



The United States Conference of Mayors

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U.S. Conference of Mayors – Sodexo, Inc. Hunger and Homelessness Survey 2005

Survey Cities Say Lack of Federal Commitment to Hurricane Evacuees Will Strain Local Limited Resources

Hunger and Homelessness Remains a Critical Issue for Families, Working People and Unemployed

San Francisco, CA – The 2005 U.S. Conference of Mayors-Sodexo, Inc. Hunger and Homelessness Survey was released today during a press conference at City Hall in San Francisco hosted by Mayor Gavin Newsom, Co-chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Hunger and Homelessness Taskforce. Others joining Mayor Newsom were Conference of Mayors President Long Beach Mayor Beverly O’Neill, Cedar Rapids Mayor Paul Pate, Co-Chair of the Conference of Mayors Hunger and Homelessness Taskforce, Rod Bond, President of Sodexo, Inc. School Services Division, Philip Mangano, Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and Conference of Mayors Executive Director, Tom Cochran.

For the past 21 years, The U.S. Conference of Mayors has reported on the shortage of emergency services – food, shelter, medical care, income assistance and energy assistance – in the nation’s cities. For the third year, Sodexo, Inc. joins the Conference of Mayors in bringing national attention to the factors that impact hunger and homelessness in metropolitan centers in the United States.

New to the survey this year is the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on hunger and homelessness. Survey cities with evacuees from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are particularly concerned that a lack of federal commitment to evacuees, many of whom reside in their communities, will eventually put a strain on already limited resources cities used for their pre-hurricane hunger and homeless populations.

Survey cities also believe that the impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita will become more evident in 2006 as evacuees will continue to need social services, food, and housing. Further, cities say that the federal government’s policy for hurricane evacuees should be broadened to include readily available housing and social services to homeless populations that existed prior to the hurricanes.

“Hurricanes Katrina and Rita exposed the poverty and social needs in our cities which have been the mantra of this report over the past 20 years,” said U.S. Conference of Mayors President and Long Beach Mayor Beverly O’Neill. “Our hope is that everyone will make the commitment to address these serious problems.”

Highlights of the survey also show that overall requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 12% over the past year with 76% of the 24 cities surveyed showing an increase. Additionally, 54% of the people requesting emergency food assistance in the survey cities were children and their parents, and 40% of the adults requesting food assistance were employed.

“Though the overall numbers still need to be improved, our efforts at the local level, the efforts of our sponsor Sodexo, and the efforts of the federal government have all translated into a brand new awareness of what problems exist, and how we can and should work together, cutting through the bureaucracy, to help those most in need,” said Cedar-Rapids Mayor Paul D. Pate, Co-chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Taskforce on Hunger and Homelessness.

Also during the past year, requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of six percent over the last year, with 71% of the survey cities showing an increase. The lack of affordable housing is considered the leading cause of homelessness by city officials.

“As evidenced in this report we are making headway on the issues of hunger and homelessness - but it's clear that we have a long way to go,” said San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, Co-chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Taskforce on Hunger and Homelessness. “Locally, cities like San Francisco are finding new and innovative solutions to these problems like Direct Access to housing and Project Homeless Connect. As we continue to identify new solutions locally, we will also continue to expand our partnerships with the private sector and the federal government - because it is only by working together that we will end hunger and homelessness.”

“The American way of life dictates that if you work hard you will move ahead or at the very least stave off poverty. However, today’s survey results prove that working families are increasingly at risk for hunger and in danger of homelessness,” said Rod Bond, President of Sodexo, Inc. School Services Division. “Unfortunately, as this epidemic continues to grow, working families are forced to choose between housing or groceries, heat or groceries, medicine or groceries. As citizens, it is our responsibility, indeed it is our duty, to help ensure that every family has enough to eat and a decent place to live.”

The findings of the 24-city survey include:

Hunger:

Officials in the survey cities estimate that during the past year requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 12 percent, with 76 percent of the cities registering an increase. Requests for food assistance by families with children also increased by an average of seven percent. Requests for emergency food assistance by elderly persons increased by an average of 13 percent during the last year, with 76 percent of the cities reporting an increase.

On average, 18 percent of the requests for emergency food assistance are estimated to have gone unmet during the last year. For families alone, 18 percent of the requests for assistance are estimated to have gone unmet. In 43 percent of the cities, emergency food assistance facilities may have to turn away people in need due to lack of resources.

The overall level of resources available to emergency food assistance facilities increased by seven percent, over the past year, in the cities showing an increase. Forty-eight percent of the survey cities reported that emergency food assistance facilities are able to provide an adequate quantity of food. However, eighty-three percent of the cities’ emergency food assistance facilities have had to decrease the number of bags of food provided and/or the number of times people can receive food. Of these cities, 63 percent have had to increase the limit of food provided.

In 87 percent of the cities, families and individuals relied on emergency food assistance facilities both in emergencies and as a steady source of food over long periods of time.

Lastly, city officials cited unemployment and other employment-related problems as the leading causes of hunger. Others causes of hunger cited, in order of frequency, include high housing costs, poverty or lack of income, medical or health costs, mental health problems, substance abuse, transportation costs, high childcare costs, lack of education, and utility costs.

Homelessness:

During the past year, requests for emergency shelter increased in the survey cities by an average of 6 percent, with 71 percent of the cities registering an increase. Requests for shelter by homeless families alone, increased by 5 percent, with 63 percent of the cities reporting an increase.

An average of 14 percent of the requests for emergency shelter by homeless people overall and 32 percent of the requests by homeless families alone are estimated to have gone unmet during the last year. In 88 percent of the cities, emergency shelters may have to turn away homeless families due to lack of resources; in 79 percent they may also have to turn away other homeless people.

Some causes cited, in order of frequency include low-paying jobs, mental illness, substance abuse and the lack of needed services, domestic violence, unemployment, poverty, and prisoner re-entry.

An average of 22 percent of homeless people in the survey cities are considered mentally ill; 30 percent are substance abusers; 15 percent are employed; and 11 percent are veterans.

In 57 percent of the cities, families may have to break up in order to be sheltered. In 48 percent of the cities families may have to spend their daytime hours outside of the shelter they use at night.

Requests for assisted housing by low-income families and individuals increased in 86 percent of the cities during the last year.

Outlook:

Officials in 90 percent of the responding cities expect requests for overall emergency food assistance to increase during 2006; eighty-six percent expect that requests for emergency food assistance by families with children will increase during 2006. Officials in 93 percent of the cities expect that requests for overall emergency shelter will increase in 2006; ninety-five percent expect that requests by homeless families will increase in the same year.

The 24 mayors participating in this survey are members of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness. They include:

**Boston Mayor Thomas Menino
Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle
Cedar Rapids Mayor Paul Pate
Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Charlotte Mayor Patrick McCrory
Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley
Cleveland Mayor Jane Campbell
Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper**

**Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick
Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa
Louisville Metro Mayor Jerry Abramson
Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz
Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell
Philadelphia Mayor John Street
Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon
Portland Mayor Tom Potter**

Providence Mayor David Cicilline
 St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly
 Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson
 San Antonio Mayor Phil Hardberger

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom
 Santa Monica Mayor Pam O'Connor
 Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels
 Trenton Mayor Doug Palmer

**The complete survey can be downloaded at the U.S. Conference of Mayors website at www.usmayors.org.
 The press conference can also be viewed via web cast at www.usmayors.org**

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. The primary roles of the Conference of Mayors are to promote the development of effective national urban/suburban policy; strengthen federal-city relationships; ensure that federal policy meets urban needs; provide mayors with leadership and management tools; and create a forum in which mayors can share ideas and information. More information about the Conference is available at usmayors.org.



Sodexo, Inc. (www.sodexoUSA.com) is the leading provider of food and facilities management in North America. Sodexo, Inc. offers innovative outsourcing solutions in food service, housekeeping, grounds keeping, plant operations and maintenance, asset management, and laundry services to more than 6,000 corporations, health care, long term care and retirement centers, schools, college campuses, military and remote sites in North America.

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