Survey of Fairfax County Basic Needs Providers: Trends in Participation, Demand and Service Levels 4th Quarter 2007 - 4th Quarter 2008

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Overview

In November 2008, in response to the growing demand for basic needs assistance and a concern about resource capacity among the safety net system of supports in our community, a group met that included representatives from nonprofit organizations, houses of worship, and local government. While the group had information on the increase in demand for basic needs assistance through Fairfax County's Coordinated Services Planning (CSP), they recognized that CSP data only represented a partial view of the demand for basic needs assistance, since oftentimes persons in need go directly to their house of worship or local nonprofit organization for assistance. The group suggested a survey of nonprofit organizations and houses of worship to capture another perspective on the need in our community for food and financial assistance as well as to assess the community's capacity to respond to that need. The survey was conducted in February 2009 and will assist the Fairfax County community's preparedness for and response to local community needs in 2009 and 2010.

The survey was sent out to 48 nonprofit organizations having either a contractual relationship with the County or a working relationship with the Coordinated Services Planning unit to provide emergency food or financial assistance. The survey was also sent to 129 community- and faith-based organizations and 371 houses of worship that potentially provide assistance or that receive communications from the County's Community Interfaith Liaison Office. Participants were asked a number of questions about their participation in food and financial assistance programs, and were asked to compare demand, service levels, and resources available for such programs for the fourth quarter of calendar year 2007 and the fourth quarter of calendar year 2008 (the months of October, November, and December)[1]. While many houses of worship and nonprofit organizations support other groups' food pantries and/or financial assistance programs, most of the survey's questions were focused on the provision of direct services to people needing basic needs assistance.

[1] Note that the time period for comparison includes Thanksgiving and the holiday season, when many nonprofits and houses of worship sponsor holiday basket programs. Service levels and donations for food programs may include holiday programs as well as ongoing food assistance.

- Eighty-nine full or partial responses were received. About half of respondents (45) identified themselves as nonprofit organizations; half (44) as houses of worship.
- Of the 89 surveys received, 75 respondents completed the survey, answering all applicable questions. Fourteen partially completed the survey, but provided enough information to include their response in the analysis.
- The total number and type of respondents are indicated in Table 1, below. In subsequent tables, the number of responses included in each column or row of the table is indicated by an "n" in parentheses. Skipped questions within a respondent set are indicated by "No response" (NR) in the tables below.

Table 1. Summary of Respondents	Nonprofit Organizations	Houses of Worship	All Respondents
Number of Survey Respondents	45	44	89

Note on Data Interpretation: The data from this survey is intended to complement other sources of data on demand for basic needs assistance, such as the quarterly briefing entitled "Trends in Community Needs Illustrated by Demand for CSP Services." The Fairfax-Falls Church area is fortunate to have a strong network of public, nonprofit and faith-based providers which operate in a cooperative yet independent manner. While referral agreements are in place between CSP and many of these organizations, each provider operates under their own policies and most have multiple appropriate points of access for residents seeking different types of assistance. Just as there is no single path required of residents seeking help, there is no single system to collect data on the number of households served. As such, there may be overlap (or "double-counting") in the service levels reported across various data sources, and there are certainly households receiving services that go unreported from organizations not participating in any type of survey. Each data source provides a unique perspective on the demand for and capacity to respond to basic needs in the community. While numbers from different data sources should not be aggregated to provide a total picture of need, it is possible to look for similar trends, such as the overall increase in the demand for services and the increase in "new" types of households requesting services.

Food Assistance

- Food assistance programs provide a limited amount of food for individuals or families during times of personal crisis, or for people who need food and cannot afford to purchase it. Some programs deliver food to people whose disabilities or illnesses make it difficult for them to leave home, and some have limited quantities available on a walk-in basis. Others consist of pantries that acquire food through donations, canned food drives, food bank programs or direct purchase and then distribute the food to people in emergency situations. Some food programs limit the number of times a family or individual can receive food during a given time period.
- Table 2 summarizes respondents' participation in food assistance programs. Eighty-one percent of respondents (72 of 89) participate in food assistance programs, either by

supporting other groups' food programs through donations or volunteers, or by providing food assistance directly to community residents.

- Among the 29 nonprofit organizations that participate in food assistance programs, nearly all (27) provide direct food assistance to residents; 62 percent (18) also support other groups' programs.
- Among the 43 houses of worship that participate in food assistance programs, nearly all (38) support other groups' programs; two-thirds (29) also provide food directly to community residents.

Table 2. Participation in Food Assistance Programs	Nonprofit Organizations (n=45)			Houses of Worship (n=44)			All Respondents (n=89)		
	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR
Do you participate in food assistance programs?	29	16		43	1		72	17	
Do you support other groups' food programs through contributions or volunteers?	18	27		38	6		56	33	
Do you provide food assistance directly to residents?	27	18		29	15		56	33	

Changes in Demand for Food Assistance

- Respondents provided direct food assistance to 32,044 households during the fourth quarter of 2008. Compared to the fourth quarter of 2007, this represents a 39 percent increase in the number of households assisted.
- Table 3 illustrates that of the 56 respondents that provide food assistance directly to community residents, 80 percent (45) reported receiving more food requests in the fourth quarter of 2008 than in the fourth quarter of 2007.

Table 3. Change in Direct Food Assistance Requests, by Type	Nonprofit Organizations (n=27)			Houses of Worship (n=29)			All Respondents (n=56)		
	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR
Did you receive more food requests from residents in the 4th quarter of 2008 than the 4th quarter of 2007?	22	5		23	5	1	45 (80%)	10	1

(n = 56. Includes only those respondents that provide direct food assistance to community residents.)

- While the type of organization (nonprofit organization or house of worship) did not correlate with changes in demand for food assistance, the size of the organization was

related. Respondents with larger food assistance programs were much more likely to report experiencing an increase in demand than those with smaller food programs.

- Of the 56 respondents that provide direct food assistance, 49 provided data on the size of their program in the fourth quarter of 2008. Table 4 breaks down these 49 programs by size:
    - Eighteen respondents offer small food programs each serving fewer than 100 households in the quarter. Nearly three-quarters of these are houses of worship, and only two served more than 50 households. Some provide holiday meals, but do not offer a year-round food program. Only 56 percent of small programs (10 of 18) reported an increase in requests for food assistance.
    - Twenty-one respondents operate "medium-sized" food programs, each serving more than 100 but less than 500 households in the quarter. All but one (95 percent) reported an increase in demand for food. These medium-sized programs were evenly split between nonprofit organizations and houses of worship, although the nonprofit organizations tended to be larger.
    - The ten largest programs, including seven nonprofit organizations and three houses of worship, served from 500 to over 16,000 households each in the quarter. The largest five, all nonprofits, each served over 1,000 households in the quarter. Nine of the 10 (90 percent) reported an increase in demand.

Table 4. Change in Direct Food Assistance Requests, by Size	**Small Programs** (<100 served in the quarter, n = 18)			**Medium Programs** (100-499 served in the quarter, n = 21)			**Large Programs** (500+ served in the quarter, n = 10)		
	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR
Did you receive more food requests in the 4th quarter of 2008 than the 4th quarter of 2007?	10 (56%)	8		20 (95%)	1		9 (90%)	1	

(n = 49. Includes only direct food assistance programs that provided data for FY 2008.)

Service Level Changes in Food Assistance Programs

- Of the 56 direct food providers, 46 provided comparative data on the number of households served from the fourth quarter of 2007 to the fourth quarter of 2008.
- Three additional respondents provided data only for 2008, and therefore are not included in the comparative analysis below. These include one new program that served 330 households in 2008 and two other programs that served a total of 68 households in 2008, but did not have records for 2007.
- Of the 46 respondents that provided comparative data, 76 percent (35) reported an increase in the number of households served between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2008.

- Sixteen respondents offer small food programs each serving fewer than 100 households in the quarter. Small programs were mixed in whether they experienced an increase, decrease, or no change in their service levels; in total, they experienced a 21 percent increase in the number of households served. One-half of small programs experienced an increase, and these served 76 percent more households in the fourth quarter of 2008. One-quarter experienced a decrease, and these served 27 percent fewer households. O ne-quarter experienced no change in service levels.
- Twenty respondents offer "medium-sized" programs each serving between 100 and 499 households in the quarter. In total, this group experienced a 42 percent increase in the number of households served from the fourth quarter of 2007 to the fourth quarter of 2008, an average increase of 64 additional households.
- The 10 largest programs, provided by a mix of nonprofit organizations and houses of worship, each served from 500 to over 16,000 households per quarter. These groups experienced an average 37 percent increase in households served, with an average of 731 additional households served.

Table 5. Change in Direct Food Assistance Provided, 4th Qtr 2007 to 4th Qtr 2008	**Small Programs** (<100 served in the quarter, n = 16)	**Medium Programs** (100-499 served in the quarter, n = 20)	**Large Programs** (500+ served in the quarter, n = 10)
Total households served, 4th Qtr 2008	346	4,283	27,017
Number reporting an increase in households served	8*	18**	9***
Total Percent Increase in Households Served	21%*	42%	37%

(n = 46. Includes only those respondents that provided comparative data on food assistance requests.)

* The eight small programs reporting an increase averaged a 76% increase. Of the remaining eight, four experienced no change and four experienced a 27% decrease.
** One medium program experienced no change; another experienced a decrease of only 4%.
*** One large program experienced no change.

- Of the 56 respondents that provide direct food assistance to community residents, fifteen (15, or 27%) indicated that there were times that their organization was unable to serve households in the fourth quarter of 2008 due to lack of food resources. While not all organizations were able to provide data on the number of households turned away, those who did reported a total of 317 households they were unable to serve due to lack of food resources.

Changes in Donations for Food Assistance

- The 72 survey participants who participate in any type of food program were asked whether they had experienced an increase or a decrease in food donations for households in need. Table 6 compares food donations for the fourth quarter of 2007 with the fourth quarter of 2008. Almost half of respondents (35 of 72) reported an increase in donations, seven percent (5) reported a decrease, 28 percent (20) reported no change, and 17 percent (12) did not provide a response. Nonprofit organizations were more likely to have experienced an increase in donations (62 percent) than houses of worship (40 percent).

Table 6. Changes in Food Donations (by type), 4th Quarter 2007 to 4th Quarter 2008	Increase	Decrease	No Change	No Response (NR)
Nonprofit Organizations (n= 29)	18 (62%)	2	6	3
Houses of Worship (n= 43)	17 (40%)	3	14	9
All Respondents (n= 72)	35 (49%)	5	20	12

(n = 72. Includes all respondents that participate in food programs, either as a direct provider or through other groups' programs.)

- Of the five who reported a decrease in food donations, three nonprofit organizations and one house of worship provided an estimate of the decrease. Estimates ranged from 3 percent to 50 percent, with an average decrease of 28 percent.
- Of the 35 respondents that reported an increase in donations, 60 percent (21) indicated that the increase was enough to meet the requests. Thirty-one percent (11) reported that the increase in donations was not sufficient to meet the increase in requests, and three did not provide a response.
- When food assistance providers are broken down by the size of their program, similar trends are apparent, as shown in Table 7. Small programs were more likely to have experienced either flat or decreasing donations as they were to have experienced increases in donations. The larger the program, however, the more likely it was to have experienced an increase in donations. The larger programs are most often offered by nonprofits, while the smaller programs are more likely to be offered by houses of worship.

Table 7. Changes in Food Donations (by size), 4th Quarter 2007 to 4th Quarter 2008	Increase	Decrease	No Change	No Response (NR)
Small Programs (n= 18)	7 (39%)	2	9	0
Medium Programs (n= 21)	16 (76%)	1	4	0
Large Programs (n= 10)	7 (70%)	1	2	0

(n = 49. includes all direct food assistance programs that provided data on the size of their food program.)

- Survey participants were asked how they achieved the increase in donations for their food programs. Thirty-nine respondents (21 nonprofits and 18 houses of worship) provided information. Most attributed the increase in donations to an intentional increase in the following types of efforts:
    - Publicizing the need for food to the community at large through local media;
    - Making direct appeals for donations within the membership of houses of worship and nonprofit organizations via worship gatherings, newsletters and websites;
    - Increasing direct outreach efforts to community groups, through contacts with civic groups, scouting organizations and schools;
    - Expanding partnerships among houses of worship, businesses and civic groups to collect and distribute food;
    - Dedicating additional volunteer or staff hours to support these efforts.

- Sample responses included the following:

"Following the media coverage in the fall (front page picture of empty shelves), community donations increased dramatically. We are keeping up with the demand now, handing out three times as much food as three years ago. Churches stepped forward to hold food drives for us, and we hope that will continue."

"Several organizations and at least one individual held food drives. Some were annually scheduled and some were spontaneous in response to the current recession in the economy. Without all of these, our organization would not have been able to meet the increased volume of requests."

"Talking to many groups, particularly faith communities and organizations such as Kiwanis and Scouts. Publicity, through newsletters, newspapers, etc. Lots of additional efforts."

"Our congregation has increased their food donations given through the church. While the program of bringing a non-perishable food item to worship services began in 2008, it has steadily increased over the past 8 months from four to five bags of food per month to literal car-loads by the end of December. This has continued into 2009."

"People responded to news accounts of food shortages in food programs. Also, we made requests to more groups to remember to donate and they came through. Community response was great, as was that of civic groups. Individual contributions from businesses were way off."

Financial Assistance Programs

- Emergency financial assistance programs provide funds to individuals or families experiencing a financial crisis. They provide rent or mortgage assistance to prevent eviction or foreclosure, security deposit assistance to secure permanent housing, utility payments to prevent disconnection, prescription assistance, and other special needs. Many, though not all, programs work with Coordinated Services Planning or other

County agencies to establish eligibility for assistance. Programs vary widely in size, from houses of worship or specialized nonprofits serving a handful of households to large organizations serving hundreds every quarter. While some programs receive public funding for emergency assistance and others rely primarily on private donations, most have a mix of funding sources. Many programs have limits on the amount of assistance provided per household or on the frequency with which a household can be assisted.

- Survey respondents provided over $740,000 in financial assistance directly to 2,971 households in need during the fourth quarter of 2008. Compared to the fourth quarter of 2007, this represents a 28 percent increase in the total funds provided, and a 24 percent increase in the number of households assisted.
- The number above is only a partial estimate. While 46 respondents indicated that they provide direct assistance, only 37 reported data on the number of households served in 2008, and 36 reported data on the amount of financial assistance provided.

Participation in Financial Assistance Programs

- Table 8 summarizes respondents' participation in financial assistance programs, which help individuals with expenses associated with rent, utilities, and medical care. Sixty-five percent of respondents (58 of 89) participate in financial assistance programs, either by supporting other groups' programs or by working directly with community residents to provide financial assistance.
- Among the 23 nonprofit organizations that participate in financial assistance programs, all but one provide direct financial assistance to residents; less than one-third also support other groups' programs.
- Among the 35 houses of worship that participate in financial assistance programs, nearly all support other groups' programs; over two-thirds also provide financial assistance directly to community residents.

Table 8. Participation in Financial Assistance Programs	Nonprofit Organizations (n=45)			Houses of Worship (n=44)			All Respondents (n=89)		
	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR
Do you participate in any financial assistance program?	23	18	4	35	5	4	58	23	8
Do you support other groups' programs through financial contributions?	8	33	4	31	8	5	39	41	9
Do you provide financial assistance directly to residents?	22	19	4	24	16	4	46	35	8

(n = 89. Includes all survey respondents.)

Changes in Demand for Financial Assistance

- Of the 46 respondents that provide financial assistance directly to community residents in need, over three-quarters (35 of 46) indicated that they received more financial requests in the fourth quarter of 2008 than in the fourth quarter of 2007.
- Of the 46 respondents that provide direct financial assistance to community residents, just under half (22) indicated that there were times that their organization was unable to serve households in the fourth quarter of 2008 due to lack of financial resources. While not all organizations were able to provide data on the number of households turned away, the 15 who did reported a total of 300 households they were unable to serve due to lack of financial resources.

Table 9. Change in Financial Assistance Requests	Nonprofit Organizations (n=22)			Houses of Worship (n=24)			All Respondents (n=46)		
	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR
Did you receive more financial assistance requests in the 4th quarter of 2008 than the 4th quarter of 2007?	17 (77%)	5		18 (75%)	3	3	35 (77%)	8	3
Were you unable to provide financial assistance at times due to lack of resources?	12 (55%)	10		10 (42%)	9	5	22 (48%)	19	5

(n = 46. Includes only those respondents that provide direct financial assistance to community residents.)

Service Level Changes in Financial Assistance Programs

- Of 46 direct financial assistance providers, 33 provided comparative data on the number of households served, and 32 provided comparative data on the amount of assistance provided between the fourth quarter of 2007 and the fourth quarter of 2008.[2]
- Of the direct service providers who provided comparative data, 73 percent (24) reported an increase in the number of households served, with an average increase of 17 additional households. Sixty-six percent (21) reported an increase in the amount of funding provided, with an average increase of almost $6,500.
- Seven providers reported a decrease in the number of households served and eight reported a decrease in the amount of funding provided. Respondents were evenly split

[2] Four organizations did not provide financial assistance programs in 2007, but began or resumed programs in 2008. These four providers served a total of 245 households in the fourth quarter of 2008, providing nearly $60,800 in financial assistance. Because they could not report comparative data for 2007, however, they are not included in the comparative analysis.

on whether they reported an increase or decrease in the average amount of funding provided per household assisted.

- Table 10 below summarizes the range of financial assistance programs operated by nonprofit organizations and houses of worship in the community. Of the respondents that provided data on financial assistance provided in the fourth quarter of 2008:
    - The eleven smallest are primarily houses of worship serving fewer than ten households in the quarter, often walk-ins from the community or members of that house of worship who need assistance. These smallest programs served a total of 65 households in the quarter, providing a total of $20,800. All but one provided modest amounts per household (an average of $168).
    - The middle group consists of nonprofit organizations and houses of worship that served between 13 and 80 households in the quarter, providing a total of almost $310,000 to 524 families, at an average of $590 per household.
    - The eleven largest programs are run by nonprofit organizations that provided assistance to approximately 100 or more households in the quarter. These organizations provided a total of more than $411,000 to over 2,300 households, for an average of approximately $179 per household.

Table 10. Change in Financial Assistance Requests, 4th Qtr 2007 to 4th Qtr 2008	Small Programs n = 11	Medium Programs n = 15	Large Programs n = 11
Total Households Served	65	524	2,301
Avg households Served, 4th Qtr 2008	6	40	209
Range of Households Served	3-10	13-80	96-535
Average Increase in Households Served	78%	47%	16%
Total Amount Provided, 4th Qtr 2008	$20,800 (half from 1 group)	$308,300	$411,038
Average amount per household	$168 (10 of 11) $3,200 for 1	$588	$179

(n = 37. Includes respondents that provided comparative data on the number of households served.)

Resources Available for Financial Assistance Programs

- Survey participants were asked whether they had experienced an increase or a decrease in donations (or budgets) specifically targeted for providing financial assistance to households in need. About half (22) reported an increase in donations, just under one-fifth (8) reported a decrease, just under a quarter (11) reported no change, and just over 10 percent (5) did not provide a response.

Table 11. Changes in Donations or Budgets for Providing Financial Assistance, 4th Quarter 2007 to 4th Quarter 2008	Increase	Decrease	No Change	No Response (NR)
Nonprofit Organizations (n= 22)	12 (55%)	3	5	2
Houses of Worship (n= 24)	10 (42%)	5	6	3
All Respondents (n= 46)	22 (48%)	8 (17%)	11 (24%)	5 (11%)

(n= 46. Includes respondents that provide direct financial assistance to households in need.)

- Of the eight respondents that reported a decrease in budgets or donations, two nonprofit organizations and four houses of worship provided an estimate of the decrease. Estimates ranged from 10% to 50%, with an average decrease of 22%.
- Of the 22 respondents that reported an increase in budgets or donations, 45 percent (10) indicated that the increase was enough to meet the requests, while 57 percent (12) reported that the increase in donations was insufficient to meet the requests.
- Table 12 breaks down the changes in budgets or donations by the size of the financial assistance program. Differences in resource trends by size of program are similar to trends seen for food donations. Small programs were much more likely to have experienced either flat or decreasing budgets/donations as they were to have experienced increases in budgets or donations for financial assistance. Medium and large programs, however, were more likely to have experienced an increase in donations. The larger programs are almost all offered by nonprofits, while the smaller programs are almost all offered by houses of worship.

Table 12. Change in Financial Assistance Resources, 4th Qtr 2007 to 4th Qtr 2008	Small Programs (3-10 households served, n = 11)	Medium Programs (13-80 households served, n = 15)	Large Programs (96-535 households served, n = 11)
Increase in Budgets/Donations	2	10	8
Decrease in Budgets/Donations	4	0	2
No Change in Budgets/Donations	4	5	1
Increase Enough to Meet Requests?	2 of 2 (100%)	3 of 10 (30%)	4 of 8 (50%)

(n = 37. Includes only those respondents that provided data on the number of households served in financial assistance programs.)

- Survey participants were asked how they achieved the increase in donations or budgets for their financial assistance programs. Twenty-four respondents (16 nonprofits and 8 houses of worship) provided information. Most attributed the increase in donations to an intentional increase in the following types of efforts:
    - Publicizing the need for financial assistance to the community at large through local media;

- Making direct appeals for donations within congregations and existing donor bases via worship gatherings, newsletters and websites;
- Redirecting existing resources to meet this need – through cuts in other programs or cost-cutting measures;
- Finding new funding sources through direct appeals, grant-writing, proposals and networking.

- Sample responses included the following:

"Lots and lots of outreach and proposal writing."

"While we did not turn away anyone meeting agency criteria, we were unable to provide enough to meet all of their needs... We prioritized spending for eviction prevention and utility cut off prevention, reducing bus tokens. We reduced dental expenses because the Dental Clinic is taking fewer patients. Lowered generic prescription costs at pharmacies helped."

"The need was communicated to our donors and they increased their donations, sometimes restricting their donations for this use specifically."

"We did nothing---they came from individual donations from people hearing about the hard times. We had an increase in giving of 18%."

"We made a plea for additional resources within our existing donor base."

"We used media and networking to highlight increased need. We used our Board of Directors to amplify the request."

"We specifically asked the parish to donate more for members in our congregation experiencing financial assistance."

Emerging Trends and Other Information

- Survey participants were asked whether they had received either food or financial assistance requests from new types of households not previously served in the past. Of the sixty-five respondents that provide direct food and/or financial assistance to residents, 45 percent (29) reported receiving requests from new types of households. Overall, nonprofit organizations were more likely than houses of worship to report requests from new types of households. Table 13 breaks down the responses by type of organization.

Table 13. Requests from New Types of Households	Nonprofit Organizations (n=29)			Houses of Worship (n=36)			All Respondents (n=65)		
	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR	Yes	No	NR
Have you received requests for food or financial assistance from new types of households?	20 (69%)	4	5	9 (25%)	9	18	29 (45%)	13	23

(n = 65. Includes respondents that participate in direct food and/or financial assistance programs.)

- Twenty-nine respondents provided examples of new types of households from whom they had received food or financial assistance requests in the fourth quarter of 2008. Most of the examples fall into the following categories:
    - First-time requestors, usually because of recent unemployment from jobs impacted by the economic downturn;
    - Families and individuals who had received in the past, but who had more recently been making ends meet without assistance;
    - Higher income, middle-class, dual-income families, and homeowners;
    - Different family compositions – more families as opposed to individuals, more two-parent families, and more households supporting multiple families;
    - More immigrants having trouble finding employment;
    - Families facing eviction or foreclosure.

- Specific examples included:

"We have received about twice as many calls this year as last, but many of them are outside our 'circle of help.' Because we get so many requests, we have had to limit the area locally."

"Parishioners who have never had to ask for assistance before now need help because a large majority work in construction and there is no work."

"Formerly upper middle class families who are strained by unemployment or underemployment. Middle class clients needing housing/rent assistance, utilities assistance, emergency food, and clothing."

"More families, more people with their own housing (as compared to homeless) People with threat of foreclosure or who had been foreclosed on; people who had never asked for any kind of assistance before."

"Households consisting of persons being laid-off of work due to the economy (ie. handyman services, household services, customer services (hotel), a real estate agent, a home estimator, a construction supervisor."

" Households consisting of persons who are supporting multiple families, in order to better pool resources to survive. Households consisting of persons who are new to the "system" and unaware of available resources, or where to go."

- Respondents were also asked to provide any additional information to highlight the changes that their organizations have been experiencing in assisting community households to meet food and financial assistance needs. A total of 38 respondents (23 nonprofit organizations and 15 houses of worship) provided comments.
- Many comments focused on the challenges of keeping pace with the increasing scope and intensity of need in the community:

"Major changes include the number of people returning every week for food, rather than occasionally and having more needs (eviction and utility cut-off prevention, food, medical, transportation, other) for longer periods of time. Because of the duration of services, basic needs counselors' caseloads have doubled or tripled, making goal setting and follow-up more difficult, thus exacerbating the problem. Lines for food are often all around the front and side of building, looking like bread lines of Great Depression - heartbreaking. Our employment program is also seeing a huge increase in number of clients, but no increase in staffing. We have more than doubled the amount of food distributed so far this year compared with last year and that is challenging. We spend what we receive in food and financial assistance, and the need is much, much greater than we can meet."

"Good steady in-kind donations, but a decrease in financial donations annually. We had many supporters of holiday baskets but very limited funding from other sources for financial assistance for clients. Fairfax County only provides limited funding for direct client assistance and no contributions toward rent/overhead."

"We are simply doing what we can to meet all the needs of the community. We will not turn anyone away, and have been able to receive necessary support to continue with our current services. In May 2006 however, we decreased our financial assistance available per household, from $500 to $200 annually in anticipation of increased need - we saw the demand increasing at that point already. This was a big disappointment, but necessary in order to serve increasing requests."

"We need as much help as we can get to ratchet up the public awareness that we are all in this together. This is a tough one since we also know that the economy needs to lift on good news not bad. So it is a juggling act."

"We have not historically tracked those we haven't been able to serve or have denied for various reasons. We have increased both our receiving and giving in February 2009. Most of our funding comes from a special offering on communion Sunday (once a month). Our pastors have reminded the congregation of the need and the donations have increased to more than $1100 versus the historical trend (about $450). In addition, we ran out of funds mid-January and did a special offering and received about $1100. We do not provide food, but Giant food cards. Many homeless individuals don't have a place to prepare groceries and many who receive food from foodbanks need healthier food (low sugar, low salt)."

"Several of the larger donors within the congregation have lost income and the corresponding ability to contribute to the extent they did previously."

"Our church has provided 'emergency' food for a number of years; this has been intended to be a once per month event to meet emergency needs. We are now having many more people making requests more than once per month; we have changed our rules to once in each

half of the month. We will also be designating specific days of the week that food will be distributed (rather than Monday-Friday) because the increased volume meant that church staff were constantly disrupted from normal business work to respond to food requests. We are a small congregation of about 150/Sunday. Our food donations come primarily from our own members [and a local Boy Scout Troop once a year]. Our own congregation is experiencing job layoffs as well as our community neighbors. As a result, we have fewer donations from our members while at the same time experiencing a more than doubling of requests. The average number of requests per month in 2007 was 23; the average per month for 2008 was 57. However, each month of 2008 showed an increase so the average is lower than the trend. The number of requests for Oct-Dec was about 70 per month."