

NEWS RELEASE

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New Report: Texas has Highest Rate of Child Hunger in U.S. *One in five Texas children live on the brink of hunger* Nearly 459,000 children younger than 5 are food insecure

In greater Tarrant area, 33 percent of all persons living below poverty and at risk of hunger are children

FORT WORTH (May 7, 2009) – One in five of all Texas children younger than 18 live on the brink of hunger. Texas leads the nation in the rate of child hunger with 22.1 percent, or 1.47 million, of its children being at risk of hunger. Nationwide, 17 percent, or 12.5 million children, are food insecure—unable to consistently access adequate amounts of nutritious food necessary for a healthy life.

This national and state-by-state analysis of child hunger is in the report, *Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2005 – 2007*, released today by Feeding America, the national network of regional food banks such as Tarrant Area Food Bank in Fort Worth and North Texas Food Bank in Dallas.

This study, based on data collected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, also offers the first state-by-state analysis of data to determine the number of children under the age of 5 (from birth to four years of age) who are at risk of hunger. For Texas, that number is nearly 459,000, or 23.3 percent of all Texas children under age 5; nationwide it is 3.5 million children, or 17.3 percent.

The report, which was funded by the ConAgra Foods Foundation, was analyzed by researcher John Cook, Ph.D., a nationally-recognized expert on child hunger at the Boston Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine.

“Children are the engine for economic growth in the United States. Hunger creates unbearable, unsustainable costs that ripple through the economy and prevent economic success,” said Cook. “If we fail to give them the nutrition and health supports they need in the first three to five years of life, our economy cannot fulfill its potential.”

“The first three years of life are the most critical period of brain growth and development,” Cook continued. “Child hunger causes physical and mental impairment that may never be reversed. Child hunger also creates tremendous costs that are completely unavoidable. There is no better investment in a prosperous future than investing in ending childhood hunger.”

Poverty is often the cause of food insecurity and hunger. According to Tarrant Area Food Bank, in its 13-county service area surrounding Fort Worth, more than 136,000 children live below the federal poverty level and thus are likely to be at risk of hunger. The Food Bank reports that more

than one-third (35 percent) of all persons served by its network of partner hunger-relief charities are children.

The analysis of the USDA data on child hunger does not include data from 2008 when the economic recession began. However, since July 2008, Tarrant Area Food Bank has seen an increase of 25 percent in the amount of food it distributes to partner charities.

The full report, *Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2005 – 2007*, is available at www.feedingamerica.org/http://Feedingamerica.org/childreport. The report analyzes data collected by the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) over a three-year period. The USDA has collected data on domestic food insecurity since 1995, but has not analyzed it to determine specifically the number of children living in food-insecure household by state.

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