



The United States Conference of Mayors

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MAYORS EXAMINE CAUSES OF HUNGER, HOMELESSNESS

The U.S. Conference of Mayors – Sodexo, Inc. Release 2007 Hunger and Homelessness Survey

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Conference of Mayors and Sodexo, Inc. released today the results of its 2007 Hunger and Homelessness Survey at a press conference at the Conference of Mayors Headquarters in Washington, D.C. For more than 21 years, the Conference of Mayors has documented the magnitude of the issues of hunger and homelessness in our nation's cities. This report provides an analysis of the scale of the problem in twenty-three of America's major cities (listed below) and the efforts these cities are making to address the issue.

"Although 87% of our nation's wealth is generated in our nation's cities, hunger and homelessness persists in most of our country's cities and urban centers," said Conference President Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer, who opened the press conference. "At a time when the nation is focused on the presidential campaign, we must ensure that the needs of those most in need in America are at the top of the candidates' policy agendas."

Significantly, the report cites high housing costs and the lack of affordable housing as a major cause of homelessness in households with children, as well as a major cause of hunger. The survey also notes the recent spike in foreclosures, the increased cost of living in general and the increased cost of food as major causes of hunger in America.

Unlike past reports, this year's report contains individual profiles of hunger and homelessness for each city that participated in the 2007 survey, as well as contact information for service providers in those cities. As a whole, cities reported that they are not able to meet the need for providing shelter for homelessness persons. In fact, twelve cities (52 percent) reported that they turn people away some or all of the time.

Additionally, cities reported a limited ability to meet the need for emergency food assistance. Across the survey cities, 17 percent of all people in need of food assistance and 15 percent of households with children are not receiving it. Nineteen cities expect demand for food assistance to increase in 2008.

"This report underscores the fact that issues of poverty in this country are often inter-related," said Mayor Frank Cownie, Co-Chair of the Conference's Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness. "It is instructive in that we must deal with these issues collectively to make sustainable impact, but cities cannot handle these challenges alone. We need all levels of government, as well as the private sector, to partner with us."

For the fifth year in a row, 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. "Sodexo is committed to being a driving and creative force that contributes to a hunger-free nation," said Lorna Donatone, President of Sodexo, Inc. School Services Division. "I am pleased to stand with the Conference of Mayors as a representative of over 125,000 employees working to reduce hunger in communities all across the nation."

Other key findings of the report are as follows:

Hunger -

- The main causes of hunger in survey cities are poverty, unemployment and high housing costs.
- Food Stamp benefits not keeping up with the increasing price of food is also a major factor.
- Sixteen (eighty percent) of survey cities reported that requests for emergency food assistance increased during the last year. Among fifteen cities that provided data, the median increase was 10 percent.
- The most commonly cited way to reduce hunger is through more affordable housing.

Homelessness -

- Among households with children, common causes of homelessness other than of the lack of affordable housing are poverty and domestic violence. Among single individuals, the most common causes are mental illness and substance abuse.
- During the last year, members of households with children made up 23 percent of persons using emergency shelter and transitional housing programs in survey cities, while single individuals made up 76 percent. Only one percent of persons in these programs were unaccompanied youth.
- Six cities reported an increase in the overall number of homeless persons accessing emergency shelter and transitional housing programs during the last year. Ten cities cited a specific increase in households with children. Seven cities reported a decrease in the number of individuals accessing emergency shelter and transitional housing programs.
- Disability is more prevalent among homeless singles than among adults in households with children. Rates of disability (mental illness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, physical and developmental disabilities) were approximately three times greater for singles than for adults in households with children.
- The average length of stay for persons in emergency shelter and transitional housing decreased from 2006. Cities reported that for households with children, the average length of a stay was 5.7 months in 2007. For singles, the average length of a single stay was reported as 4.7 months. In 2006, cities reported that an average length of stay was 8 months for both populations.

This year's report was prepared by Abt Associates and is based on data collected from The U.S. Conference of Mayors Hunger and Homelessness Information Questionnaire, completed by cities that reported on persons receiving food and shelter services for the period of November 1, 2006 through October 31, 2007. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the report, which can be downloaded in its entirety at The Conference of Mayors website at www.usmayors.org.

The 23 participating cities in this survey are members of The U.S. Conference of Mayors Task Force on Hunger and Homelessness and include the following:

Boston, MA
Charleston, SC
Charlotte, NC
Chicago, IL
Cleveland, OH
Denver, CO
Des Moines, IA
Detroit, MI
Kansas City, MO
Los Angeles, CA
Louisville, KY
Miami, FL

Nashville, TN
Philadelphia, PA
Phoenix, AZ
Portland, OR
Providence, RI
Salt Lake City, UT
San Francisco, CA
Santa Monica, CA
Seattle, WA
St. Paul, MN
Trenton, NJ

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 represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.



Sodexo, Inc. is a leading integrated food and facilities management services company in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, with \$7.3 billion in annual revenue and 125,000 employees. Sodexo serves more than ten million customers daily in corporations, health care, long term care and retirement centers, schools, college campuses, government and remote sites. Sodexo, Inc., headquartered in Gaithersburg, Md., is a subsidiary of Sodexo Alliance (www.sodexo.com). Sodexo, Inc. funds the Sodexo Foundation (www.helpstophunger.org), an independent charitable organization that, since its founding in 1999, has made more than \$9.2 million in grants to fight hunger in America.