

## CENTER FOR CIVIL JUSTICE

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### **Contact for more information:**

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### **Michigan improves and needs improvement in The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) annual “State of the States” for 2003**

On Wednesday morning, April 21<sup>st</sup>, the Food Research Action Center in Washington, DC released its annual “state of the state” report on the use and availability of federal nutrition programs in each of the 50 states. Information on Michigan is including on page 43 of the report and is included in the tables at the end of the report.

The food assistance provided to Michigan households through these federal nutrition programs is 100% federally funded. Most of the food is purchased in or near the communities where recipients live. It is estimated that each dollar in assistance generates an additional \$2 of activity within the local economy.

### **Michigan Among Top 10 in Food Stamp Participation Rates**

Michigan was named one of the 10 states with the highest percentage of eligible people receiving food stamps (called the “Food Assistance Program” in Michigan). (See pages 7 and 43 of report.) This reverses a trend during the 1990s states including Michigan saw a decline in the percentage of eligible individuals and families - especially working families – who actually received food stamps. The number of persons receiving Food Stamps in Michigan increased 38.9% over the last 3 years in the number of eligible families receiving food stamps.

“Although the economy is certainly one reason why more people in Michigan are receiving Food Stamps, the increased participation is also related to the growing outreach efforts by USDA, Michigan, and non-profits as well as some recent changes in Food Stamp eligibility rules,” reported Terri Stangl, Executive Director of the Center for Civil Justice. Since 2000, the Center has worked in partnership with organizations such as the Food Bank Council of Michigan and MSU Extension to get the word out to thousands of potentially eligible persons that they may qualify for assistance. The Center currently operates a toll-free statewide Food Stamp Helpline out of Flint in partnership with Michigan State University Extension’s Food and Nutrition Program. The Helpline’s Coordinator has handled calls from over 3500 households in the past 18 months. Over half the callers had earnings from work, and over 80% appeared eligible for assistance. Persons interested in finding out the amount of assistance for which they may be eligible can call the helpline at 1-800-481-4989.

Several other organizations in Michigan are also engaged in Food Stamp outreach activities, including Elder Law of Michigan, the Muskegon Health Project, and the All-County Churches Emergency Support System (ACCESS) in Kent County. The Family Independence Agency has supported these various efforts and recently convened a working group to encourage coordinated outreach strategies.

### **Michigan Resumes Administration of Summer Meals Program in an effort to increase participation**

The FRAC report also notes that participation of children in Michigan's Summer Food Service Program has continued to decline, a total of -8.2% over the past 10 years. The Summer Food Service Program is a federal program that reimburses schools and non-profit agencies that provide children with nutritional meals and snacks over the summer months when students are not in school. Eligibility for the Summer Food Service Program is similar to eligibility for the free and reduced-price school lunches in which more than 400,000 children in Michigan participate. FRAC estimates that over 100,000 Michigan school children are eligible for this program but are not yet taking advantage of it.

In an effort to make more families aware of the Summer Food Program, Michigan's Department of Education has begun administering the program in Michigan in efforts to increase the number of sites participating in the program and to offer support for schools and agencies that sponsor the program. Non-profit agencies that are currently promoting the program and helping to recruit new sponsors include Food Bank Council of Michigan, and the Michigan Association of United Ways. Sponsors take care of much of the paperwork involved for the program and recruit sites for feed meals for children. By offering nutritious snacks and meals over the summer, schools and agencies can assure that children continue to receive nutritious meals while not in school. Organizations interested in offering summer meals to children participating in summer activities should contact the Michigan Department of Education (517) 241-2096. A list of sites in Michigan will be available from the USDA at (312) 353-3089.

### **Michigan Participating in Pilot Program to Increase Opportunities for Children in After School Programs to Receive Meals**

Participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which makes food available to children at licensed child day care and after school programs, has also declined 7.7% over the past 10 years. Michigan is currently participating in a pilot program that should make it easier for organizations offering after school programming to children to participate in the program. Organizations wanting more information on how to participate in the program can call 517-373-3347.

### **Promoting Public Nutrition Programs Eases Strain on Emergency Food System**

"Federal Food programs will always be the first line of defense against hunger and to promote long-term health", says Jane Marshall, Executive Director of the Food Bank Council of Michigan. Food Banks distributed donated food, and Marshall reports that in recent months donations to food banks are flat or decreasing while demand for food is growing. "Federal Programs like Food Stamps, the Summer Food program and the

Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program help stabilize the food supply at times when the non-profit community cannot meet the need. It is critical that Michigan do everything it can to assure that households who are eligible for help know about the available programs and are able to access them.“

## **FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

### **1. Examples of Food Stamp Outreach Projects in Michigan:**

**Center for Civil Justice** – trains other human services providers, develops statewide outreach materials, operates statewide toll-free Food Stamp Helpline and web site.  
(800) 481-4989 [www.foodstamphelp.org](http://www.foodstamphelp.org)  
(989) 755-3120 (administrative office)

#### **Food Bank Council of Michigan**

Jane Marshall, Executive Director  
(517) 485-1202

Food Bank members and partners have helped distribute information on food stamps and the Food Stamp Helpline to thousands of people seeking food at emergency food pantries.

**Elder Law of Michigan** – runs senior citizen outreach project in Genesee County called MI-CAFÉ. Received USDA Food Stamp access grant.

Candice Janizcek

1-877-6MICAFAE. (517) 485-9164 ext 241

<http://www.elderslaw.org/micafe/index.html>

**Muskegon Health Project** - runs outreach project in Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana

Laura Fitzpatrick

Outreach and Community Projects Director

231-728-3201

<http://www.mchp.org/html/food.html>

**All County Churches Emergency Support System (ACCESS)** – an interfaith organization in Kent County that provides eligibility screening and assistance with completing and filing Food Stamp applications.

Marsha DeHollander, Program Director

Phone (616) 774-2175 x 103

Fax (616) 774-2883

[www.accessconnects.org](http://www.accessconnects.org)

### **2. Child Nutrition Programs**

**Michigan Department of Education** (State Department administering SFSP, Child and Adult Care Food Program, After-school supper program, and school meals)