

# Losing battle to feed hungry in New York City

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More New Yorkers are hitting soup kitchens and food pantries this year, but the cash-starved centers can't keep pace with the growing demand, a new hunger survey says.

Emergency food providers - like soup kitchens - served 28% more people this year than last, said the [New York City](#) Coalition Against Hunger's survey, which is being released today.

That increase followed a 20% rise in the number of folks using the food centers between 2006 and 2007.

The trend is expected to continue.

"While the results from this year's survey were sobering, we unfortunately expect that next year's survey results will be even more staggering as the economy continues to decline," said Coalition

Executive Director Joel Berg.

Already, 89% of the 308 food banks surveyed said they believed the need for them will rise in the coming months.

The Coalition called for more government funding, arguing that 69% of the soup kitchens and food pantries reported they didn't have enough supplies to feed all the hungry.

Most of the centers are suffering from a slash in federal and local funding because of budget deficits, as food prices soar.

They are also facing a dwindling number of donors, forcing an appeal for help.



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Black Rock employees Leo Altieri (l.), 21, and Mel Lopez(r.), 27, both facilities specialists, load food into boxes. Black Rock Financial employees collected 5,500 food items for City Harvest.

"As the holiday season approaches, the economic stimulus package won't come in time to help many in need," said [Aine Duggan](#), vice president of the New York City Food Bank.

"We're hoping that New Yorkers can reach into their pockets to help."

Food banks in the [Bronx](#) showed the biggest increase in demand, with [Brooklyn](#) and [Staten Island](#) trailing closely behind. Centers in [Queens](#) had the hardest time meeting the ballooning demand.

"We have the space and staff to expand, but we are handicapped by the lack of equipment to store the frozen items," said [Lawrence Charles](#), who runs a pantry at [First United Methodist Church](#) in [Jamaica, Queens](#).

Many providers said they reached into their own wallets to buy food so they didn't have to turn away the needy.

The city isn't likely to increase funds but officials are trying to encourage New Yorkers to sign up for food stamps by reaching out to people who qualify for [Medicaid](#).

A summer push in Queens resulted in 9,000 residents getting food stamps, said [City Council Speaker Christine Quinn](#).

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