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The Number of People in Need of Food Continues to Grow

In response to the increasing need for food assistance in our communities, Hunger Solutions Minnesota (HSM) has launched the **Minnesota Food Helpline**, a statewide toll-free number that provides information and resources to Minnesotans at risk of hunger and those that serve them.

One way to help meet the demand for food in our communities is by assisting people struggling with hunger and poverty in the eligibility and application process for public program benefits including Food Support (formerly Food Stamps).

Food Support Benefits Can Help Feed Families

Food Support provides low income families at risk for hunger with more choices, less stigma, self sufficiency and more consumer power.

- The state of Minnesota estimates that only 68% of those that are eligible for Food Support are participating in the program.
- Approximately 80% of eligible seniors are not enrolled due to a variety of barriers and misconceptions about eligibility.
- According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, \$5 in new Food Support benefits generates \$9.20 in total community spending.

A main component of the Minnesota Food Helpline is to reach the Minnesotans who may not realize they are eligible, are reluctant to participate, or experience difficulties during the Food Support application process. The Minnesota Food Helpline helps enroll low-income Minnesotans in the Food Support program by answering their questions.

The Minnesota Food Helpline 1-888-711-1151

8:30-4:30 p.m. – Monday through Friday

Multilingual Phone Assistance Available Statewide

Food Support Eligibility Screening and Application Assistance

Assistance Locating Local Emergency & Supplemental Food Programs

The First Month of Operation

In the first month of operation (June 2009), the Minnesota Food Helpline has had the following results:

- 54% of callers asked questions about Food Support eligibility requirements. 44% asked for general information about the Food Support program.
- 66% of total calls were screened for Food Support eligibility using CDF's Bridge to Benefits website.
- Of those callers who were screened, 77% were found to be likely eligible for the food support program.
- 22% of the calls have been from seniors (60 or older).
- 46% of callers have children.
- 85% of callers received referrals to other food programs such as their local food shelf or community dining site, WIC, MAC/NAPS, Fare for All, etc.
- Our calls have come from 39 different Minnesota counties so far. By far the largest proportion has been Hennepin County (36%). Ramsey County was second, with 11%.

Free Promotional Materials are Available

Minnesota Food Helpline promotional materials include posters, postcards and business cards in both English and Spanish. Please contact Katie Clarkson, kclarkson@hungersolutions.org at 651-486-9860 or toll-free at 800-782-6372 ext. 847 to request materials and for more information.

