

## **Keeping Our Children Hungry:**

*South Carolina Food Stamp Program Fails to Deliver*

By Deborah Halliday  
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***South Carolina Fair Share • Northwest Federation of Community Organizations***

**Acknowledgements**

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## Executive Summary

Ms. Constance Etheredge was recently laid off from her job at a local mill. A struggling single mother of five children, Mr. Etheredge had no food for her family and no money to buy food. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the agency that manages food stamps, has a fast-track process called “expedited services” for families like Ms. Etheredge’s who are at-risk of going without food, and requires local welfare offices to screen all applicants for expedited services. Eligible families receive food stamps within seven days. Ms. Etheredge told the welfare office that she needed food for her family and had no money, but the local welfare office neglected to properly screen her for expedited services. Ms. Etheredge and her children waited over a month before receiving food stamp assistance.

**“Sometimes me and my kids go without food – it’s rarely lasted throughout the month. I told the caseworker I needed help *now*. She didn’t get me food within the week: instead, she told me she forgot to send in my information.”**

*Ms. Constance Etheredge*

Unfortunately for the low-income families of South Carolina, Ms. Etheredge’s story is not uncommon. Federal guidelines designed to provide families with ready access to food assistance are regularly ignored by local South Carolina welfare offices, and the state is doing little to rectify the situation. According to the USDA, one in ten South Carolinian households are “food insecure,” meaning families do not have enough food to meet their basic needs;<sup>1</sup> one-third of food insecure households regularly experience *painful* feelings of hunger.<sup>2</sup> The level of unmet need is mounting: since 1997, there has been a *40 percent increase* in South Carolinian families who experience food insecurity with hunger.<sup>3</sup> And still the state does little to help these families prosper.

The Food Stamp Program is South Carolina’s most important program in the fight against hunger, particularly for children. Over 50 percent of food stamp recipients in South Carolina are children.<sup>4</sup> The Food Stamp Program, while modest in its monthly benefits (a family of three with a parent working a minimum wage job 34 hours per week could receive \$134 per month), can mean the difference between hunger and a healthy diet for families. Evidence from recent research about child nutrition shows that, in addition to having a detrimental effect on the cognitive development of children, inadequate nutrition results in lost knowledge, brainpower, and productivity for the nation.<sup>5</sup> A hungry child struggles more in school as well. School-aged children who are hungry cannot concentrate nor do they do as well as others in the tasks they need to perform to learn the basics.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the benefits food stamps offer families, participation in South Carolina's Food Stamp Program is declining. Since 1996, participation has dropped by 10 percent.<sup>7</sup> At this time, 42% of families eligible for food stamps, or 246,000 poor people, are *not enrolled in food stamps, due to South Carolina's failure to make available this basic service.*<sup>8</sup>

South Carolina Fair Share (SCFS) and the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations (NWFCO) undertook this study to understand why so many eligible families are going without needed food stamp assistance. SCFS identified 27 low-income families and tracked their experience applying for food stamps at local welfare offices. Parent applicants were interviewed after each interaction with the welfare office in accordance to a protocol developed for this project.

This study found that the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS), which administers the state's Food Stamp Program enrollment process, constructs barriers so onerous that families struggle to access services to which they are entitled. DSS has failed to design a system that is easy to navigate or that assures those who need emergency food assistance receive food quickly. DSS' application process is unnecessarily complicated and time-consuming; parents must wade through an application that is confusing and invasive, and endure degrading interactions with caseworkers in the hopes of obtaining adequate food for the family dinner table. Barriers placed in front of needy applicants are not uniform across counties. DSS office can do it right, but no Quality Assurance program exists to make sure that county offices do their job properly.

These barriers depress food stamp enrollment. This report identifies five specific barriers that obstruct applicants during the application process, including one that appears to be in violation of federal and state law.

- DSS fails to provide families in crisis with immediate, federally-required food stamp assistance
- DSS uses an arbitrary, inflexible food stamp interview process
- DSS uses a food stamp application that is needlessly confusing and invasive
- DSS provides inadequate and discourteous service
- DSS' outreach efforts are inadequate, and DSS fails to connect applicants to key supportive services

DSS has the power to eliminate all the barriers identified in this report. DSS can correct these problems by:

- Guaranteeing access to expedited services for eligible applicants in crisis
- Simplifying and accelerating the application process
- Treating applicants with dignity and respect
- Developing a strong Quality Assurance program for county operations
- Initiating an effective outreach program to educate potential applicants

Section Five of this report fully explains the actions DSS should immediately take to solve the problems experienced by the 27 families in this study.

## **Introduction**

When a parent cannot get enough food on the family dinner table, serious problems result. Children who do not receive an adequate diet through the critical years when nutrition is important to brain growth and mental and physical development can suffer long-term health deficiencies.<sup>9</sup> But there's help for families who are unable to purchase adequate food stuffs on their own. The federally-funded and state-implemented Food Stamp Program is designed to supplement low-income families' incomes in order to ensure they are able to purchase an adequate low-cost diet.<sup>10</sup>

The Food Stamp Program is South Carolina's most important program in the fight against hunger, particularly for children. Over 50 percent of food stamp recipients in South Carolina are children.<sup>11</sup> The Food Stamp Program, while modest in its monthly benefits (a family of three with a parent working a minimum wage job 34 hours per week could receive \$134 per month), can mean the difference between hunger and a healthy diet for families. In an average year, over 300,000 households receive food stamps in South Carolina.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the benefits food stamps offer families, participation in South Carolina's Food Stamp Program is declining. Since 1996, participation has dropped by 10 percent.<sup>13</sup> According to the USDA, one in ten South Carolinian households are "food insecure," meaning families do not have enough food to meet their basic needs;<sup>14</sup> one-third of food insecure households regularly experience *painful* feelings of hunger.<sup>15</sup> The level of unmet need is mounting: since 1997, there has been a *40 percent increase* in South Carolinian families who experience food insecurity with hunger.<sup>16</sup> At this time, 42% of families eligible for food stamps, or 246,000 poor people, are *not enrolled in food stamps, due to South Carolina's failure to make available this basic service*.<sup>17</sup> And still the state does little to help these families prosper.

To understand why so many eligible families are going without needed food stamp assistance, South Carolina Fair Share and the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations interviewed 27 low-income families who sought to apply for food stamps at local welfare offices. We examined the enrollment

policies and practices at three DSS local branch offices in Fairfield, Orangeburg and Saluda counties in order to identify policies and practices that hinder applicants from applying for food stamps.

Section Three of this report describes the key findings of the study. In Section Four, five barriers to enrollment erected by DSS, including one that appears to violate federal and state law, are outlined in detail. Section Five provides concrete solutions DSS can take to implement structural changes, create policies and procedures, and train and evaluate local welfare office managers and workers in order to eliminate all the barriers identified by this study.

### ***Section Three: Key Findings***

**Barrier One: DSS fails to provide families in crisis with immediate, federally-required food stamp assistance.** DSS failed to properly screen 80 percent of applicants for emergency food services. Of those applicants DSS neglected to counsel, over one-half were in crisis situations and needed food immediately. A review of their personal income and assets demonstrated they were likely to be eligible for expedited service and should have received food stamps within seven days.

**Barrier Two: DSS uses an arbitrary, inflexible food stamp interview process.** Some local DSS offices offer no walk-in hours and instead assign an appointment time to applicants; 25 percent of the time applicants reported that the appointments were inconvenient due to school and work conflicts. Appointments are often scheduled two to four weeks out from original request, violating access to expedited services.

**Barrier Three: DSS uses a food stamp application that is needlessly confusing and invasive.** More than one-third of applicants were unable to complete the application because it was unclear, and twenty-five percent rated the DSS application “difficult to understand.” DSS failed to provide applicants with pertinent information about which documents to provide during the application process, leading to multiple trips to the DSS office.

**Barrier Four: DSS provides inadequate and discourteous service.** Applicants did not receive basic instructions on how to apply for food stamps. Furthermore, applicants were not given a phone number to call if they had any questions, nor were they informed about grievance procedures. Applicants reported that caseworkers made disparaging comments about their looks, lifestyles, and life choices.

**Barrier Five: DSS' outreach efforts are inadequate, and DSS fails to connect applicants to key supportive services.** Outreach efforts are critical to getting families the food assistance they are eligible for. Yet *not one single applicant* reported ever having heard about the program through a DSS promotion. Furthermore, 92 percent of the time DSS neglected to tell applicants they may be eligible for additional public assistance programs or supportive services available in their community.

#### **Section Four: Barriers to Enrollment**

**Barrier One: DSS fails to provide families in crisis with immediate, federally-required food stamp assistance.**

##### **Mr. Curtis Yarborough's Story**

Mr. Curtis Yarborough is unable to work because of a history of medical illness. Although he tries to do odd jobs, such as picking up trash around restaurants, a nearby chicken plant, and at convenient stores, the cash he receives is limited. When Mr. Yarborough went to a local DSS to apply for food stamps, he was told he needed to wait 30 days before he could receive food stamps. He told DSS he had no money, and that he was in need of food right away. He was sent away from the local office, without having completed an application for food stamps. "When you been mistreated for so long some things just don't matter," Mr. Yarborough says. "These people don't want to help anybody."

##### **Ms. Tasha Harrison's Story**

Ms. Tasha Harrison and her three children live in a transitional living community for homeless families while Ms. Harrison pursues a college degree in social work. Last November, Ms. Harrison went into premature labor and had to be hospitalized. During the time she was in the hospital, her re-certification papers for food stamps came due, and she was unable to complete the paperwork on time. Her family lost their food stamp benefits. When she went to reapply for food stamps and explained her situation, she asked her case worker to expedite her food stamp application. The DSS caseworker replied that DSS "does not give emergency food stamps anymore," and that he was not obligated to process her application until one month from the date that Ms. Harrison applied for assistance.

##### *Pull Quotes:*

*"[The DSS caseworker] didn't offer me emergency food stamps or food from the food bank. I know they have it, but it must be for certain people."* Ms. Constance Etheredge

##### *Findings:*



- DSS failed to tell 80 percent of applicants they may be eligible for expedited food services.
- Of those applicants DSS neglected to counsel, over one-half were in crisis situations and needed food immediately. According to SCFS review of personal income and assets, they appeared to be eligible for expedited services.
- Only eight percent of applicants were properly screened for expedited services by being asked if they needed immediate assistance with buying food or were in an emergency situation.

The general lack of urgency and sluggishness evident in DSS branch offices can have devastating effects on families with emergency food needs. Expedited processing is a federally-mandated policy stating that local offices must provide food stamps to qualified individuals within seven days rather than the standard 30 days. To be entitled to expedited services, an applicant must have almost no income or assets and be at serious risk of not being able to access food.<sup>18</sup> Expedited service is a critical component of the Food Stamp Program: it reduces the time an applicant in crisis must wait to receive food stamps. Families in emergency are desperately waiting four weeks for food assistance because DSS fails to properly screen their needs.

### **DSS' faulty expedited food stamp process may violate federal law.**

Under federal law, every food stamp applicant must be screened for expedited service. The USDA requires all states to design application procedures that identify households eligible for expedited food stamp processing the same day that assistance is requested.<sup>19</sup> This is not happening in any consistent or reliable way in South Carolina. Additionally, when an applicant contacts the local welfare office in Fairfield County requesting food stamp services, the applicant is told they must wait for an appointment time, often 15 to 30 days out from the original request. Fairfield County policy appears to violate federal law, which states that a household has the right to file an application form on the same day it contacts the food stamp office.<sup>20</sup>

### **Barrier Two: DSS uses an arbitrary, inflexible food stamp interview process.**

#### **Angelet's Story**

*Angelet is the mother of four children who recently began receiving food stamp assistance. When asked if she and her family had ever run out of food, Angelet said, "my stomach hurts just thinking about it."*

*"As far as food stamps go, they help a lot. But not enough – before the end of the month we are always scraping to get by. It is real stressful. I went down there [to DSS] to apply for food stamps since I was out of work. This time I had good*

luck. I remember once, though, the caseworker lost all my information. Social security numbers for me and my kids, my signatures from previous employers. You have to get the signatures from your last three employers and that can take a day and a half riding the bus and all. So, when she lost them I had to start the process all over again. I remember another time my sister Brenda turned in her information and the caseworker at DSS said they never got it. All of a sudden they cut off her food stamps and it took a real effort to get it back. It was their mistake, but we got punished for it.”

#### *Pull Quotes*

*“I asked [the local DSS office] to send the information through the mail so that I would not have to go all the way up there [to a local DSS office] to apply for food stamps. But they were unsympathetic and of course said I had to personally come to the office.”* Ms. Gina Oliver

*“It’s really hard trying to feed a family on so little. I had to turn in some paperwork once to my caseworker. I was two days late and she reduced my food stamps from \$426 to \$234 because I was late. We didn’t eat much that month.”* Ms. Aretha Weldon

*“I’d like it if the local DSS office could be open some weekends and evenings. That’d keep some parents from having to lose a day of pay just to apply for food stamps.”* Ms. Tasha Harrison

#### *Findings:*

- Intake procedures vary widely from county to county and even within local offices, with little regard for customer service or quality control.
- For no apparent reason, some applicants were given appointments and some were required to return during mass-intake times. Fifty-nine percent of applicants were given a scheduled appointment, and 41 percent of applicants were told they must come in during walk-in hours.
- 25 percent of the time applicants reported that the appointments were inconvenient due to work and school conflicts
- One-half of the applicants who requested alternative interview times (because they work or attend school) were denied an alternative interview time.
- One county office offers no walk-in hours, offers no appointments on Wednesdays, and requires applicants to schedule an appointment, often 15 to 30 days out from the applicant’s original request for food stamp assistance.

DSS ignores the serious needs of food stamp applicants by establishing arbitrary interview systems that keep families from accessing food. Some DSS offices force applicants to wait two to four weeks for an assigned interview (violating federally-required immediate access to expedited services). Other offices only offer walk-in hours, so applicants must take a chance they won’t arrive on a busy

day and find that they will not be interviewed that day. DSS' refusal to send an applicant food stamp information through the mail appears to violate federal law which states that a local welfare office must mail an application form to applicants who do not wish to come to the office.<sup>21</sup> Many applicants cannot afford to own a car, so they must spend the time and money to navigate public transportation to return to the DSS office. Worse still, not all DSS offices are located on public bus lines, so applicants without cars must pay for a taxi, or arrange a ride with an acquaintance. For applicants who are working, time spent at the welfare office means losing pay and endangering the financial stability of their families. For applicants who are in training or who are searching for work, long waits at DSS offices interferes with their ability to become self-sufficient.

**Barrier Three: DSS uses a food stamp application that is confusing and invasive.**

**Ms. Constance Etheredge's Story**

Ms. Constance Etheredge is a single mother of five children who recently lost her job at a local mill. She currently shares a rented two-bedroom mobile home with her father and her children. Recently, she sent her two eldest children to stay with their grandmother. "I didn't want to separate my children," Ms. Etheredge said. "But I didn't have a choice, because I had no money." When she went into the local welfare office to apply for food stamps, the caseworker asked her personal questions unrelated to the application. "I get nervous every time I have to go to DSS," she said. "My case worker makes me feel bad when she asks me questions about my children's father. She asked me very personal questions about our relationship that didn't have anything to do with me getting assistance. They also want me to sign off on a document saying they can talk to my neighbors about me and my lifestyle. I'm poor, and my kids need food. Does that give DSS the right to invade my privacy?"

*Pull quotes*

*"The DSS caseworker told me I needed to develop a plan to prevent another pregnancy."*  
Ms. Josie Jackson, mother of one child.

*"One visit, the DSS worker asked me about my children's father. When I said the father was not involved in their life, the caseworker started asking me personal questions. I was married and it didn't work out. I don't know where he is. It should be left at that..."*  
Ms. Annette Woods

*Findings:*

- Over one-third of applicants were unable to complete the application because it was unclear.
- 26 percent of applicants rated the DSS application "difficult to understand."

- DSS failed to tell 36 percent of applicants what documents to provide during the application process, and gave only one in ten applicants any written information to refer to when collecting documents.
- Over one-quarter of applicants' were unaware that DSS is empowered to contact neighbors and employers to verify any facts relevant to the applicant's eligibility for food stamps.
- 73 percent of applicants were not aware that they must cooperate with child support enforcement by signing the worksheet.

Applicants who are confused by the complexity of an application form or are required to produce a long list of documents are less likely to follow-through on applying for assistance. States have wide discretion over what an application looks like, how long it is, the language used, and – to a large extent – what documentation is required. The federal government places minimal verification requirements on states to certify or recertify food stamp recipients' eligibility.<sup>22</sup> Yet DSS has chosen to use a long and difficult application. DSS chooses to require applicants to sign an extensive, two-page document, titled "Your Rights and Responsibilities," which gives the state broad latitude to intrude on an applicants' life. For example, DSS forces applicants to agree to allow DSS to contact their neighbors and employers to verify income, medical history, "and any other facts relevant to [the applicant's] eligibility."<sup>23</sup>

It is the responsibility of the caseworker to ensure applicants understand what they are signing. Yet, over one-quarter of applicants' were unaware aware that DSS is empowered to contact neighbors and employers to verify any facts relevant to the applicant's eligibility for food stamps. Applicants are also required to cooperate with child support enforcement. DSS fails to counsel families fleeing violent homes that they do not have to cooperate with child support enforcement – which often entails identifying paternity and locating a father in order to collect child support – if they have good cause. Seventy-three percent of applicants were not aware that they must cooperate with child support enforcement by signing the worksheet.

### **DSS' application rejects federal guidance.**

The USDA urges states to simplify their application to eliminate barriers that prevent families from receiving food stamps.<sup>24</sup> Yet DSS has chosen to ignore the USDA guidelines: DSS does not consistently provide applicants with a list of required documentation, nor is the application written in clear and simple language.<sup>25</sup> These small steps would help families gain access to the services to which they are eligible.

### **Barrier Four: DSS provides inadequate and discourteous service.**

### **Ms. Gina Oliver's Story**

Ms. Gina Oliver is a college-educated woman with professional training as a seamstress and a beautician. Her son, Nicholas, was born prematurely with disabilities. While Ms. Oliver stayed by Nicholas' side for three months in the hospital's neonatal care unit, DSS cut her off from food stamps for missing a paperwork deadline. To reapply for food stamps, Ms. Oliver was told she had to go the local welfare office. [The state failed to mail her an application when she requested one, an option that is federally required.] As there are no buses that run out to her local welfare office, she tried to take a cab but could not afford it, and eventually her son's social worker drove her to the office. "The humiliating thing about applying for food stamps is that [DSS] treats you as if you don't matter," Ms. Oliver said. "I don't even know how to describe it. It is as if somebody were to blow their nose on a tissue and hand it to you to dispose of – that is their attitude."

#### *Pull quotes:*

*"Everybody is not alike. DSS doesn't really look at the individual situation, they think everybody is trying to take advantage of the system. That's not true."* Ms. Aretha Weldon

*"DSS workers may get tired of seeing the same people all the time, but they should try to find out what's really going on in people's lives instead of writing them off as being lazy and not wanting any better."* Ms. Annette Woods

*"I called the DSS worker to reschedule my appointment because I had jury duty and I needed to go to my daughter's school evaluation. She told me that was my problem and then she even hung up on me. I was shocked."* Ms. Crystal Monroe

#### *Findings:*

- Seven out of ten applicants were not given a telephone number or another way to obtain help while filling out the application.
- Every single applicant reported there were no directional signs in the DSS office to help identify where to apply for food stamps.
- Applicants most frequently rated the helpfulness of the front desk as "not very helpful."
- DSS failed to ask applicants if they had any questions or to counsel applicants on the basic requirements of the Food Stamp Program 44 percent of the time.
- Only 15 percent of applicants were told or saw information about the grievance procedure.

Applicants who don't understand the food stamp enrollment process and are not offered any assistance with the application are more likely to be discouraged and

miss out on vital food stamp benefits. Oftentimes, a local welfare office caseworker is the only “face” of the program a food stamp recipient will ever see. The treatment an applicant receives from a caseworker can permanently shape an applicant’s sense of the program. Yet DSS maintains a culture of poor customer service. For example, DSS requires recipients to attend a mandatory training on the use of an electronic benefits card, yet DSS does not allow children to attend the training nor do they offer childcare. With over 50 percent of food stamp applicants being children, one would think DSS could devise a more family-friendly system of support to help families along.

**Barrier Five: DSS’ outreach efforts are inadequate, and DSS fails to connect applicants to key supportive services.**

*Pull quotes:*

*“I found a trailer for me and the kids. I asked my caseworker if DSS could help me with the deposit. She said they don’t do that. I asked if anybody else could help me. She said she didn’t know who provided that service. I think DSS should have information like that for people.”* Ms. Constance Etheredge

*“It is really hard during the winter and I do not get assistance with the electricity bill which in winter is double what it usually is. My food stamps run out the third week of the month and I try to find money to get food for the end of the month. If there’s help out there, surely DSS should help me find it.”* Ms. Gina Oliver

*Findings:*

- Not one single applicant reported ever having seen a poster or television ad or heard a radio ad promoting the Food Stamp Program.
- 93 percent of applicants reported that DSS neglected to tell them they may be eligible for additional public assistance programs (Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program, Child Support Services, etc.).
- 59 percent of applicants asked by DSS to give their name to local social service organizations for additional assistance agreed to this assistance, yet DSS only offered this point of contact to thirty percent of applicants.

Outreach efforts are critical to ensure eligible families receive food stamps. Yet parents must know that food assistance is available or they cannot apply. The USDA has urged all states to develop a state education plan to inform all low-income households about the availability, eligibility requirements, application procedures and benefits of the Food Stamp Program.<sup>26</sup> Since 1988, states have had the ability to get federal funds to cover 50 percent of the cost of outreach activities for the Food Stamp Program. Yet, to date, only eight states have submitted an outreach plan to increase enrollment.<sup>27</sup> South Carolina has failed to submit a food stamp outreach plan.

DSS fails to implement one of the cheapest and most basic types of outreach: applicants are not being told about other programs for which they may be eligible. The local welfare office is the central location for low-income families to access food stamp assistance, health care for their children and themselves, and child support services. Yet DSS fails to provide this critical link for families. As a result, families are poorer. DSS also neglects to connect applicants with available community-based resources. Even when asked, DSS rarely told applicants of the availability of local food pantries and rental or utility assistance programs. Failure to play a role in helping families navigate the systems of assistance perpetuates applicants' sense that DSS doesn't really care about them or their families.

### ***Section Five: Solutions***

The barriers documented in this report can be eliminated by decisive action by the director of the South Carolina Department of Social Services. Structural changes, improvements in the standard practices of the Department, and an increased investment in providing information and training to caseworkers can make the process of applying for food stamps a faster and smoother process for families. The members of South Carolina Fir Share call on the Department to enact the following solutions:

#### **A. Guarantee access to expedited services for eligible applicants in crisis**

- Inform clients about how the expedited food stamp process works.
- Train staff on how to identify clients needing expedited service.
- Develop and use an effective screening tool to identify people in need of emergency assistance.

#### **B. Simplify and accelerate the application process**

- Encourage applicants to file an application form – even one that is incomplete – on the same day they first contact the DSS office. The clock starts ticking on the 30-day wait period when an applicant hands in an application. Failure on the part of DSS to inform applicants results in longer waiting periods for food.
- Streamline the interview process so that clients wait no more than 2 days for an interview.
- Provide applicants with a clear list of documentation required.
- Provide clients with a specific interview time if the client determines it is more convenient.
- Provide clients with sufficient information so they do not have to repeatedly contact the office.
- Increase access to the Food Stamp Program by providing evening hours for working and student clients.

- Inform eligible applicants of their right to a home or phone interview. Improve the phone system so clients can access the information they need.

### **C. Treat applicants with dignity and respect**

- Improve client relations by training all workers on customer service.
- Train front desk personnel to fully explain the food stamp process and to engage with clients.
- Use directional signs in the DSS office.
- Provide clients with the required information about the grievance and appeal procedures. This information should be written in simple to understand language.
- Ensure the above actions are taken by hiring an independent research group to survey clients about the treatment they receive and track improvement through the implementation of these measures.

### **D. Develop a strong Quality Assurance program for county operations**

- DSS needs to develop a quality assurance mechanism in which county directors and county program supervisors are annually assessed in part on their office's treatment of clients and the accuracy of information given to applicants regarding program requirements and the interview process.

### **E. Initiate an effective outreach program to educate potential applicants**

- Develop outreach campaigns that include community-based educational activities.
- Inform applicants about the other social service and public assistance program available to them.
- Develop an outreach plan and submit it to the USDA as soon as possible.

## **Research Methods**

*Keeping Our Children Hungry: South Carolina Food Stamp Program Fails to Deliver* is based on data collected March through June 2000 by South Carolina Fair Share and the Northwest Federation of Community Organizations. The objective of this study is to identify policies and practices that delay or impede applicants from obtaining food stamps in South Carolina.

Data was gathered from 27 food stamp applicants identified by South Carolina Fair Share. Study participants applied for food stamps at the Fairfield, Orangeburg and Saluda County DDS offices. Researcher intervention in the application process was limited to providing rides to public assistance offices.

Applicants were interviewed once in accordance with the protocol developed for this project. The protocol covered the applicant's interaction with DSS after the applicant obtained an application and after the required interview with DSS. In



addition, researchers looked for posted and written information at each DSS office visited by an applicant.

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### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Mark Nord, Kyle Jemison, Gary Bickel, *Prevalence of Food Insecurity and Hunger*, by State. 1996-1998, Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, US Department of Agriculture, 1993, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Hunger is defined by an uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food; the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> United States General Accounting Office, *Food Stamp Program: Various Factors Have Led to Decline in Participation*, July 1999, pp. 31 - 34.

<sup>5</sup> <<<http://www.frac.org>>>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> United States General Accounting Office, *Food Stamp Program: Various Factors Have Led to Decline in Participation*, July 1999, p. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Nord, Jemison, Bickel, *Prevalence of Food Insecurity*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Sharon Parrott and Stacy Dean, *Food Stamps Can Help Low-Income Working Families Put Food on the Table*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> United States General Accounting Office, *Food Stamp Program: Various Factors Have Led to Decline in Participation*, July 1999, pp. 31 - 34.

<sup>12</sup> Nord, Jemison, Bickel, *Prevalence of Food Security*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Included in the categories of households entitled to expedited services are those households with less than \$150 in monthly gross income and liquid resources (cash on hand, bank accounts, etc.) not exceeding \$100. CFR 273.2

<sup>19</sup> 7 CFR 273.2

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> South Carolina Department of Social Services Form 3800 (MAR 98), “Your Rights and Responsibilities,” under section “Home Visits and Verifications.”

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Dan Glickman, U.S. Department of Agriculture, to all state Governors, dated July 12, 1999, re: the Clinton Food Stamp Initiative.

<sup>25</sup> 7 CFR 273.2

<sup>26</sup> Glickman, USDA letter to all state Governors, July 12, 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.