

OHIO ASSOCIATION OF



**Second
HARVEST
FOOD BANKS**

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NEW USDA STATISTICS CONFIRM ESCALATING HUNGER CRISIS IN OHIO

Columbus, Ohio, Nov. 16, 2009 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service (USDA) reported today that **13.3%** of Ohio’s residents are “food insecure,” meaning that they lack consistent access to adequate amounts of nutritious food. In total, 49 million Americans, including nearly 17 million children, are food insecure. The 2009 report on Household Food Insecurity in the United States paints an alarming picture of the pervasiveness of hunger in our nation.

Demand at Ohio 12 foodbanks and 3,000 member charities are up approximately 21 percent over this time last year, according to Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks.

The new data reinforces recent findings from a [research study](#) conducted by Feeding America, the nation’s leading hunger-relief organization of which Ohio foodbanks are members, reflecting a dramatic increase in requests for emergency food assistance. Conducted in September, the Feeding America study shows uniformly that its network of food banks witnessed an average increased need of nearly 30 percent this year.

“These are alarming numbers. It is tragic that so many people in Ohio don’t have regular access to food,” said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt. “It is important to note that the USDA numbers reflect the state of food insecurity and very low food security in Ohio in 2008. Since then, the economy has significantly weakened, and there are likely many more people struggling with hunger than this report states.

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"We continue to work on the front lines feeding more than 1,910,000 people each quarter through the state food pantries and emergency feeding centers – more than 3,000 agencies in total," said Lisa Hamler-Fugitt. "These organizations, many of which are grassroots and faith-based centers operated solely by volunteers, serve as an oasis for people who seek help to feed themselves and their families. Emergency food assistance is a critical link in Ohio as we attempt to help people through times of crisis."

"National socio-economic indicators, including the escalating unemployment rate and the number of working-poor, lead us to believe that the number of people facing hunger will continue to rise significantly over the coming year," added Vicki Escarra, president and CEO of Feeding America. "Research on previous economic recessions indicates that people who fall into the grips of poverty in a time of recession often times never recover. Many of those people are likely to be in need of our services now or in the future."

Escarra observes, "Feeding America and its network food banks will continue to work closely with our partners at USDA to ensure that the public and charitable sectors are keeping pace – as best we can – with the dramatically increasing needs for food assistance."

The cold hard facts are simple - Poverty and hunger are increasing at alarming rates in Ohio:

- In 2008, 13.4% of Ohioans lived in poverty (US Census),
- Of America's top 10 poorest cities, three are in Ohio, Cleveland ranked 2nd with a poverty rate of 30.5%, Cincinnati ranked 7th with 25.1% and Toledo ranked 8th with 24.7% of its residents living at or below the poverty level. *No other state had more than one city in the top 10.* (US Census),
- 1 in 4 Ohioans over the age of 18 earn \$10 or less an hour (Community Research Partners),
- 1 in 8 Ohioans are receiving Food Stamps (ODJFS),
- 1 in 6 Ohioans are on the Medicaid/SCHIP (ODJFS),
- 1 in 4 Ohio children under age 5 are hungry or at significant risk of hunger, ranking Ohio 3rd in the nation, behind LA and NC (USDA),
- 1 out of every 2 children born in our state are eligible for WIC the Women, Infants and Children's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (USDA/ODH),
- 40% of Ohio's students are eligible for free and/or reduced price school meals (ODE).

About the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF)

OASHF is Ohio's largest charitable response to hunger, representing 12 foodbanks and 3,000 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters. OASHF and its network of providers distributed more than 113.7 million pounds of food and grocery items. OASHF also served as the lead agencies for the Ohio Benefit Bank, a web-enabled software program which breaks down barriers and helps simplify the application process for work support programs and tax credits. To learn more about visit OASHF at www.oashf.org.

About Feeding America

Feeding America provides low-income individuals and families with the fuel to survive and even thrive. As the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity, our network members supply food to more than 25 million Americans each year, including 9 million children and 3 million seniors. Serving the entire United States, more than 200 member food banks support 63,000 agencies that address hunger in all of its forms. For more information on how you can fight hunger in your community and across the country, visit <http://www.feedingamerica.org>. Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/Feeding America](http://www.facebook.com/FeedingAmerica) or follow our news on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/Feedingamerica>.

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