The Emergency Food Assistance Program

The Emergency Food Assistance Program distributes U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) donated food to individuals and families who use on-site meal programs, food shelves and shelters. The Minnesota Department of Human Services contracts with Hunger Solutions Minnesota to allocate USDA commodities based on population and poverty data.

Program impact

- Approximately 9.6 million pounds of commodities, worth more than $7.9 million, were distributed in 2018.
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program provides nutritious, domestically produced food to Minnesotans in need, and provides direct support to the agriculture community.
- Donations through the program are important in providing agencies with more certainty regarding their inventory, and contributing to the variety of foods offered.

Program funding

- The USDA awarded Minnesota approximately $1.2 million in federal emergency nutrition assistance funding for fiscal year 2018.
- Additional state funds of $241,463 helped supplement the federal grant in fiscal year 2018.

Food distribution

The emergency assistance program ensures an equitable distribution of commodities to all of Minnesota’s 87 counties by partnering with Hunger Solutions Minnesota, working with seven regional food banks each distributing commodities to more than 400 food shelves, on-site meal programs and shelters statewide.

Trends in food commodities use

- USDA commodities have become a significant portion of nutritional food that food banks and food shelves provide to individuals and families in need.
- Today, an ever-increasing variety of foods, including culturally specific items, as well as packaging sizes appropriate for individual households, are available through food shelves.
Program eligibility

Food shelves are available to all who identify themselves as being in need. People may be asked to register to receive help. Households with incomes that do not exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible. Families identifying themselves as in crisis are not required to prove income or residence.

Help

Those who are in need of food shelf assistance or more information can contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services’ Office of Economic Opportunity at 651-431-6309, or Hunger Solutions Minnesota’s Food Helpline toll free at 888-711-1151.

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