



March 22, 2010

Contact: Gene Evans, 503-947-5286

SNAP and TANF: Need for public services continues to rise

With state unemployment numbers at 10.5 percent, Oregonians continue to count on public services to help get through economic tough times. Demand for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (SNAP -- formerly food stamps) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) remained at record levels for February.

In February, a total of 689,128 Oregonians received SNAP benefits, an increase of more than 24 percent compared to one year ago and up 43 percent since July 2008.

SNAP benefits are used to buy food at local grocery stores around the state. They provide an important bridge for people who are unemployed or underemployed and earn too little to meet basic expenses.

The TANF program, which is available only for very low-income Oregon families, has also helped tens of thousands of families pay for food, shelter and other necessities that parents would not be able to otherwise afford. There are currently 26,494 families in Oregon receiving TANF, a nearly 13 percent increase over one year ago.

"In difficult times, the public safety net is an important part of how people and families get through," says Erinn Kelley-Siel, director of the Department of Human Services Children, Adults and Families Division. "We're working hard to make sure we are there to help."

(more)

There are approximately 160 DHS locations across the state where Oregonians can apply for SNAP, TANF and other benefits they may be eligible for when their incomes drop. Many programs also have online applications: Go to <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/assistance/>. In spite of double-digit increases, DHS workers have kept up with the flow of applications and new clients.

“Many of the new applicants have never applied for public services before and didn’t know what to expect,” says Kelley-Siel. “We are proud that they are leaving our offices with the help they need.”

Background

To be eligible for SNAP benefits, people must earn less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, along with other criteria. Benefits are determined on a sliding scale. For a family of four, the income limit is less than \$3,400 per month, with a maximum benefit for the same household of \$684 per month. The overall average SNAP benefit is approximately \$250 per month. As its name implies, SNAP benefits are intended to supplement a family’s overall food budget, not to cover it entirely.

TANF cash assistance is available only to parents with children age 18 or under. Most participants are unemployed, underemployed or the primary wage earner is incapacitated; therefore, the program provides opportunities for job preparation and on-the-job training to build personal responsibility and self-reliance. Benefits are determined on a sliding scale. A two-parent family with two children and no other income who meet specific criteria would receive a maximum monthly benefit of \$647.

- To learn if you might be eligible for SNAP benefits, TANF, the Oregon Health Plan or other services, visit your local DHS office. You may also go online to OregonHelps.org to see if you may be eligible for these and other programs.
- To download applications for TANF and SNAP benefits, go to www.oregon.gov/dhs/assistance.
- DHS also partners with SafeNet to help people find local resources such as food pantries and other assistance. The number is 800-SAFENET (800-723-3638).

#

**Oregon Department of Human Services Monthly Caseloads: SNAP and TANF
February 2010**

	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly food stamps)		Temporary Assistance to Needy Families	
	Individuals Receiving SNAP Benefits February 2010	Percentage Change From February 2009	Families Receiving TANF Benefits February 2010	Percentage Change From February 2009
District 1 (Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook)	19,537	25.5%	427	-1.8%
District 2 (Multnomah)	135,843	23.8%	7,448	17.7%
District 3 (Polk, Marion, Yamhill)	100,688	22.4%	4,680	17.6%
District 4 (Benton, Lincoln, Linn)	44,360	19.9%	1393	-0.7%
District 5 (Lane)	71,924	20.4%	2023	4.4%
District 6 (Douglas)	24,173	15.9%	846	-1.4%
District 7 (Coos, Curry)	19,151	19.6%	720	8.8%
District 8 (Jackson, Josephine)	65,655	25.7%	2153	13.4%
District 9 (Hood River, Gilliam, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler)	8,989	22.4%	213	0.9%
District 10 (Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson)	40,615	28.3%	1118	8.6%
District 11 (Klamath, Lake)	16,829	17.7%	453	18.0%
District 12 (Morrow, Umatilla)	17,454	18.8%	557	-2.3%
District 13 (Baker, Union, Wallowa)	9,098	19.5%	285	13.1%
District 14 (Grant, Harney, Malheur)	10,030	20.5%	197	22.4%
District 15 (Clackamas)	42,085	34.6%	1379	7.1%
District 16 (Washington)	62,697	36.0%	2602	23.1%
STATE TOTAL	689,128	24.2%	26,494	12.7%