



Press release for Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance. For immediate release.

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28.2% of Arkansas Households with Children Report Inability to Afford Enough Food

Data Also Show Widespread Struggle in Every State and Metropolitan Area, Underscoring Need to Protect Nutrition Safety Net

LITTLE ROCK, AR(September 18, 2013)–The recession has meant that high numbers of all types of households have been struggling to purchase adequate food, but households with children suffered extraordinarily high rates, according to a new national report released today. In surveys running for five years through 2012, nearly one in four households with children said they couldn't consistently afford food, even as the House Majority Leadership is proposing to cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) by a staggering \$40 billion.

Food Hardship 2008-2012: Geography and Household Structure, released by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), found that in surveys from 2008-2012, **nearly 1 in 3 households with children in Arkansas** reported there were times in the prior year when they did not have enough money to buy food they needed for themselves or their family.

“Given the economic struggles that continue to persist in Arkansas, it is terrible that Congress is even debating cuts to SNAP,” said Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance Executive Director Kathy Webb. “Food hardship is too high for all households in our state, and the situation for households with children is far worse. Our Members of Congress need to act on what’s going to help, not hurt, struggling families here, and the first step is to pass a Farm Bill that doesn’t cut SNAP.”

This report is consistent with data released by the federal government this month which show how many Americans continue to struggle. Food insecurity data, released earlier this month by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), show that 19.7 percent of Arkansas households struggled with hunger during the 2010 to 2012 period. (Those data are not broken down by households with and without children.) And national poverty data released yesterday by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that the national poverty rate has remained at elevated rates since the recession began.

“What these data tell us is that there’s a new reality for too many Americans. Hunger and poverty rates spiked at the beginning of the recession and have stayed high ever since,” said Webb. “And the food hardship data reveal the extraordinary frequency of that struggle for households with children who say they can’t afford enough food. Cutting SNAP would worsen an already terrible situation.”

The FRAC analysis examines food hardship rates – the inability to afford enough food – for households with and without children. Data are available for the nation, every state and region, and 100 of the country’s largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), including Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway in Arkansas. Findings for childhood food hardship for surveys from 2008-2012 in Arkansas include:

- **28.2 percent** of **households with children** in Arkansas said they were unable to afford enough food. The food hardship rate for **households without children was 19.7 percent.**
- For the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway MSA, the food hardship rate for **households with children was 23.2 percent** and **18.3 percent for households without children.**
- For the Memphis MSA, which includes households in Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas, the food hardship rate for **households with children was 27.3 percent** and **18.1 percent for households without children.**

The full analysis is available on FRAC’s website (www.frac.org).

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About the data

FRAC’s *Food Hardship in America* series analyzes data that were collected by Gallup and provided to FRAC. The data were gathered as part of the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index project, which has interviewed nearly 1.8 million households between 2008 and 2012. FRAC has analyzed responses to the question: “Have there been times in the past twelve months when you did not have enough money to buy food that you or your family needed?”

The Alliance

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is a non-profit collaborative network of more than 250 hunger relief organizations across Arkansas including the Arkansas Foodbank in Little Rock, the Food Bank of Northeast Arkansas in Jonesboro, Harvest Texarkana Regional Food Bank in Texarkana, Food Bank of North Central Arkansas in Norfork, Northwest Arkansas Food Bank in Bethel Heights and River Valley Regional Food Bank in Fort Smith who are dedicated to reducing hunger through direct relief, education and advocacy. We invite you to visit www.ARhungeralliance.org for details on hunger relief programs and volunteer opportunities.