

## Hunger at the holidays for 500,000 Minnesotans: Recent SNAP cuts push more to food shelves

Written by John Michaelson  
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Minnesota's unemployment rate is at a six-year-low and the state budget is back in the black, but for many of the working poor, the economic rebound has yet to be felt. According to the new director of Minnesota FoodShare, Suzanne Shatila, the need at food shelves remains around record levels, and recent cuts to SNAP benefits have more people looking for help in feeding their families.

"And I'm hearing from our partner organizations all over the state that they're seeing more people returning," Shatila said. "They're seeing people who they haven't seen in a number of years coming in for assistance with food, and so the need is still there."

In addition to the recent reduction from the ending of an economic stimulus program, a new Farm Bill could bring more cuts to SNAP benefits, of which more than 500,000 Minnesotans are recipients.

As benefits are cut, Shatila said, that adds even more financial pressure on those struggling to make ends meet. She said a lot of them are employed but don't earn enough to cover the basics.

"And so they do have to rely on these different forms of assistance to kind of fill the gaps and make sure that they're able to find food and that they're able to heat their homes and things like that."

Last year, there were more than 3 million food shelf visits in the state and Shatila said around 40 percent of those helped are children.

Minnesota FoodShare is a program of the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches.

Minnesota hunger information is at [bit.ly/1hdYQIO](http://bit.ly/1hdYQIO) .