaking Portal www.regulations.gov. For more information, call Christopher Davenport at (703) 305-2590.
- **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**, 11/22/05, p. 70488. HHS, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announces the availability of a guidance entitled *Questions and Answers Regarding Establishment and Maintenance of Records (Edition 2)*, responding to various questions raised about section 306 of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 and FDA's implementing regulation, which requires the establishment and maintenance of records by persons who manufacture, process, pack, transport, distribute, receive, hold, or import food in the U.S. Compliance must take place by 12/09/05, 06/09/06, or 12/11/06, depending on the size of the business. Submit comments, identified by Docket No. 2005D-0356, by: Federal eRulemaking Portal, www.fda.gov/dockets/ecomments; fax, (301) 827-6870; mail, Division of Dockets Management (HFA-305), FDA, 5630 Fishers Ln., Rm. 1061, Rockville, MD 20852. For further information, contact Denise Beavers at (301) 436-1721.
- **USDA**, 11/29/05, p. 71707. USDA issues an interim rule amending regulations governing

the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to strengthen vendor cost containment. These requirements are in the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, enacted 06/30/04. The rule reflects statutory provisions requiring State agencies to implement a vendor peer group system, competitive price criteria, and allowable reimbursement levels in a manner ensuring that the WIC Program pays authorized vendors competitive prices. It also requires State agencies to ensure vendors that derive more than 50 percent of their annual food sales revenue from WIC do not result in higher food costs to the program than other vendors. This rule is effective 12/29/05. State agencies must implement the provisions no later than 12/30/05. Comments must be received by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) by 11/29/06. Mail to Patricia Daniels, Director, Supplemental Food Programs Division, FNS, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Rm. 528, Alexandria, VA 22302; internet through www.fns.usda.gov/wic; email to WICHQ-SFPD@fns.usda.gov (include Docket ID No. 0584-AD71, Vendor Cost Containment Interim Rule, in the subject line); or Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. For further information, contact Debra Whitford at (703) 305-2746.

- **USDA**, 11/30/05, p. 71800. In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, FNS publishes for public comment notice of a proposed information collection to extend a collection currently approved for the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Commodity Schools Program, and the Special Milk Program. Comments must be received by 01/30/06. Send comments and requests for copies of this information collection to Alan Rich, Program Reports, Analysis, and Monitoring Branch, Budget Division, FNS, USDA, 3101 Park Center Dr., Alexandria, VA 22302. For more information, call Alan Rich at (703) 305-2109.
- **USDA**, 12/05/05, p. 72349. The provisions of the interim rule entitled School Food Safety Inspections, published 06/15/05, could not become effective until approval of the associated information collection requirements by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB cleared those requirements on 08/26/05. The amendments to 210.15, 210.20 and 220.13 are effective 08/26/05. For further information, contact Rosemary O'Connell or Marisol Benesch at (703) 305-2590.
- **USDA**, 12/05/05, p. 72349. The provisions of the final rule entitled, Child and Adult Care Food Program: Increasing the Duration of Tiering Determinations for Day Care Homes, published 02/22/05, could not become effective until approval of the associated information collection requirements by OMB. OMB cleared those requirements on 08/18/05. The amendments to 226.6(f)(1)(iii) and 226.15(f) are effective 08/18/05. For further information, contact Keith Churchill at (703) 305-2590.
- **USDA**, 12/05/05, p. 72350. This action provides final rulemaking for a proposed rule published 05/06/03. It revises Food Stamp Program (FSP) regulations pertaining to standards for approval of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) systems, participation of retail food stores and wholesale food concerns, and State agency liabilities and Federal sanctions. These changes to FSP's regulations implement sections 4108, 4110, 4113 and 4117 of the Food Stamp Reauthorization Act of 2002, and will allow USDA to use delivery methods other than certified mail for adverse action notification; permit USDA to approve alternate methods of issuing food stamp benefits during disasters; eliminate the requirement that Federal costs for EBT systems cannot exceed costs of paper systems they replace; and allow group homes/institutions to redeem EBT benefits directly through banks rather than authorized wholesalers or retailers. This rule is effective 01/04/06. For more information, call Mandy Briggs at (703) 305-2523.



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