

## Promising Practices in Food Stamp Program Outreach Targeted to Hispanic Populations



**Pennsylvania** – When Allegheny County experienced its first noticeable influx of Hispanic immigrants a couple of years ago, the Hunger Services Program of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh contacted the newly formed Hispanic Center of Pittsburgh to partner in coordinating and delivering services to low income households. Hunger Services' Food Stamp outreach program offers pre-screening and application assistance. They attribute their success with the Hispanic community to the availability of corollary services offered at the Urban League (employment, housing, and emergency food) through which they have been able to build the trust necessary to be effective at

encouraging low income clients to apply for Federal nutrition assistance. *For more information, contact: Jim Jackson, Hunger Services of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, 412- 325-0745, [jjackson@ulpgh.org](mailto:jjackson@ulpgh.org).*

**Arizona** – The Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA), a recipient of a food stamp outreach grant in FY2007, provides outreach materials and makes presentations to Spanish-speaking groups to encourage use of a website that pre-screens for 19 local, state and Federal social service programs. The site is [ArizonaSelfHelp.org](http://ArizonaSelfHelp.org) (ASH). Pre-screening is available in English or Spanish and many of the program applications are available online. Because it is vital to address language barriers and trust issues when working with those who fear accessing the social services network, ACAA partners with trusted individuals in the community. The success of this strategy was demonstrated recently at an elementary school where ACAA talked with Hispanic mothers of school-aged children who are homeless or doubling up with friends or relatives. The Homeless School Liaison who works with the parents on a daily basis served as an interpreter. The mothers present were extremely engaged and asked a lot of important questions. *For more information, contact: Katie Kahle, Program Manager, Arizona Community Action Association, 2700 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 3040, Phoenix AZ, 602-604-0640, [www.azcaa.org](http://www.azcaa.org).*

**New York** – The Hunger Action Network of New York State, a recipient of a food stamp outreach grant in FY2007, found that the biggest challenge in reaching low income Hispanic residents in rural areas of Hudson Valley is a lack of awareness that the Food Stamp Program exists. To overcome this barrier, they designed Food Stamp outreach brochures in Spanish with tear-off tabs containing their outreach hotline number. These were posted on bulletin boards in places frequented by low income families in the area, such as bodegas, libraries and coin-operated laundry facilities. In addition, they partnered with churches, food pantries and Head Start programs to distribute brochures to parishioners and clients. *For more information, contact: Veda Myers, Food Stamp Program Outreach Coordinator, Hunger Action Network of New York State, 260 W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 504, New York, New York 10018, 212-741-8192, ext. 2#, [vmyers@hungeractionnys.org](mailto:vmyers@hungeractionnys.org).*

**Virginia** – Twice a month, a bilingual eligibility specialist or customer service representative of the Richmond City Department of Social Services takes Food Stamp Program applications and answers questions at a nearby apartment complex where more than 90 percent of the tenants speak Spanish. The agency conducts business in an unused apartment and advertises the availability of its services in the rental office. They also have bilingual eligibility specialists at its Southside Office to assist customers. Speaking the language of potential customers helps them to feel comfortable and relaxed. *For more information, contact: Michael Muse, Manager, 804-646-3178, [musemj@ci.richmond.va.us](mailto:musemj@ci.richmond.va.us).*





**Connecticut** – Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries, a recipient of a food stamp outreach grant in FY2006, works exclusively with low wage Hispanic immigrants in their community. They attribute some success to the fact that their offices are in a church which is perceived as safe ground, but the primary factor is the high quality of their outreach worker. “Word spread fast in the community that she would help them. They do not come here for our emergency food pantry; they come to see our FSP outreach worker. For successful outreach, one has to be available to the target population. Because they work during the day, one has to be flexible enough to meet with them at their

community gatherings, usually a church event; and one has to live by one’s word.” *For more information, contact: Susan Pronovost, Food Stamp Grant Project Director, Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries, 16 Church Street, Waterbury, CT 06702, susan.pronovost@snet.net.*

**California** – The Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz, a recipient of a food stamp outreach grant in FY2002, aired television ads aimed at marketing Food Stamp Program benefits as a nutrition and health solution. They also completed a five-minute video in English and Spanish, which answers 12 commonly-asked questions about Food Stamp Program benefits. The video is used by health and social service agencies on California’s central coast. *For more information, contact: Lee Mercer, Director of Education and Outreach, Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties, P.O. Box 990, Watsonville, CA 95077 (831) 722-7110 x 220, lee@thefoodbank.org.*

**California** – The Community Action Partnership of Orange County provides enrollment workshops which include prescreening, application assistance and transportation for potentially eligible recipients. Hiring culturally appropriate outreach staff has helped them reach legal Mexican immigrants, the County’s largest underserved group. *For more information, contact: Jerry Sanders, Commodity Supplemental Food Program Manager, Community Action Partnership of Orange County, 12640 Knott Street, Garden Grove, CA 92841 (714) 897-6670, jsanders@capoc.org.*

**Montana** – To help farm workers, the Lake County Office of Public Assistance in Polson brings the Food Stamp Program quite literally to the field. Under tents and awnings in a field adjacent to the packing warehouse, the local office staff have been issuing timely, accurate benefits to more than 400 seasonal farm worker households during a two-week period each July since 1995. For most households, there was no one who could go to the local office to do the paperwork, so the local office and the growers worked together to find a way to help farm workers without taking them out of the field during the most critical hours of the day. *For more information, contact: Marilyn Becker, Director, Lake County Office of Public Assistance, 406-883-7830, mbecker@mt.gov .*

**Kentucky** - Boone and Kenton Counties provide outreach to Hispanic and Latino communities at the annual *Feria de Salud* (Health Fair) which attracts over 300 participants. Their booth is staffed by Spanish speaking professionals and stocked with a variety of brochures in Spanish about the Food Stamp Program. Working with other community agencies made it possible to reach low income families who are hampered by limited language skills. At the same time, the quality of outreach conducted by these Family Support Offices has earned the admiration of their partners. *For more information, contact: Sarah Hughes, RN, Special Projects Coordinator, North Central Area Health Education Center, 859-384-2209.*

**Connecticut** – The Hispanic Health Council of Hartford and the CT Department of Social Services collaborated to produce a *fotonovela* titled *In Times of Need, Food Stamps Are Here to Help*. Written in a culturally appropriate format at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level, the *fotonovela* educates the reader about food stamps and the health benefits that may result from participating in the program. *For more information, contact: Richard Burt, Connecticut Department of Social Services, Hartford, CT, 860-424-5384, richard.burt@po.state.ct.us.*

