

## **Hunger and Food Insecurity Up in PA**

Data collected in December 2002 by the Census Bureau show that both hunger and the risk of hunger have increased sharply in Pennsylvania.

According to this latest report, 450,000 Pennsylvania households (9.4 percent) were unsure of having enough food for all household members. This is up 12 percent from 2001, when 400,000 households (8.4 percent) were food insecure. In approximately 130,000 households (2.7 percent), the lack of food was not resolved and at least one household member missed meals entirely. This number is also up sharply from last year's report, which indicated that hunger was present in 2.2 percent of Pennsylvania households.

The 2002 totals are the worst recorded for Pennsylvania since the Census Bureau added a Food Security Supplement to its Current Population Survey in April 1995. On a more positive note, the State continues to rank at the top of the large-population states with a rate of hunger well below the national average.

Nationally, both food insecurity and hunger increased in 2002 but not as sharply as in Pennsylvania. The national rate of food insecurity in 2002 was 11.1 percent, up from 10.7 percent in 2001. The national rate of hunger was 3.5 percent in 2002, up from 3.3 percent in 2001.

Jim Weill, president of Food Research and Action (FRAC) in Washington, linked the national increase in hunger to the weak economy. However, "the economy alone does not fully explain these unacceptably high numbers. They reflect as well the growing inequality of income in this country, and the harmful holes in the safety net."

Since 1995, the US Department of Agriculture, using data from surveys conducted annually by the Census Bureau, has released estimates of the number of households that are "food insecure with hunger" and "food insecure without hunger." In this latest survey 5,298 Pennsylvania households were interviewed. For a full copy of the USDA study, go to [www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr35/](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr35/). [See related article on page 2.]