



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **RECOVERY ACT HELPS MORE TENNESSEANS FEED THEIR FAMILIES** *FOOD STAMP BENEFITS START INCREASING TODAY*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Food Stamp program participants in Tennessee and across the nation are beginning to see the real effects of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. More than one million Tennesseans participate in the Food Stamp program, making up 473,000 households. Each month, approximately \$117 million in benefits are issued to these individuals and families.

Starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, all participants will see a 13.6 percent increase in their monthly Food Stamp allotments. Those dollars are 100 percent federally funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and they will directly benefit local businesses as participants buy groceries to feed their families. In general, a household of one will see a maximum increase of \$24 per month, and a family of four will receive an \$80 per month boost in benefits.

The number of Food Stamp cases in Tennessee has risen steadily over the last 12 months, up nearly 18 percent since February 2008. These federal benefits help increase a family's purchasing power, and they can even lift families out of [poverty](#).

"The Food Stamp program is a vital form of assistance for our moderate to low income families," said Governor Phil Bredesen. "Across the state, as more families turn to this important food assistance program, the additional benefits will better equip families to meet the challenges of these tough economic times. Having additional assistance to pay for food also makes it easier for families to pay the rent or mortgage or purchase other necessities."

The USDA urges states to increase participation in the program. Tennessee already ranks second in the nation for participation, with over 70 percent of eligible households enrolled. A recipient must be living at or below 130 percent of poverty (\$27,564 per year for a family of four). The Department of Human Services has offices in all 95 Tennessee counties where citizens can apply, and applications can also be submitted through the DHS Web site.

DHS issues Food Stamp benefits over the first 10 days of the month. The new increases will begin showing up on the household's electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card on April 1<sup>st</sup>. The EBT card is like a debit card that can be swiped at the check-out counter. Long gone are the days of the paper stamp. The automated process enables DHS to make such mass changes, like the new increase, seamlessly and quickly.

For more information on the Food Stamp program and the Recovery Act, visit the following links:  
[http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/afs\\_fsp.html](http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/afs_fsp.html) or <http://www.recovery.gov/>.

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