



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

For Immediate Release

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With need urgent, food stamp benefits expand

Added food purchases will feed children and boost local economies

April 1, 2009—Beginning today, low-income Washingtonians who rely on the Basic Food Program (food stamps) to feed themselves and their children will see those benefits go a little further. Thanks to the federal stimulus law, the maximum monthly food benefit will go up by 13.6 percent, roughly \$20 to \$24 per person per month for most families.

This help is welcome news for the growing number of Washington families struggling to meet their most basic needs. Over the next year, an estimated 40,000 more children will slip into poverty; these expanded benefits will help ensure that they don't go hungry. More than 75 percent of all food stamp participants are in families with children.

These added benefits will also boost struggling local economies. Families use their food stamp benefits to make purchases at local grocery stores, and from there the money ripples out through the economy. During the state's 2007 fiscal year, Washington's Basic Food Program generated more than \$607 million in food purchases statewide. With these expansions, this figure should reach nearly \$1 billion in 2009. Experts agree that food stamps are among the most effective forms of stimulus, creating \$1.73 in economic activity for every dollar spent.

The Basic Food Program is designed to respond quickly and effectively to economic downturns: enrollment expands automatically to support the larger number of low-income families and communities when the economy weakens and contracts when the economy recovers. Nearly nine in ten households that receive food stamps have incomes below the poverty line; roughly four in ten have incomes below half of the poverty level (about \$8,800

for a family of three). Families with the greatest need receive the largest food stamp benefits.

“This expansion of food benefits comes at a moment when need for it has never been greater. The Basic Food program is an extraordinarily effective program for feeding children and for stabilizing families’ and communities’ economies,” said Linda Stone, senior food policy coordinator for the Children’s Alliance.

People wanting more information about Basic Food can call 877-514-FOOD (3663) or go to www.foodhelp.wa.gov, where they can estimate what their monthly benefits would be and apply online.

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