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 18 million pounds of commodities, worth more than $17 million, were distributed in Minnesota in 2019.
- 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 $2 million in federal emergency nutrition assistance funding for fiscal year 2019.
- Additional state funds of $232,560 helped supplement the federal grant in fiscal year 2019.

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% 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.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistant program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

If you wish to file a civil rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call 866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax 202-690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339; or 800-845-6136 (Spanish).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to dhs.info@state.mn.us, call 651-431-3809, or use your preferred relay service. ADA1 (1-18)