



Poverty Figures Offer Bleak Forecast For City

By: Ruschell Boone

New census figures released Thursday show millions more Americans are living in poverty nationwide, an increase that can already be seen at food pantries across the five boroughs. NY1's Ruschell Boone filed the following report.

Standing on line for free food was not something Queens resident Zoraida thought she would ever do, but that changed after she lost her job two years ago. Now she's among the dozens of people who visit the Bread of Life Food Pantry in Long Island City every week.

"Sometimes these lines are so long they run out of food before they can help all the other people," Zoraida said.

"It use to be 60 now it's 70 to a hundred everyday. All last week there were 70 each day," said Barbara Jones of the Center Of Hope International Bread of Life.

The increased traffic at local food pantries are not surprising given the latest census numbers on income, poverty and health coverage.

The federal government says the number of people in poverty in this country increased by more than 2.5 million between 2007 and last year, with almost 40 million now below the poverty line. Average household income fell by almost \$2,000 and more than 46 million have no health insurance.

The government says the decrease in the average income coincides with the recession that started in December 2007. And the dip has broken a string of increases in the previous three years.

Figures for the city won't be in until later this month but the New York City Coalition Against Hunger is predicting dismal numbers.

"Given the magnitude of the increase in poverty nationwide and given our experience everyday at food pantries like this with the needs exploding there is no question whatsoever that there is going to be a dramatic increase in poverty in New York City when those numbers come out," said NYC Coalition Against Hunger Executive Director Joel Berg.