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As holidays approach, SNAP and TANF assistance provide safety net for thousands of families, individuals

As the nation heads into the holiday season, state assistance programs continue to play an important role in Oregon's economy. More and more low-income Oregonians rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called Food Stamps, to put food on the table and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to help families with children pay for basic necessities.

"SNAP and TANF benefits, along with unemployment payments, have been so important in helping Oregon families get through this recession," said Erinn Kelley-Siel, director of the Department of Human Services Children, Adults and Families Division.

"These programs continue to provide critical financial stability for families and individuals struggling to make ends meet. Especially as we enter the holiday season, I would encourage all Oregonians to take the opportunity to see what other assistance or donations may be needed in their local communities," Kelley-Siel said.

Here are the total figures for SNAP and TANF for October:

- 735,134 Oregonians received SNAP benefits, an increase of 12 percent from one year ago and 52 percent since July 2008.
- 28,500 families received TANF, up 15 percent from a year ago and 43 percent from July 2008.

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- The number of people receiving SNAP benefits grew by 8,132 last month, and demand for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) also increased by 351 families. State forecasts predict this trend will continue into 2012.

“Each month, SNAP recipients spend millions of dollars to buy food from Oregon retailers, and that helps support jobs in local communities,” said Kelley-Siel. “When people spend their benefits in their hometowns, it immediately puts money right back into the local economy and local jobs. That’s the economic benefit we all get from these programs.”

SNAP benefits provide an important bridge for people who are unemployed or underemployed and earn too little to meet their basic nutrition needs. TANF, which is only available for very low income families with children, helps pay for shelter, utilities and other necessities that parents otherwise would not be able to afford.

An excellent statewide resource for individuals and families in need of assistance is the [OregonHelps website](#). OregonHelps is a free and easy prescreener where people can answer questions about their household, income and expenses -- and the site estimates potential eligibility for 33 programs and assistance.

Note: OregonHelps does not guarantee that people qualify for the programs, and individuals must still apply for help by contacting and filling out the required forms for each program.

Attached: chart of Oregon recipients by region

Background

To be eligible for SNAP benefits, families must earn less than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, along with other factors. For a family of four, the income limit is less than \$3,400 per month. The maximum benefit for a household of four totals \$668 per month. The overall average SNAP benefit per household is approximately \$250 per month. Approximately three-fourths of all SNAP households have some form of income, which results in the actual benefit level received being reduced from the maximum.

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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 can be used to purchase foods for the household to eat, such as breads and cereals; fruits and vegetables; meats, fish and poultry; and dairy products. SNAP benefits are intended to act as a supplement to a family's overall food budget, not to cover it entirely. In many households with little or no income, it can be the primary means to meet the family's nutritional needs.

To be eligible for TANF, parents with children must earn less than the total monthly income limit of 43 percent of the federal poverty level. For a two-parent family with two children, that maximum is \$795, along with an asset limit of \$2,500 (not including the family home, or the first \$10,000 value of family vehicles). The current total maximum benefit for the family of four with no other income is a total \$647 per month. TANF provides temporary assistance and case management services for families struggling due to unemployment, underemployment or incapacitation of a primary wage earner. TANF and TANF-related programs also provide employment and training services, child care while looking for work or other alternatives, assistance seeking Social Security Income or Social Security Disability Income, and help to flee or stay free from domestic violence.

To learn if you might be eligible for SNAP benefits, TANF, Oregon Health Plan or other services, visit your local DHS office. You may also go online to [OregonHelps](#) and see if you may be eligible for these and other programs. To download applications for TANF and SNAP, go to the [DHS Assistance website](#). 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).

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

	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly food stamps)		Temporary Assistance to Needy Families	
	Individuals receiving SNAP benefits October 2010	Percentage change from October 2009	Families receiving TANF benefits October 2010	Percentage change from October 2009
District 1 (Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook)	20,434	12%	453	16%
District 2 (Multnomah)	146,022	12%	8,074	12%
District 3 (Polk, Marion, Yamhill)	107,504	13%	5,093	19%
District 4 (Benton, Lincoln, Linn)	47,293	11%	1,361	0.5%
District 5 (Lane)	77,141	11%	2,159	11%
District 6 (Douglas)	25,311	9%	831	2%
District 7 (Coos, Curry)	20,159	10%	807	19%
District 8 (Jackson, Josephine)	70,424	13%	2,504	25%
District 9 (Hood River, Gilliam, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler)	8,969	9%	202	8%
District 10 (Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson)	42,407	14%	1,163	17%
District 11 (Klamath, Lake)	18,029	12%	575	43%
District 12 (Morrow, Umatilla)	17,791	11%	570	20%
District 13 (Baker, Union, Wallowa)	9,555	11%	332	31%
District 14 (Grant, Harney, Malheur)	10,772	12%	209	24%
District 15 (Clackamas)	45,812	17%	1,422	12%
District 16 (Washington)	67,511	15%	2,745	17%
STATE TOTAL	735,134	12%	28,500	15%