

NO+mas HAMBRE

Nearly 50 million Americans face hunger, but for Latinos the news is even worse. According to a recent study by the Department of Agriculture, about 26.9% of Latino households experienced food insecurity, compared to 14.7% of non-Latino households.

While this can be attributed to economic factors such as unemployment, there is another reason. According to Vicki Escarra, president of Feeding America, "this is due to a lack of awareness of emergency feeding programs..." The fact that almost one in three Latinos go hungry has been largely ignored. But it is not enough to make ourselves aware of the problem. A challenge of this magnitude can be met only if the Latino community is mobilized to take action.

LATINO Magazine is collaborating with the AARP Foundation, Sodexo, the Office of Minority Health and others to address this need through an initiative called NO+HAMBRE. Its mission is to raise public awareness about hunger in the Latino community through a website; foster a national conversation about this issue in a NO+HAMBRE Summit to be held May 17, 2011 in Washington, DC; and mobilize Latinos to get involved in their own communities. For more information, contact Alfredo Estrada at ajestrada@latinomagazine.com.



www.nomashambre.com



Join us at the NO+HAMBRE Summit on May 17, 2011 in Washington, DC.

By Lisa Pino, Deputy Administrator of SNAP

Ending Hunger for Latinos

No one should go hungry in America, especially children.

However, far too many Latino children and their families are experiencing hunger every day. At a time when so many are struggling to put food on the table, it is critical for Latino families to know about help that is available. In that spirit, the Department of Agriculture's 15 nutrition assistance programs can make that difference as they encompass the nation's critical safety net to combat hunger. It is a privilege for me to serve at the Department's Food and Nutrition Service, where our mission is to provide that assistance to low-income children, individuals, and families each and every day.

The span of our programs is so vast that we are now reaching one of out every four people in the country. Our Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is helping more than 42 million people a month, and our National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs serves more than 32 million school children each year. Other programs include Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC), which in sum work in concert with each other depending on the need and circumstance.

However, despite the ability of these programs to positively change people's lives, far too many Latinos who are eligible are not receiving this extra hand. The Latino gap in SNAP alone illustrates this. While SNAP is the nation's largest anti-hunger program, only 56% of SNAP-eligible Latinos are receiving aid. This means that millions of eligible Latinos are missing out from the additional help that they could have to buy food each

month. Those SNAP dollars could help people to shop and have the chance to buy healthy, nutritious food when dollars are stretched, reflecting how the program enables struggling individuals and families to get back on their feet during hard times.

This message is critical when Latinos are particularly vulnerable to both hunger and obesity. According to USDA's Food Security report, Latinos experience food insecurity at a rate of 26.9 percent – nearly double the national average. This means that in 2009, 3.6 million Hispanic households struggled to obtain nutritious food. As a result, Hispanic families are at a higher risk of experiencing hunger. Similarly, obesity rates among Hispanics are also higher than the general population. Over 30% of Hispanics are obese, and more than 40% of Hispanic children are facing this crisis.

For many low-income Latino families, with budgets that are often squeezed tighter and more frequently than for others, these nutrition programs offer crucial opportunities. Increasing nutrition assistance program participation among Hispanics is essential to improving food security in the community, and is a top priority for USDA.

To address this issue, the Department hosted a series of community roundtables in six states in 2010 including Arizona, Florida, New Jersey, Illinois, Texas, and California. We focused on locations with large numbers of food insecure households and low-participation to directly discuss with communities what we could do better to amplify access and improve customer service. This invaluable feedback will help us reach more eligible families by reshaping our message and partnering with others across diverse



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communities.

We are also working hard to increase Latino participation in our other programs, which are also crucial in providing assistance, especially to children. Fortunately, many Latino children benefit from the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs, as well as WIC. WIC now serves more than 9 million participants every month, of which more than 40% are Hispanic.

The Obama administration is committed to providing greater access to USDA nutrition assistance programs and ensuring that healthy nutrition is available to all Americans in need. The President has committed to ending childhood hunger by 2015, and the First Lady is a spokesperson on the issue of childhood obesity through the incredible effort of Let's Move! Through these efforts, and the dedicated work conducted around the country by numerous communities, we can together contribute towards the urgent need to realize this dream.

For more information go to www.nomashambre.com.