



Contact: Karen Pozna, Cleveland Foodbank, 216-738-2132; cell 216-214-9436

23 Percent of Young Children in Ohio Live at Risk of Hunger
*Ohio ranks 3rd in the nation with more than 23% of Ohio children
under the age of five that are food insecure*

Cleveland, OH—May 7, 2009 – One in four young children live on the brink of hunger in Ohio, according to a new report issued today by Feeding America. In Ohio, more than 23 percent of children under the age of five, or more than 170,000, live in food insecure homes, ranking the state third in the nation just behind Louisiana and North Carolina.

This national report, *Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2005 – 2007*, states that 3.5 million American children, ages five and under, are food insecure. This is the first time the USDA data has ever been analyzed to determine how many children under the age of five live at risk of hunger. Living in food-insecure households means they are unable to consistently access adequate amounts of nutritious food necessary for a healthy life.

“These numbers can be very shocking,” said Anne Goodman, executive director, Cleveland Foodbank. “A lack of nutritious food in a child’s very early years of development can have a lasting impact on their health and development.”

The Cleveland Foodbank has several programs including the Backpack for Kids program, Kids Cafe and Summer Feeding program which feed school-age children. More than 7,800 children receive free food from one of these programs each week through the Cleveland Foodbank but reaching the younger age children can be challenging. Parents of these younger children often turn to the 450 food pantries, soup kitchens and other agencies served by the Cleveland Foodbank to provide food for their families.

“The first three years of life are the most critical period of brain growth and development. Child hunger causes physical and mental impairment that may never be reversed,” said researcher John Cook, Ph.D., of the Boston Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine, a nationally-recognized expert on child hunger, who conducted the analysis.

The report, funded with a grant from the ConAgra Foods Foundation, also found that 18.7 percent of all Ohio children under the age of 18, or more than 520,000, live in food insecure homes. The national average is 17.3 percent.

-more-

Childhood Hunger

Page 2

“This new data is definitely cause for concern, especially since the data was collected prior to the current recession,” said Goodman. “Our area has been hit hard by the downturn in the economy, we are seeing more people turn to hunger centers for food the first time.”

Child Food Insecurity in the United States: 2005 – 2007, analyzes data collected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service (ERS) over a three-year period. The USDA has collected data on domestic food insecurity since 1995, but has not analyzed it to determine the specific number of children living in food insecure households by state. The report is available at www.feedingamerica.org.

The Cleveland Foodbank provides food and critical nonfood products to local nonprofit organizations which serve hungry individuals across northeast Ohio. In 2008, it distributed 21.7 million pounds of food to 451 local food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and other agencies such as child-care centers and homes for the elderly in six counties including Cuyahoga, Ashland, Richland, Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula. For more information, visit www.clevelandfoodbank.org.

###