



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Release of New Study, *Hunger in America 2010*, Illustrates Severity of Hunger and Difficult Choices Facing Rhode Island Families**

*Comprehensive Study of Domestic Hunger Shows Families with Children are at High Risk for Hunger*

**PROVIDENCE, R.I.** A landmark study released today by the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization, depicts the hardships facing clients served through the Food Bank's network of emergency food programs. According to the report, most client households live in poverty and are unable to afford adequate food. In Rhode Island, four out of every ten served are families with children.

The study, commissioned by Feeding America, was produced by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., a social policy research firm that is nationally recognized as a leader in the field of human services research. *Hunger in America 2010* is the first research study to capture the significant connection between the current economic downturn and the increased need for emergency food assistance. Reflecting the high rate of job loss and unemployment, in one-fifth of Rhode Island client households, an adult was laid off during the past year.

The number of people served each month at emergency food programs in Rhode Island has grown to more than 50,000, states Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. "It is extremely troubling that so many Rhode Islanders need food assistance. In particular, the number of children served through our network is of enormous concern since hunger takes a tremendous toll on children's learning and health."

At program sites throughout Rhode Island, Food Bank staff members and volunteers conducted interviews with 361 clients as part of the national study. Many of the clients who participated in face-to-face interviews reported having to make difficult choices between food and other basic necessities: 41 percent of client households explained that they have such limited income that they must choose between paying for food and paying their rent or mortgage. Additionally, 43 percent had to decide whether to pay for food or pay their utility bills; 32 percent made choices between food and medicine or health care.

Many of our neighbors are being faced with impossible choices, comments Schiff. "No one should have to choose between feeding their children and paying the rent. But, the reality is that more and more families can only pay the rent if they receive food assistance. Meanwhile, the charitable response to hunger in Rhode Island is stretched to the limit."

We must continue outreach for the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, identifying eligible families and encouraging enrollment, adds Schiff. According to *Hunger in America 2010*, Rhode Island's enrollment in SNAP has experienced a large increase over the past few years. In 2009, 57 percent of client households benefited from the program. This is a significant improvement from the last *Hunger in America* study conducted in 2006 when just 35 percent of client households received these benefits.

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As *Hunger in America 2010* shows, food banks and emergency food programs provide critical hunger relief, but cannot solve the problem alone. To meet the basic food needs of the thousands of Rhode Islanders now in financial crisis, we must help them enroll in federal nutrition programs that can provide on-going assistance, explains Schiff. Since SNAP is a major source of federal revenue for Rhode Island, enrolling every eligible household should be a key part of the state's strategy for economic revival. ”

An Executive Summary of the Rhode Island Report of *Hunger in America 2010* is available on the Food Bank's website at [www.rifoodbank.org](http://www.rifoodbank.org).

**The Rhode Island Community Food Bank** is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank's network of more than 300 member agency programs. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 9.5 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit [www.rifoodbank.org](http://www.rifoodbank.org)

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