

# Hunger Solutions Toolkit:

*Sample Materials for Outreach in Difficult Times*



**Vermont Campaign to  
End Childhood Hunger**



802-865-0255 • [www.vtnohunger.org](http://www.vtnohunger.org)

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# Hunger Resource Toolkit

In these difficult economic times, many Vermont families are struggling to pay for their basic needs, including shelter, utilities, healthcare and food. As household budgets shrink, it can be especially difficult for low-income households to choose between providing utilities to their homes and feeding their families. Fortunately, there is a safety net of food resources available to many low-income Vermonters including:

- **3SquaresVT** (formerly the Food Stamp program), which provides monthly benefits in the form of a debit-style card. The average monthly benefit is \$232 per household.
- **Free and Reduced Price School Meals** provide breakfast and lunch to eligible children at school. New changes make breakfast free for all eligible students.
- **Food shelves and community meal programs** provide emergency food assistance to families.

**The Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger** has assembled a toolkit of resources in order to provide information both to those seeking services and to engaged community citizens, businesses and schools. Here you'll find suggestions for how to maximize use of key nutrition programs in Vermont communities, as well as easy-to-use sample materials and tools such as newsletter articles, envelope inserts, and flyers.

Please commit to completing several of the enclosed recommended outreach strategies to improve program participation in your community. Feel free to reproduce and modify the enclosed materials.

## What You Can Do if You are Seeking Food Assistance

1. **Apply for 3SquaresVT (formerly Food Stamps).** New changes make more people eligible for the program. Benefits are distributed on a debit card; seniors can have benefits deposited as cash into their bank accounts. Visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) or call the Department of Children and Families at 1-800-287-0589.
2. **Take advantage of free or reduced price school meals.** Families can apply at any time in the school year. All breakfasts served to low-income kids are free. Contact your local school for an application or download one from the web at [www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf](http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf)
3. **Visit your local food shelf or community meal program.** Individuals and families can go to their local food shelves or community meal programs to receive emergency food assistance. Dial 2-1-1 for information on locations and hours in your community.
4. **Tell your friends and neighbors about these programs.** Learn more about ways to reach out in your own community on page 5.
5. **Sign up for our E-Update** for news and information about how you can help--join our mailing list today by visiting us on the web at [www.vtnohunger.org](http://www.vtnohunger.org).

## What Schools Can Do

1. **Make school meal applications available.** Place school meal applications wherever families gather such as libraries, laundromats, childcare facilities, health clinics, and the town office. Download an application at [www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf](http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf) or visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FRP/frp.process.htm> for an application in one of twenty-five foreign languages.
2. **Include in your next school newsletter** the sample articles or newsletter announcements in the "Sample Materials" section of the toolkit.
3. **Include nutrition resource envelope stuffers** with report cards and letters home to parents. Envelope stuffers may be found on page 7.
4. **Increase participation in your school meal program.** Offer breakfast in the classroom or at snack time and reach out to families in need. Use handouts for tips and best practices:
  - [Making Breakfast Better](#)
  - [School Meals Best Practices](#)
5. **Participate in the annual Hike for Hunger** and download the "Feeding Minds" Hunger Curriculum to use as a lesson plan in your classroom. Both are a great way to raise awareness about hunger in your school community. Visit <http://www.vtnohunger.org/info/hikeforhunger.php> for more information.
6. **Sign up for our E-Update** for news and information about how you can help--join our mailing list today by visiting [www.vtnohunger.org](http://www.vtnohunger.org) .

# What Businesses Can Do

1. **Include envelope stuffers in monthly bills or statements** encouraging your customers to access nutrition programs. Commit to including one envelope stuffer a month for the next three months. Sample inserts can be found on page 7.
  - All Programs Envelope Stuffer
  - School Meals Envelope Stuffer
  - 3SquaresVT Stuffer
2. **Encourage food retailers** in your local business association to accept 3SquaresVT and promote the new program eligibility changes in their stores. Information to help retailers get started with the program is available at [http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com/information\\_for\\_retailers/information\\_for\\_retailers.php](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com/information_for_retailers/information_for_retailers.php)
3. **Make alleviating hunger your business's contribution to the community in 2009.** Encourage employees to reach out to their families and neighbors and spread the word about applying for nutrition programs. Ask employees to share materials in their own communities. Samples may be found in the "Sample Materials" section of the toolkit.
  - Submit a newsletter bulletin) to your local school newsletter or church bulletin
  - Submit a newspaper article to your local community paper
4. **Find your local food shelf** by calling 2-1-1 and find out what items they need most. Work with employees and customers to keep the food shelf stocked.
5. **Sign up for our E-Update** for news and information about how you can help--[join our mailing list today](#).

# What Engaged Citizens, Community Leaders, Churches, and Community Organizations Can Do

1. **Make school meal applications available.** Place school meal applications wherever families gather such as libraries, laundromats, childcare facilities, health clinics, and the town office. Download an application at [www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf](http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf) or visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/FRP/frp.process.htm> for an application in one of twenty-five foreign languages.
2. **Submit newspaper articles** to your local newspaper or newsletter. Sample articles can be found in the "Sample Materials" section of the toolkit which includes articles on the following items:
  - General Nutrition Programs Article
  - 3SquaresVT Program Article
  - School Meals Program Article
3. **Submit to your church, school, or other organization** sample newsletter bulletins, found in the "Sample Materials" section.
4. **Find out if the food stores in your town accept 3SquaresVT (Food Stamps).** If they don't, encourage them to find out how to start with our Fast Facts for Grocers flyer, and tell them about [vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com)'s information for retailers which can be found at [http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com/information\\_for\\_retailers/information\\_for\\_retailers.php](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com/information_for_retailers/information_for_retailers.php).
5. **Post the 3SquaresVT expansion flyers and revised income charts** on bulletin boards at your local grocery, library, doctor's office, town building and workplace. Find materials online at: <http://www.vtnohunger.org/toolkit/Expansion%20Flyer%203SquaresVT.pdf>
6. **Volunteer or donate to your local food shelf or community meal program.** For information on charitable food in your community, dial 2-1-1.
7. **Sign up for our E-Update** for news and information about how you can help--join our mailing list today by visiting [www.vtnohunger.org](http://www.vtnohunger.org).
8. **For even more ideas** on ways you can help spread awareness and end hunger in Vermont, visit [http://www.vtnohunger.org/info/hunger\\_youcando.php](http://www.vtnohunger.org/info/hunger_youcando.php)

# Envelope Inserts

## Strengthen Our Economy: Access Food Resources

- **Apply for 3SquaresVT (Food Stamps).** New changes make more people eligible for the program. Benefits are distributed on a debit card; seniors can have benefits deposited as cash into their bank accounts. Visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) or call the Department of Children and Families at 1-800-287-0589.
- **Take advantage of free or reduced price school meals.** Families can apply at any time in the school year. All breakfasts served to low-income kids are free. Contact your local school for an application or download one from the web at [www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf](http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf)
- **Visit your local food shelf or community meal program.** Individuals and families can go to their local food shelves or community meal programs to receive emergency food assistance. Call toll free 2-1-1 for information on locations and hours in your community.

Please share this information with your neighbors via school newsletters, congregation bulletins, town offices, local libraries, senior centers, doctor's offices and food shelves.



## School Meals Can Help! Apply Today

- **Applying is easy.** Families can apply for free or reduced price school meals at any time in the school year. All breakfasts served to qualifying kids are free. Contact your local school for an application or download one from the web at [www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf](http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf)
- **The program is confidential.** All information provided on application is confidential, and all kids receive the same meal – regardless of income.
- **School meals help your bottom line.** In these tough economic times, free or reduced price school meals help take the pressure off of your food budget. A family of four with two children can save over \$150/month by qualifying for free school meals
- **Other benefits.** Students signed up for free or reduced price school meals also qualify for other benefits such as free SAT and ACT tests, and reduced fees for college applications. Ask your school counselor.

Please share this information with your neighbors via school newsletters, congregation bulletins, town offices, local libraries, senior centers, doctor's offices and food shelves.



## 3SquaresVT (formerly Food Stamps) Is New and Improved - Apply Today!

- **Applying is easier than ever.** Due to new changes in the program, families at 185% of the poverty level are eligible. That's \$39,220 for a family of four. Savings are no longer counted against you. Phone interviews are available.
- **The program is easy to use.** Monthly benefits come on a debit-style card. Seniors can get their benefits deposited as cash into their bank accounts.
- **3SquaresVT helps your bottom line.** In these tough economic times, 3Squares VT helps take the pressure off of your food budget. The average monthly household benefit is \$232.
- **Other benefits.** Most households receiving 3SquaresVT are eligible for free school meals, telephone assistance and fuel assistance.
- **Visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com)** or call 1-800-287-0589.

Please share this information with your neighbors via school newsletters, congregation bulletins, town offices, local libraries, senior centers, doctor's offices and food shelves.



# Newsletter Inserts

## 3SquaresVT

**Apply now for 3SquaresVT! 3SquaresVT (formerly the Food Stamp program) is new and improved, and can help take the pressure off of your family's food budget.** The average monthly benefit is \$232. New changes to the program mean that families at 185% of the poverty level are eligible (that's \$39,220 for a family of four) and that savings are not counted against you. Phone interviews are available and benefits come on a debit-style card. For more information visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) or call 1-800-287-0589.

For Seniors

**Seniors: Call today to learn more about 3SquaresVT.** 3SquaresVT provides monthly resources to help you pay for food – the average monthly benefit for senior households is \$158. Seniors may be able to get benefits deposited as cash in their bank accounts. **Applying is easier than ever – savings and retirement accounts don't count against you and you can have your interview over the phone.** 3SquaresVT help our local grocery stores and food producers by bringing additional dollars into our local economy. Do your part by applying for 3SquaresVT today. Call 1-800-642-5119 for more information today.

## School Meals

For Parents of All Students

**Sign Up for Free or Reduced Price School Meals!** You can sign up for free or reduced-price school meals at any time during the school year. You can download the short application online at: <http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf>, or contact your child's guidance counselor or food service director for more information. All information is confidential.

For Parents of High School Students

**Sign Up for Free or Reduced Price School Meals!** You can sign up for free or reduced-price school meals at any time during the school year. You can download the short application online at: <http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf>, or contact your child's guidance counselor or food service director for more information. Students who receive free or reduced price meals can receive a voucher for **free SAT/ACT testing and reduced college application fees.** All information is confidential.

## All Programs

Having trouble paying for food and other monthly expenses? There are programs that can help! **Apply today for 3SquaresVT** (formerly the Food Stamp program). New changes to the program make even more people eligible, and the average monthly benefit is \$232. Visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) for more information. **Families with children can apply for free or reduced price school meals at anytime during the school year.** Download the short application online at: <http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf>, or contact your child's school. All information is confidential. You can also **visit your local food shelf.** Find out about hours and locations in your community by calling the helpline at 2-1-1.

# Newspaper Articles

## 3SquaresVT

### **New and Improved Program Helps Families Purchase Nutritious Food**

Vermonters are hardworking people, but with the high costs of food, fuel and other necessities, many still struggle. Thanks to recent changes in 3SquaresVT (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program), more working Vermonters are now able to buy nutritious food for their children. New income limits mean that a family of four earning up to \$39,220 (\$3,269/mo.) may now be eligible for benefits. Also, resources will no longer keep you from receiving help, so that families with savings in the bank may still qualify.

3SquaresVT is much more than just food. Participating in the program makes your children eligible for free school meals and you may also qualify for phone assistance. These added benefits mean more money freed up to pay other bills, plus less financial stress in your life.

Everyone needs access to healthy food, and 3SquaresVT is here to help. Everyone who is eligible is entitled to benefits and should apply for the program. The program not only helps your family, but when benefits are spent at local grocery stores, you are supporting your local economy by bringing more federal money into the state. With all of the benefits there is no reason not to apply.

For more information or an application, visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) or call 1-800-287-0589.

## School Meals

### **In Tough Times, the School Meal Program is Strong**

In the current time of economic uncertainty, the school meal program is a valuable resource to families with children. Households at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible to receive free or reduced price school breakfast and lunch. For a family of four, that's \$39,220 per year. Families can apply for free or reduced price school meals at any time during the school year. All kids who qualify for free or reduced price school meals receive a free breakfast.

There are many benefits to school meals. Free or reduced price school meals ensure that kids receive consistent nutrition and take pressure off of tight family budgets. A family of four with two children can save over \$150/month by qualifying for free school meals. This ensures that families have adequate resources to pay for basic necessities including utility bills, and fuel costs. In addition, studies show that kids who participate in the meal program do better in school and have reduced rates of illness and absence. . All school meals have basic nutritional requirements, and at minimum, each meal includes milk, fruits and vegetables, protein and grains.

Apply for free or reduced price school meals today. The program is confidential and all information provided on the application is confidential. All kids receive the same meal – regardless of income.

Contact your local school for an application or download one from the web at [www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf](http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf)

Please share this information with your neighbors via school newsletters, congregation bulletins, town offices, local libraries, senior centers, doctor's offices and food shelves.

## **All Programs**

### **Strengthen Our Economy: Access Food Resources This Winter**

As we face economic uncertainty in 2009, Vermonters can play a part in stimulating our local economy by participating in nutrition programs which generate economic activity. Federal programs such as 3SquaresVT (formerly Food Stamps) and the School Breakfast Program bring federal dollars into our state and support local supermarkets, food producers, and create jobs. We can all strengthen our local economy this winter by learning more about the programs and ensuring that our neighbors are receiving the support they need to stay well fed.

**Apply for the 3Squares Program.** New changes make more people eligible for this important nutrition program, which provides an average monthly benefit of \$232 to participating households. Benefits are distributed on a debit card and seniors can have benefits deposited as cash into their bank accounts. Visit [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) to see if you are eligible, or call the Department of Children and Families at 1-800-287-0589. Even if you have previously applied, new changes may make you eligible. Spread the word about this important program by distributing flyers and resources which can be found at [www.vtnohunger.org/toolkit](http://www.vtnohunger.org/toolkit)

**Take advantage of free or reduced price school meals.** Families can apply at any time in the school year and all breakfasts served to low-income kids are free. The application and your child's status is confidential. A family of four with two children can save over \$150/month by taking advantage of this important resource. Contact your local school for an application or download one from the web at [www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf](http://www.vtnohunger.org/schoolmealapplication.pdf)

**Visit your local food shelf or community meal program.** Individuals and families can go to their local food shelves or community meal programs to receive emergency food assistance. Call toll free 2-1-1 for information on locations and hours in your community. Volunteer at your local food or make a donation to support their work.

By taking action now, we can make a difference in our state. 3SquaresVT alone brought \$60 million in purchasing power to Vermont last year. By spreading the word about these programs, we can make sure that neighbors, family, and friends are nourished, and boost our local economy. For more information and resources for your community visit: [www.vtnohunger.org/toolkit](http://www.vtnohunger.org/toolkit)

Please share this information with your neighbors via school newsletters, congregation bulletins, town offices, local libraries, senior centers, doctor's offices and food shelves.