



PRESS RELEASE

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Rhode Island Community Food Bank Awarded Grant to Expand Food Stamp Outreach Efforts - 1 of only 6 States to Receive Funds
Increasing Enrollment Would Help Struggling Families and Bring Millions in Federal Funds

PROVIDENCE, R.I. The Rhode Island Community Food Bank was recently awarded a national grant through Feeding America – the Nation’s Food Bank Network to hire two full-time Food Stamp Outreach Coordinators – one of only 6 states to receive funds. The federal Food Stamp Program has recently been renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

In an effort to reach more eligible families in need, the coordinators will provide direct assistance at Food Bank member agencies in Newport and Woonsocket each week, two of the highest need communities in the state. Their focus will be on expanding SNAP participation by screening clients to determine eligibility, providing applications assistance and following up on completed applications.

The outreach efforts are the result of a partnership between the Food Bank, the Food Stamp Outreach Project at URI’s Feinstein Center for a Hunger-Free America and non-profit agencies in both Newport and Woonsocket, including the Newport Partnership for Families, and East Bay CAP, and in Woonsocket, Family Resources Community Action and Connecting for Children and Families.

Rhode Island’s participation rate among those eligible for SNAP benefits ranks near the bottom of the country. Due to this low enrollment, and the fact that nearly 11 percent of all Rhode Island households are at risk of hunger, the Ocean State was selected to receive funds. The other states awarded grants are California, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina and Wisconsin.

Participation in federal nutrition programs such as SNAP is not only good for families in need, it is good for Rhode Island. If Rhode Island can enroll 80 percent of those eligible, it would mean an additional \$35 million for the state in federal dollars, and, more importantly, less hunger for our neighbors in need.

“It’s critical to reach everyone in Rhode Island who is eligible but not enrolled in food stamps,” states Andrew Schiff, Chief Executive Officer of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank. “Food stamps are like a vaccine that can prevent hunger. If we had a vaccine that could improve nutrition and health, particularly among children and senior adults, we would make sure that everyone had access to it.”

Currently, the Food Bank feeds more than 50,000 Rhode Islanders each month through a network of 285 certified member agency programs across the state. This rise in need reflects a 26% increase over last year. According to the USDA, nearly 11% of Rhode Island households are at risk of going hungry.

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 285 member agencies. 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

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