

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Food Stamp program helps address hunger

BISMARCK, N.D. –As food banks, food pantries, churches, and others recognize National Hunger Awareness Day on June 7, 2005, the North Dakota Department of Human Services wants to remind individuals and families who need help that food assistance is available.

Each month, the food stamp program helps about 45,000 North Dakotans, almost half of them children, to meet their basic nutrition needs by paying approximately \$3.8 million for food purchased at about 424 grocers. Department officials estimate that about 76 percent of eligible North Dakota households are actually receiving food stamp benefits.

Department Executive Director Carol K. Olson said, “No one should go hungry in this state. We encourage people who need help to apply at their county social service office.”

Olson said that 40 percent of the adults participating in the food stamp program are working. Others are aged or disabled, and many need help temporarily. Individuals can determine if they might qualify by using a calculator on the department’s Web site at <http://www.state.nd.us/humanservices/services/financialhelp/foodstamps.html>.

The department’s 2005-2007 food stamp budget is \$105.8 million in federal dollars.

Individuals who qualify receive an electronic debit card that is accepted by grocers across the state. It can be used to purchase breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, meat, fish and poultry, and dairy products, as well as seeds and plants that produce food for the household. Food stamp benefits cannot be used for nonfood items such as alcohol or tobacco, pet food, soaps, paper products, household supplies, vitamins, medicines, or food that will be eaten in the store, or hot foods. In some areas, restaurants can be authorized to accept food stamp benefits from qualified homeless, elderly, or disabled people in exchange for low-cost meals. Food stamp benefits cannot be exchanged for cash.

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