



Food Assistance (Food Stamps)

Public Affairs Contact: Roger Munns (515) 281-4848 E-mail rmunns@dhs.state.ia.us

Purpose

The food assistance program (the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) provides nutrition to low-income Iowans and also benefits retail and agricultural economies.

Who

In June 2009, a record 303,429 people received benefits, an 18.2 percent increase from June 2008. Of all households receiving benefits:

- 40,583 or 31 percent received food assistance but no other state benefit.
- 89,998 or 69 percent received other government aid, mostly Medicaid. Some received Family Investment Program (cash) benefits. See separate summaries on these topics.

What

- The average household benefit was \$243 a month in SFY 09. Average benefits nationwide increased 13.6 percent because of the congressional stimulus.
- Eligibility and benefits are based on federal rules that consider size of household, number of people eating together, income, resources, household expenses, and other variables.
- Benefits are funded 100 percent with federal dollars. The cost of administering the program is shared 50-50 with states.

How are We Doing?

- Among more recent service improvements, the department added a customer call center (February 2005), used wireless technology to provide access at farmers markets (May 2005), implemented local outreach efforts (March 2006), added an online application that can be submitted by computer at www.oasis.iowa.gov (May 2007), excluded child support paid to determine eligibility (February 2009), and increased benefits due to the federal economic stimulus plan (April 2009).
- About \$380.6 million in federal food assistance funds were brought into the Iowa economy in SFY09, a 31.5 percent one-year increase. The USDA estimates that \$5 in food assistance generates \$9.20 in local and state economic activity.

