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State offers help to more Oregon families as holidays approach Governor visits branch, thanks workers

SALEM – As the demand for services continues to increase, more Oregon families than ever before will be counting on economic services to help them through the second holiday season of the economic crisis.

New figures released from the Oregon Department of Human Services show that assistance to Oregon families through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the food stamp program, continued to increase in October. The increases over the past months are unprecedented, and Oregon officials expect to see continued growth in the need for assistance to individuals and families.

Since Oregon's economic downturn began in July 2008, the number of SNAP recipients has increased by 36 percent. Last month, 654,437 individuals received assistance, up from 482,407 in July 2008 -- an increase of over 172,000 Oregonians.

In order to keep up with the increased pace, the Children, Adults and Families Division at DHS has transformed its intake process to reduce wait times and eliminate backlogs. Now Oregonians receive their benefits an average of nine days sooner than they did one year ago. In most places across the state, families in need get same-day service.

Governor Kulongoski dropped by to visit the DHS office in southeast Portland this morning to talk about how the state is helping those most affected by the recession and to meet some of the Oregonians who are relying on state services to make it through these difficult times, especially during the holiday season.
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The Governor also met with front line staff to discuss the importance of their work and to praise other state and private programs working to reduce hunger for Oregon families and their children.

"Oregon's state assistance programs, like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and the food stamp program, work together with government and community partners to provide a network of safeguards -- whether it is food stamps, nutritional support programs, free breakfast, lunch or after-school snacks, or emergency food boxes through the Oregon Food Bank Network -- each day, tens of thousands of Oregonians turn to these programs to help feed their families," Kulongoski said.

"This economic crisis is having the greatest effect on families, especially low-income families with children," said Erinn Kelley-Siel, director of DHS Children, Adults and Families Division. "These programs are a primary part of the safety net helping families meet their basic needs and ensuring children remain safely in their homes."

Like SNAP benefits, demand for cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program has also increased since last year. In October, a total of 24,775 families with children received this benefit in Oregon, an increase of 20 percent over last year. TANF is available only to parents with children 18 years of age and under; the program provides cash assistance to very low-income families and builds personal responsibility and self reliance through job preparation and on-the-job training.

To learn if you might be eligible for SNAP benefits, TANF, Oregon Health Plan or other services, visit your local DHS office. You may also go online to OregonHelps and see if you may be eligible for these and other programs at <http://oregonhelps.org/>. To download applications for TANF and SNAP benefits, go to: www.oregon.gov/DHS/assistance/. DHS also partners with SafeNet to help people to find local resources such as local food pantries or other assistance. The number is 800-SAFENET (800-723-3638).

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Attached: chart of Oregon recipients by region

	Individuals Receiving SNAP Benefits (Food Stamps) October 2009	Percentage Increase Over July 2008 Baseline		Families Receiving Cash Assistance (TANF) October 2009	Percentage Increase Over One Year Ago
District 1 (Clatsop, Columbia & Tillamook)	18,316	42%		391	6%
District 2 (Multnomah)	130,828	36%		7,203	24%
District 3 (Polk, Marion, Yamhill)	95,523	33%		4,275	27%
District 4 (Benton, Lincoln, Linn)	42,513	33%		1,354	8%
District 5 (Lane)	69,471	34%		1,948	17%
District 6 (Douglas)	23,336	25%		814	-3%
District 7 (Coos, Curry)	18,343	28%		679	15%
District 8 (Jackson, Josephine)	62,292	34%		2,008	19%
District 9 (Hood River, Gilliam, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler)	8,203	21%		187	3%
District 10 (Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson)	37,294	44%		997	20%
District 11 (Klamath, Lake)	16,113	26%		402	24%
District 12 (Morrow, Umatilla)	15,978	19%		474	11%
District 13 (Baker, Union, Wallowa)	8,633	28%		254	11%
District 14 (Grant, Harney, Malheur)	9,599	24%		168	12%
District 15 (Clackamas)	39,247	40%		1,266	12%
District 16 (Washington)	58,748	50%		2,355	38%
STATE TOTAL	654,437	36%		24,775	20%