

New Jersey

Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee:



Report to The Legislature

www.endhungernj.org 2007



Jon S. Corzine, Governor, State of New Jersey
Jennifer Velez, Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Human Services

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“ We were an ordinary middle class family, and then it all changed. In just a year and a half, I had lost my marriage, my mother, and the home we had owned for seventeen years. My six children and I were placed in a motel for five months. When the end of the month came, there were no food stamps left and no food. A local social service provider sent me to a church that had a food pantry. We were fortunate they gave us a whole shopping cart full of food! By the end of the year, I was granted subsidized housing and we got a four bedroom house. I was working then but we were still struggling. Without the pantry, we would have been hungry. Slowly, things got better. I knew what I had struggled through and wanted to show my appreciation. Today, I sustain a food pantry in my church, from paper work to stocking the shelves. I love to help people.”

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the activities of the Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee (HPAC), during fiscal year 2007. The HPAC has been meeting since late 2002, carrying out efforts to assist food insecure New Jerseyans.

Food insecurity is defined as a limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or “limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways”.¹

The HPAC would like to thank Governor Jon S. Corzine and the Legislature for appropriating \$4 million, through the Department of Agriculture, for hunger-relief efforts during Fiscal Year (FY) ‘07. The appropriation included \$3 million for the acquisition of food and \$1 million for infrastructure needs at the local level.

While the Department of Agriculture is analyzing the data from the infrastructure funding requests, it is known that the need for infrastructure funding exceeded the \$1 million that was available. This analysis should provide detailed information on the need for additional infrastructure funding for the acquisition of freezers, refrigerators, stoves, etc., for the emergency food providers (EFPs).

For FY ‘08, the state budget includes \$4 million for the acquisition of food; and, no funding for infrastructure needs or food distribution. While this appropriation is a vital resource in our battle against hunger in the Garden State, additional funds are needed. According to the Statewide Emergency Food Assistance Network (SEFAN), \$10 million is needed annually to address hunger in New Jersey.

The HPAC is recommending an increase in the state funding allocation in FY ‘09 for the acquisition of food, new funding to help cover food distribution costs and restoration of funds to help address EFP infrastructure needs at the local level.

Hunger continues to be an issue in New Jersey. It is estimated nationally that 12.6 percent of the population is defined as poor. Given New Jersey’s population of 8.4 million people, this translates into over one million people in the state being poor and at risk of food-insecurity, which some view as a very conservative estimate. Throughout this report, you will find stories about the people who are reliant upon New Jersey’s emergency food provider system.



¹ American Institute of Nutrition, Life Sciences Research Office (LSRO), of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (Anderson/AIN/LSRO, 1990).

According to the Association for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) in 2002, 19 percent of families with children in New Jersey were determined to be working poor or poor according to federal classifications of low income. In the same year, 34 percent of New Jersey families could not afford to pay for food, housing, child care, and transportation according to the Real Cost of Living 2005: The Self-Sufficiency Standard for New Jersey, which takes these costs into account. ²

According to New Jersey Kids Count 2007, overall child poverty remained relatively stable from 2004 to 2005, but it is still higher than it was in 2001.³ The number of children living in extreme poverty increased 41 percent from 2001 to 2005, increasing the divide between the wealthiest and poorest families. Simultaneously, housing problems deepened with a 25 percent increase in the number of children living in low-income families that were paying too much for rent between 2001 and 2005. Likewise, the number of children living in families with no full-time, year-round employment increased 14 percent. These factors give rise to the escalating number of poor and working poor families in New Jersey, who as a result become food insecure and reliant on the EFP system.

To help these individuals access Food Stamp benefits and/or emergency food providers (food pantries and soup kitchens), the HPAC and the Department of Human Services jointly developed and recently launched a hunger website for people to have access to hunger-related resources. This website, www.endhungernj.org, combined with the Food Stamp Outreach campaign, the Food Stamp Screening Tool, and the on-line Food Stamp Application are collectively working to increase the Food Stamp participation rate, as the Federal Food Stamp program is the first line of defense in fighting hunger.

The HPAC again would like to thank both the Governor and the Legislature for their continued support of hunger-relief efforts. The HPAC also extends thanks to the Department of Agriculture and the Association for Children of New Jersey for providing hunger-related information.

“ One of the regular customers at a local soup kitchen is a woman who works full time, at a low-wage job. She comes into the soup kitchen most evenings so she can stretch her limited budget and have more food at home to feed her growing teenage sons. (The boys are too embarrassed to come with her so she tries to provide for them at home). She has one son serving in Iraq and he e-mails regularly expressing concern for his mother and siblings' well-being. He wants to get home safely so he can attend college and eventually earn enough to help his family.”

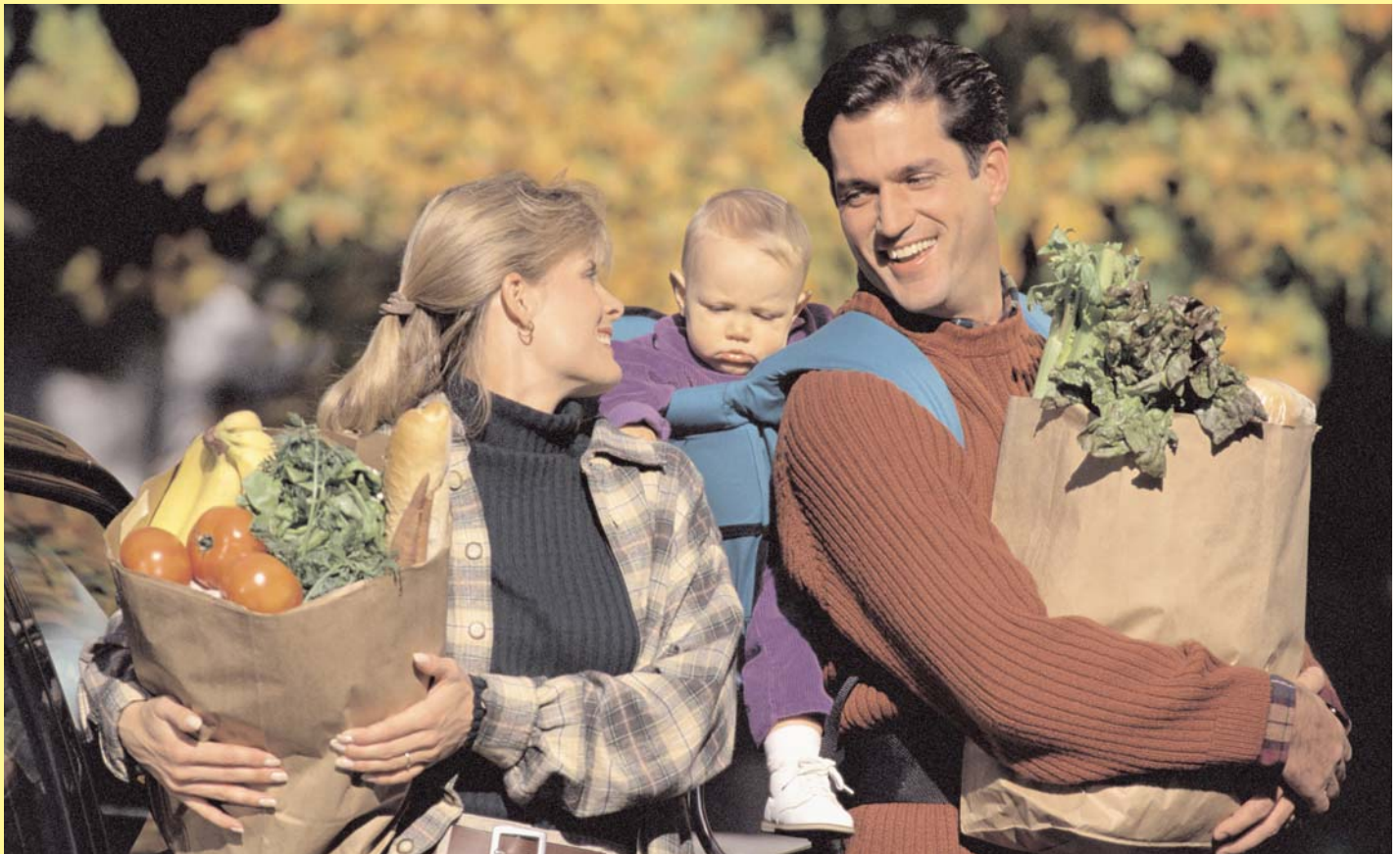
² Pearce, D. 2005, The Real Cost of Living in 2005: the Self-Sufficiency Standard for New Jersey. Prepared for the Legal Services of New Jersey Poverty Research Institute, Edison, New Jersey, pg. 19.

³ Association for Children of New Jersey 2007, New Jersey Kids Count 2007: The State of Children in our State, pg. 3.

Accomplishments

During FY '07, the HPAC worked in collaboration with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop and launch a hunger-related website known as www.endhungernj.org, which has two additional URLs including .com and .net. DHS Commissioner Velez publicly launched the website on April 30, 2007. The website allows users to:

- Locate emergency food providers (EFPs). This component of the site will find EFPs based upon agency name or address, and/or it will search for an agency based on town, zip code, or county. Once an agency or listing is identified, it will provide agency specific information and will state whether it is a food pantry, soup kitchen, or both.
- Access the Food Stamp Screening Tool. This tool allows users to anonymously enter their personal data to determine if they and/or their family are eligible for Food Stamp benefits;
- Access the NJHelps.org website. This link allows users to complete the Food Stamp application on-line, thereby improving customer service as they can apply 24/7, and not have to worry about babysitters, transportation issues or lines in the welfare office. Since the system went live in September 2004, 51,017 people have applied for food stamps on-line.
- Access links to agencies/services for families in need.
- Access links to food safety information.
- Access links to nutrition education materials.
- Access links to nutritional references.
- Access links to food resources.



- Describes how to donate food, money and/or volunteer time to help people in need of emergency food.
- Provides answers to frequently asked questions.
- Provides information on the history of the Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee, its areas of focus, membership, legislation, and its annual reports to the legislature; and
- Locates public transportation information to help clients access the emergency food providers (This section is still under development).

As of June 15th, 2007, the following efforts have been made to publicize the website:

- Information is located on both the Department of Human Services and the Department of Agriculture's websites;
- Presentation at the County Welfare Directors (CWA) meeting;
- Presentation at the Income Maintenance Administrative Supervisors (IMAS) meeting;
- Presentation at the State Human Services Council meeting;
- Presentation at the DHS State Board meeting; and
- Presentation at the National Hunger Awareness Day event, held at the Community FoodBank.

In addition, the www.endhungerj.org promotional materials, which include flyers (English/Spanish), magnets, and rolodex cards have been distributed to:

- Six regional food banks where the promotional materials are being forwarded to the food pantries and soup kitchens, and ultimately to the clients;
- Food Stamp offices within the CWAs, where the information will be shared with clients; and
- CWA staff attending TANF Reauthorization training forums.

Plans are underway to continue promotional efforts with the:

- Association of Children of New Jersey;
- Faith-based Community;
- Anti-Hunger Coalition;
- Federation of Food Banks;
- Department of Health and Senior Services, including WIC;
- Anti-Poverty Network;
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension;
- Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services for inclusion in their quarterly mailing;
- Community Action Agencies;
- Human Services Advisory Council;
- Comprehensive Emergency Assistance System (CEAS) Committee;
- County School Superintendents re: promotion in high need areas
- Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program

In addition, the HPAC noted several additional accomplishments, including:

- ❑ The Department of Agriculture was able to distribute \$3 million through the EFP system for the acquisition of nutritious food and \$1 million to help address infrastructure needs at the local level. Results are still pending regarding the outcome of this initiative.
- ❑ Promoting National Hunger Awareness Day. The HPAC worked in conjunction with the Community FoodBank in Hillside to promote National Hunger Awareness Day, on June 5, 2007. This press event showcased the multiple services the foodbank offers and provided a hands-on demonstration of the new endhungernj.org website to the 175 emergency food providers in attendance.
- ❑ Providing hunger related literature. The HPAC worked in conjunction with the Division of Family Development to create three types of literature to promote the endhungernj.org website, as referenced above. The materials included a flyer in English and Spanish, a rolodex card for professional staff, and a magnet. All materials included the endhungernj.org grocery bag logo.
- ❑ Promoting efforts to recruit and retain volunteers. The HPAC worked in conjunction with the Volunteers of America Delaware Valley Chapter to promote three regional forums to assist emergency food providers in recruiting and retaining volunteers within their respective agencies.

“ “ *A single mother with a toddler is receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, Family Care and child care services. She also received a used car through the workforce program and attends school to be a Medical Assistant. They were homeless but now receive Temporary Rental Assistance and live in a small apartment. She may soon start receiving child support payments. While this family receives numerous social services, Food Stamp benefits generally last about 2.5 weeks so they still do not have enough food. She utilizes the local food pantry to help make it through the month.* ” ”

How many food insecure people do we serve?

Food Stamps

The Division of Family Development (DFD) oversees the Food Stamp program in New Jersey and has noted an increase in the Food Stamp monthly participation from 2001 through 2006. During that five year time frame, the number of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) households on Food Stamps increased by approximately 4,220 households, while non-TANF households receiving Food Stamps grew by approximately 56,816 monthly.

For individuals receiving Food Stamps, the number of adults and children combined increased by approximately 112,880 people, from 2001 through 2006, as indicated below:



	Households			Individuals		
	TANF	Other Low Income	Total	Adults	Children	Total
2001 average	33,302	100,581	133,883	142,675	147,427	290,102
2006 average	37,522	157,397	194,920	199,518	203,464	402,982

This data is consistent with the anecdotal information received earlier from the EFPs that the number of individuals and families in need of emergency food assistance continues to grow annually.

While the Food Stamp program served more individuals and families in 2006 than in 2001, Food Stamp benefits alone were not sufficient as the benefits last two weeks, on average. For individuals and families needing additional hunger relief, they utilized the emergency food provider system.

“ “ *A disabled family receives food through their local food pantry. Both parents used to work and care for their family of six children, including three children with disabilities who were adopted. The mother, father and three adopted disabled children receive a total of \$2,800 per month in both Social Security Disability (SSD) and Social Security Income (SSI) benefits. All combined, the annual income is \$48,120 for eight people, six of whom are disabled. They are not eligible for food stamps as the household income is too high. In addition to church and community support, hot meals are delivered to the family.* ” ”

Emergency Food

The six regional food banks continue to report increased numbers of people seeking emergency food. Below is a chart listing the number of people served via the EFP network and the poundage of food the six regional food banks distributed in 2001 and 2006. As you will see, over the five year time span the numbers of people needing emergency food has increased, as has the poundage of food distributed to those in need.

Agency	Number of people served in 2001	Number of people served in 2006	Pounds of food distributed in 2001	Pounds of food distributed in 2006
Community Food Bank, Hillside	506,000	537,000	17.9 million	21.2 million
Community Food Bank of NJ- Southern Branch, Egg Harbor	6,231	8,168	2.5 million	3.7 million
Mercer Street Friends, Trenton	13,000	18,000	1.1 million	1.6 million
NORWESCAP Foodbank, Phillipsburg	883,000 *	954,400*	1.3 million	1.6 million
Foodbank of Monmouth & Ocean Counties, Neptune	Not available	70,000	2.55 million	3.3 million
Foodbank of South Jersey, Pennsauken	Not available	455,339	Not available	3.4 million

*Data was collected by volunteers and may be subject to error.

Since some of the information above was not available, a detailed comparison of the data was not possible. However, the data does illustrate the growing trends in both the rising number of people requesting emergency food as well as an increase in the poundage of food being distributed through the EFPs. Given the growing working poor population, it is anticipated that this trend will continue.

According to the Foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties:

- 33% of those served are children;
- 11% are seniors, 65 and older;
- 25% of adults are single parents;
- 33% of adults served are widowed, divorced, or separated;
- 44% of households served are working poor
- The median annual household income of EFP recipients is \$10,800.

The Food Bank of South Jersey conducted a hunger study in 2006 in collaboration with Second Harvest, in which they interviewed 85 percent of their charitable feeding programs. The results were as follows:

- ❑ 69.8% of the pantries reported serving more clients in 2006 than 2001;
- ❑ 91.6% of the soup kitchens served more clients in 2006 than 2001; and
- ❑ 9.8% of the shelters indicated that they served more clients in 2006 than in 2001.

“ A middle aged woman has been disabled since she was a teenager, when a beating by her boyfriend left her mentally incapacitated. She is very thin and walks with a limp. She lives on \$525 in SSI and luckily receives Section 8 housing assistance. She was not eating for days at a time, to help make the food she had last longer. Her close friend now helps her to the local food pantry on the last Wednesday of each month, so she no longer has to skip meals.”



Next Steps/Legislative Support

Food Distribution Funding

While the need for infrastructure funding continues, there is an even greater need to address the funding of food distribution costs. A year or more ago, anti-hunger advocates requested funding in the FY '07 state budget for both the acquisition of food and funds to address food distribution costs. While \$3 million in funding was provided for the food acquisition, the \$1 million targeted infrastructure needs rather than food distribution costs, which was and remains a higher priority.

Under The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), food banks are reimbursed eight cents per pound to distribute food. The Community FoodBank in Hillside, the largest food bank in the state, conducted an audit during 2003. The results of that 2003 audit, noted the actual cost to distribute food was twenty-one cents per pound. Noting that shortfall, the Department of Agriculture requested Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding under the New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Act to offset food distribution costs. During 2004, the Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee approved the allocation of \$250,000 for two years of funding, from January 1, 2004 through December 31, 2005 to help cover these costs. During December 2005, the HPAC approved a second allocation of \$250,000 for the period of January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2007. These two funding streams - TEFAP and TANF - when combined, help the food banks cover approximately 26 percent of their food distribution costs. The remaining 74 percent is covered through fund raising activities.

Since the 2003 audit, food distribution costs have increased due to the rising cost of fuel and labor. Effective December 31, 2007, the supplemental TANF funding will be exhausted, leaving the food banks with a larger shortfall.

Examples of Impact

When the food banks purchase food it covers the production and/or manufacturing costs of that food item, but it does not include food distribution costs. If a food bank purchases 20,000 pounds of



dried beans (a protein rich item) they are paying exclusively for the beans. However, additional costs are incurred to cover the driver/trucking expenses, and labor to cover the fork lift operators and warehouse staff to unload the food off the truck, store it in the warehouse, and then distribute it to the food pantries and soup kitchens in their geographic area. As mentioned above, the food banks are currently receiving eight cents per pound to cover distribution expenses through TEFAP, plus supplemental funds through TANF. Together the funding covers approximately 26 percent of the food distribution costs. Since these direct costs are not covered under administrative funding, the food banks are left with an unfair burden.

The food banks are doing everything they can to keep costs down to maximize available funding for the acquisition of food. As referenced above regarding the dried beans, the food banks could have purchased the beans in two pound family size packages. Instead, they purchased the beans in 100 pound sacks and used volunteers to repack the beans into family-sized portions, saving \$8,000 which was then used to purchase additional food. As you can see through this example, the food banks are stretching their resources to the best of their ability, but they simply can not stretch drivers, fork lift operators and warehouse costs. They need access to funding to more realistically offset their distribution costs.

The HPAC is requesting ongoing support with the following:

- ❑ Increasing the FY '09 state budget allocation for:
 1. The acquisition of nutritious foods for distribution through the emergency food provider system.
 2. EFP food distribution costs, either through new funding or as an allowable expenditure under the funding for the acquisition of food.
 3. Infrastructure costs within the EFP system, including the purchase of refrigerators, freezers, and stoves.
- ❑ Finalize the remaining appointments to the Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee.

“ “ *A grandmother has custody of five grandchildren ages 1-14, since both parents are addicted to drugs. The grandmother is trying to provide a stable and loving home for the children on a fixed income, which includes \$590/month in Social Security and \$625/month on SSI. Her rent is \$463/month for a small cramped apartment but she can't afford a larger one. The local food pantry helps her with diapers, food, and personal care items on a monthly basis.* ” ”

HPAC Goals for Fiscal Year 2008

The Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee will be working on several initiatives during FY '08, which include:

1. Continuing to promote the www.endhunger.nj.org website as referenced in the accomplishments section of this report. As part of this effort, we are also promoting the Federal Food Stamp program, which is our first defense against hunger. As a result of the Food Stamp Outreach initiative, there has been an increase in the number of people applying for Food Stamps on-line. As the website is promoted, we are encouraging our providers to help screen clients for Food Stamp eligibility, assist eligible clients in applying for food stamps on line, and then informing the clients that they must respond to the County Welfare Agency's request for a face-to-face or phone interview to complete the Food Stamp application process.
2. Working collaboratively with the Department of Human Services, Treasury's Office of Information Technology, New Jersey Transit, and the Department of Transportation to complete the Geographic Information System (GIS), which will provide transit-dependent citizens with information to get them to the emergency food providers in New Jersey. This GIS system would provide point to point directions via walking, public transit (bus, rail, and light rail), Para-Transit (county run services such as shuttle buses) or Access Link transportation services. Access Link provides services for people with disabilities.
3. Improving the capacity of farm market retailers to use the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) technology to use Food Stamps. The HPAC, Division of Family Development EBT unit, Department of Agriculture staff, and the farmers are working collaboratively to determine strategies for this to be implemented. We recognize funds would be needed to purchase the point-of-sale terminals, but understand funds for such initiatives may become available under the Farm Bill which is pending reauthorization in Congress. Having EBT services at the farmers markets would provide Food Stamp clients with greater access to fresh fruits and vegetables, foods that were determined to be lacking in their diets.
4. Developing strategies to encourage low-income children to participate in the free and reduced price school meals and summer feeding programs. According to New Jersey Kids Count 2007, there has been a 4 percent decline in eligible children receiving free or reduced priced school lunches. There has been declining participation in this important nutritional program since 2003.⁴ With regard to the free or reduced price school breakfast program, while enrollment increased by 48 percent, the overall participation rates remains very low at 34 percent.

The HPAC will report back on our progress on these initiatives in our 2008 annual report to the legislature.

⁴ Association for Children of New Jersey 2007, New Jersey Kids Count 2007: The State of Children in our State, pg. 17.



Background on the Legislation

The New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Act (P.L. 2001, c.62) was signed into law on April 19, 2001. The legislation appropriated \$5 million in one-time federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. The program was established within the Department of Human Services with the statutory purpose to:

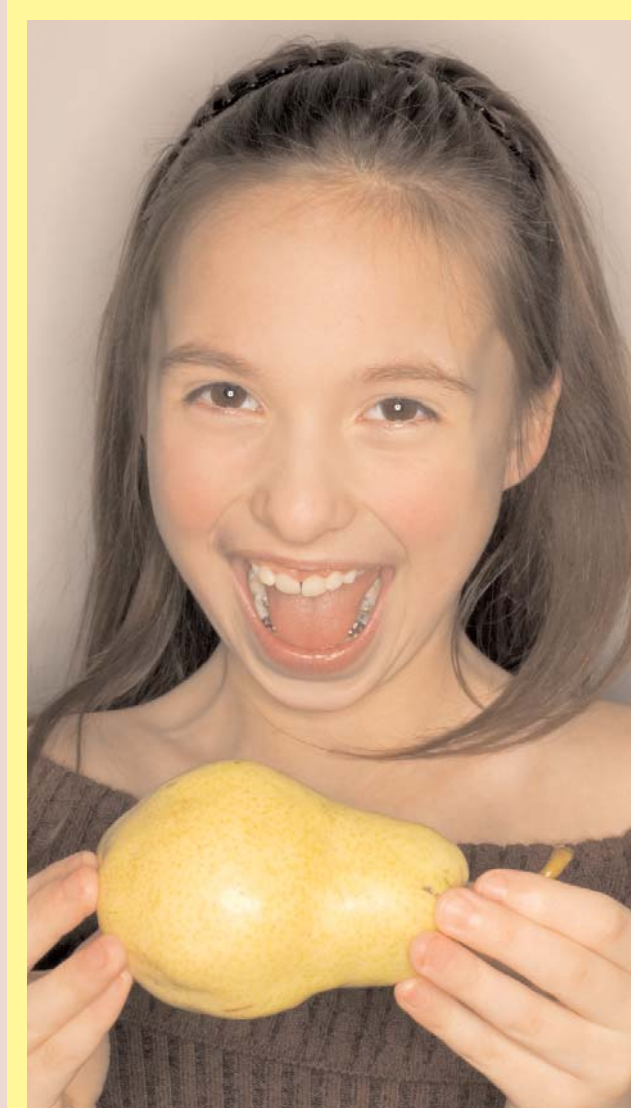
- ❑ Improve the health and nutritional status of New Jersey residents in need of food assistance;
- ❑ Supplement the efforts of emergency food programs in the state to reduce hunger; and
- ❑ Enable families and individuals to become food secure and self-sufficient.

The specific goals of the program are to:

- ❑ Enhance the accessibility and availability of safe, nutritious food and food-related resources;
- ❑ Develop and provide comprehensive nutrition education programs;
- ❑ Periodically conduct assessments of the needs of persons requesting food assistance and hunger-related issues to ensure program funds are used effectively; and
- ❑ Empower persons requesting food assistance or at risk of needing food assistance to increase their independence from emergency food assistance programs.

The legislation specified that the Commissioner of Human Services shall contract with Rutgers, the State University, to conduct a statewide needs assessment. This assessment was completed during the fall of 2005 and details of that assessment were included in the July 2006 Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee Report to the Legislature.

“ A 33 year old single mother works as a personal aide in a special needs school earning \$15,347 annually. She should be receiving \$54 weekly in child support, but only receives this periodically. Her rent is subsidized through Section 8 so she pays \$392/ month plus \$100 for utilities. She pays for car insurance and \$160/monthly for a summer day program for her child. She does not qualify for Food Stamps as her income and child support put her over the limit. The family is having trouble getting by and relies on the local pantry for food.”



Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee Membership

The New Jersey Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program Act established a 13-member Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee (HPAC) in the Department of Human Services. The membership consists of the Secretary of Agriculture, Commissioner of Human Services, and the Commissioner of Community Affairs, or their designees, who serve ex officio and ten public members appointed by the Governor who include: two representatives of emergency food programs in the State; two representatives of programs serving homeless individuals in the State; the Executive Directors of the County Welfare Directors Association of New Jersey; the Municipal Welfare Directors Association of New Jersey and the Association for Children of New Jersey, or their designees; a nutritionist; and two members of the public who are knowledgeable about emergency food programs. The 13-member Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee has been meeting since 2002. As of July 27, 2007, the committee is comprised of the following individuals:



Name	Agency	Seat	Term Expires
Carol Byrd-Bredbenner	Rutgers University	Nutritionist	1/17/06
Edward Cier (for Secretary Kuperus)	Department of Agriculture	Department of Agriculture	Indefinite
Kathleen DiChiara	Community FoodBank of New Jersey	Emergency Food Program	1/19/10
Rosemary Gilmartin	Interfaith Food Pantry	Emergency Food Provider	1/19/10
Jeanette Page-Hawkins (for Commissioner Velez)	Department of Human Services	Department of Human Services	Indefinite
Jacque Lebel (for Acting Commissioner Joseph V. Doria Jr.)	Department of Community Affairs	Department of Community Affairs	Indefinite
Bruce Nigro (pending appointment)	Essex County Welfare Agency	CWA Directors Association	Indefinite
Sheldon Presser (for Cecilia Zalkind)	Association for Children of New Jersey	ACNJ	Indefinite
Bill Southrey	Atlantic City Rescue Mission	Programs Serving Homeless	1/19/10
Mary Ellen Tango	Linden Department of Community Social Services	Municipal Welfare Directors Association	Indefinite
Sharon Reilly-Tobin	Catholic Charities	Knowledge of Emergency Food Programs	1/19/10
Gina Williams (Chairperson)	Volunteers of America Delaware Valley	Programs Serving Homeless	1/19/10
Peter Wise	Trenton Area Soup Kitchen	Knowledge of Emergency Food Programs	1/19/10

The Department of Human Services has submitted recommendations to the Governor's Appointments Office.