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Technical questions:

June caseload figures show Oregonians continue to count on services to get them through tough times

The state of Oregon released caseload figures today showing the need for food stamps and cash assistance continues to rise in response to the current economic climate.

Demand for food stamps increased 28 percent over last year. Today there are 614,653 Oregonians or about one in six who count on food stamps (now moving to be called the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program), to meet their basic food needs.

Demand for cash assistance, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), increased 26.5 percent over the same time last year. As of June 2009 there were 24,982 families with children receiving this benefit in Oregon.

One dramatic increase has been in the number of two-parent families who qualify for TANF, up 107 percent over last year. Because TANF is available only to parents with very low incomes, this increase shows how many families are struggling with making it in the current economy. A family of four in Oregon can qualify for TANF only if they earn less than \$795 per month; 43 percent of the federal poverty limit. Once qualified, a family of four could receive up to \$647 per month. The actual amount varies depending on income and family size.

"The cash assistance is not a lot, but it can make a big difference to a family on the edge," says Xochitl Esparza, Program Manager for TANF at the Oregon Department of Human Services. "Coupled with assistance focused on job skills training and job searching, and other community services, families can get back on track."

TANF is available only to parents with children 18 years of age and under. In order to receive benefits, the adults must participate in the job assistance programs.

Esparza points out that TANF, along with other community services, can also keep families who are on the edge from homelessness until they get back on their feet, but some families are hesitant to ask for help. According to recent figures from Oregon Housing and Community Services, over the past year homelessness has increased 34 percent in Oregon, and for the first time, almost half of the homeless are families.

Demand for food stamps and cash and employment assistance continues to grow across Oregon. A list of need by region is attached.

To learn if you might be eligible for Food Stamps, TANF, Oregon Health Plan or other potential services in your area, visit your local DHS Food Stamps office. You may also explore your potential eligibility for programs by visiting the Oregon Helps Web site at <http://www.oregonhelps.org/>.

To download applications for TANF and food stamps, go to: www.oregon.gov/DHS/assistance/. DHS also partners with SafeNet to help people to find local resources such as local food pantries or other assistance. The number is 800-SAFENET (800-723-3638).

Additional background on food stamps, or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)

The name of the food stamp program is changing to Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP, but the benefits remain the same. Federal law changes last year changed the name to be more reflective of the program's purpose. The Oregon Legislature followed suit and also changed the name of the program from "Food Stamps" to "Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program." This name change in Oregon will occur over the next year as the program transitions to this new name.

To qualify for SNAP, families must earn less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, along with other qualifying factors. For a household of four, the maximum income limit is less than \$3,400 per month. Benefits are determined on a sliding scale, based on household income, and are distributed through the "Oregon Trail Card" that is used like a debit card to purchase food. SNAP benefits are intended only as a supplement to a family's food budget, not to cover it entirely.

	Oregon families receiving cash assistance (TANF) June 2009	% Increase over June 2008	Oregonians (individuals) receiving food stamps (SNAP) June 2009	% Increase over June 2008
District 1 (Clatsop, Columbia & Tillamook)	431	24.9%	17,131	33%
District 2 (Multnomah)	7,041	26.8%	122,016	20%
District 3 (Polk, Marion, Yamhill)	4,281	30.6%	90,189	28%
District 4 (Benton, Lincoln, Linn)	1,382	12.2%	40,203	30%
District 5 (Lane)	1,988	23.0%	65,172	22%
District 6 (Douglas)	885	7.4%	22,664	19%
District 7 (Coos, Curry)	717	26.9%	17,422	20%
District 8 (Jackson, Josephine)	2,011	27.6%	58,286	18%
District 9 (Hood River, Gilliam, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler)	202	-1.9%	8,020	22%
District 10 (Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson)	1,051	29.6%	35,639	31.8%
District 11 (Klamath, Lake)	389	17.2%	15,328	16%
District 12 (Morrow, Umatilla)	514	20.9%	15,543	17%
District 13 (Baker, Union, Wallowa)	238	25.3%	8,003	19%
District 14 (Grant, Harney, Malheur)	176	8.0%	9,238	24%
District 15 (Clackamas)	1,329	26.7%	36,111	39%
District 16 (Washington)	2,347	48.0%	53,688	44%
STATE TOTAL	24,982	26.5%	614,653	28.2%