



**MASW**  
Since 1901

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**12.3 Percent of Missouri Residents Struggling with Hunger**

JEFFERSON CITY: Missouri had 12.3 percent of people (approximately 293,109 Missourians) living in households struggling with hunger or "food insecure" from 2004-06, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) annual report released this week. Food insecurity is the USDA term given to describe households that struggled with affording enough food.

Among the 12.3 percent of Missouri households considered to be food insecure, 4.4 percent (approximately 104,852 Missourians) were living in households that were considered to have "very low food security." People that fall into this USDA category had more severe problems experiencing hunger and cutting back or skipping meals on a more frequent basis for both adults and children.

A strong Food Stamp Program is the most successful way to alleviate food insecurity in struggling families. This week, the Missouri Association for Social Welfare, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri and the Missouri Budget Project also released a report, which focuses on the Missouri Food Stamps Program.

This collaborative report highlights that Missouri helped 796,350 people each month and brought \$740.1 million in Federal Food Stamp benefits into Missouri's economy in FY 2006. The Food Stamp benefits spent in Missouri generated an estimated \$1.36 billion in economic activity for the State and its local communities and created an estimated 4,488 farm jobs. In fact, 95 percent of eligible Missourians participated in the Food Stamp Program during fiscal year 2005, the highest Food Stamp participation rate in the country.

"Missouri has made great strides in increasing food stamp usage which has helped many low income and food insecure families. This important progress has been achieved through the work of advocacy agencies, food pantries, food banks and, of course, the State," said Christine Woody, hunger task force coordinator of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare. "There are still many food insecure families in Missouri, as the USDA report shows, and with continued education and outreach in the community our hope is that Missouri can lower its food insecurity numbers in the years to come. It is also our hope that both the federal government and the State of Missouri will explore and implement strategies to enhance an already strong Food Stamp program to combat this problem."

Nationally, more than 35.5 million people lived in households found to be food insecure. That number was higher than in 2005, and the number of people living in food insecure households has risen in six of the last seven years (2005 was the only exception). "As wages stagnate, and costs for food, energy, and housing continue to rise, households are increasingly strapped. Millions have difficulty affording a healthy and adequate diet," said Jim Weill, president of the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). "We need to do more to make sure that households have access to healthy food by improving and expanding programs that help."

Currently, Congress is reauthorizing the Farm Bill, which includes the Food Stamp Program. FRAC in Washington D.C. and both The Missouri Budget Project and The Missouri Association for Social Welfare in Missouri have called on Congress to make the nutrition title as strong as possible by making it easier for households to access the program, increasing benefits so they keep up with the cost of living, and raising the minimum benefit level for the first time in decades.

More information on the Missouri Food Stamp Program and on food insecurity in Missouri can be found in the 2007 Missouri Food Stamp Program Report. This report can be found at [www.masw.org](http://www.masw.org) or [www.mobudget.org](http://www.mobudget.org).

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