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## GOVERNMENT

# Local food banks seeing increased use during government shutdown, but they're ready

By [LISA HORNUNG](#) | January 21, 2019 10:00 am



Rep John Yarmuth and Brian Riendeau, executive director of Dare to Care, spoke to media at the Catholic Enrichment Center Saturday. Also pictured are Meridith Rogester and

## Shaun Wimberly Jr., volunteers at the center's food bank and students of Central High School. | Photo by Lisa Hornung

Over the weekend, local food banks started to see an increase in visitors and calls from government employees struggling to feed their families without income.

Food banks in the Washington, D.C., area are already seeing huge demand, and they are hosting [pop-up food banks](#) around the city. In Kentucky, food banks also are preparing for an onslaught, said Tamara Sandberg, executive director of the [Kentucky Association of Food Banks](#). According to the agency's website, food banks serve more than 620,000 Kentuckians a year.

"We were preparing for a possible extended shutdown and bracing for the increase in individuals and families who need assistance, and we're now seeing it," Sandberg said. "Lots of furloughed federal employees, they're scared, and there's no place to turn but the food banks."

U.S. Rep. John Yarmuth and Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer made an appearance at the Catholic Enrichment Center, 3146 E. Broadway, Saturday to speak about the issue, along with Brian Riendeau, executive director of [Dare to Care](#).

Yarmuth on Saturday wasn't optimistic about President Donald Trump's concession offer, which later [was rejected](#) by Democratic leadership.

"But once again this is something that should have been averted," Yarmuth said. "We need to end the shutdown as quickly as possible and get people back to their lives and restore confidence that in the government, that if you go to work for the government, you get paid for the great service you're providing."



The Dare to Care Community Kitchen is operating at capacity in Butchertown. |  
Photo by Darla Carter

Fischer said calls for food assistance have been coming into the city, but the city refers those people to Dare to Care.

“I think we’ve got to reflect here as a city and the country that this federal shutdown has come into this now, where people don’t have the means to buy their food to eat,” Fischer said. “So it’s a broader issue in terms of all the food security and zero hunger in our country right now. And so you have the real-life issue of that taking place.”

Riendeau stressed that people who need food shouldn’t hesitate to get in touch with Dare to Care.

“At Dare to Care, our message to the community is pretty simple: if you’re a federal worker who’s been impacted by this government shutdown or if you’re anybody in our community who lacks the resources to get the food you need, Dare to Care is here for you,” he said. “We’re here with fresh groceries, we’re here with food items, we’re here with hot meals and those are available to anybody in the community at 270 different food distribution locations across the area.”

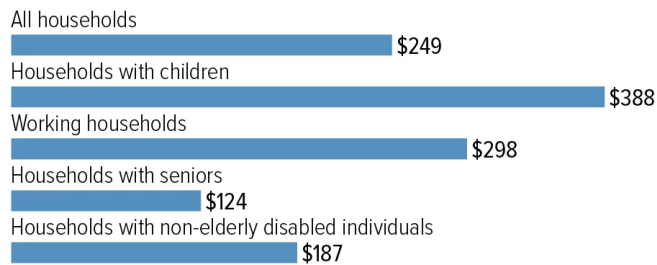
Another issue adding to the fear is the potential for delayed or no benefits from the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), WIC and other federal nutrition programs. The government is delivering February’s SNAP benefits early, by Jan. 20, but users have to make that money last through next month.

“Our concern is that it’s hard enough to make SNAP benefits stretch as it is, and they have to make that stretch at least for six weeks, or longer, if the shutdown continues,” Sandberg said. “That’s a huge concern.”

SNAP benefits average about \$1.40 per person, per meal, according to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), and the amount has taken a hit in funding in recent years. In 2017, the average SNAP household received about \$254 a month, while the average recipient received about \$126 a month. Nearly 80 percent of that money is used within the first half of the month, the CBPP said.

### SNAP Benefits Are Modest

Average monthly SNAP benefit by demographic group, 2016



Source: Department of Agriculture, "Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2016."

CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES | CBPP.ORG

## From CBPP.org

Kedrick Tembo, director of the [Lord's Kitchen Ministries](#), said he's seen an increase in people at its two locations, 1811 Standard Ave. and 2735 S. Fifth St., in the last month.

"On normal days, 100 to 150 (clients served), but now we're running mostly around 200," he said. "I cannot say for sure if it's the government shutdown but I can say the numbers have increased."

Carrie Gerard, executive director of [Eastern Area Community Ministries](#), said the organization put out a call on Facebook to invite furloughed federal workers to use the food bank. She said that if someone comes in, they will serve them food but then let them know where their home food pantry is to get service. The Eastern Area Community Ministries, 9104 Westport Road, is a Dare to Care distributor, so it sends food out to several other pantries in surrounding areas.

Gerard said the real trouble will likely come in a few weeks.

"I think people tend to think, 'Oh this isn't going to go on,' or 'Oh, I can make this work for a little while,' and as they maybe rob Peter to pay Paul, or they cut corners on bills, then it's six weeks down the road and you realize, 'Oh my gosh, I'm behind on my LG&E, I'm behind on my water bill, and I promised my landlord I was gonna make up that \$200 I didn't pay him last month,' and it's actually two months down the

road when we actually end up seeing families. Because that's when reality hits," she said. "It's usually not when that first paycheck doesn't come in."



## Courtesy of Eastern Area Community Ministries Facebook

Riendeau said that asking for assistance the first time is difficult.

"This is a hard one because most of these folks, A, they've never needed assistance so they don't know where to go, and B, going to a food pantry is a pretty emotional experience if you've never done it," he said.

While Louisville and surrounding counties in Kentucky and Southern Indiana are served by Dare to Care, Hardin County and Fort Knox are served by [Feeding America: Kentucky's Heartland](#).

Feeding America's communications director Monica Ruehling said the organization hasn't been hit yet, at least not in the Fort Knox area, where many more federal employees live and work.

“Fort Knox is a good community,” Ruehling said. “They definitely try to take care of their own. They try to make sure that, especially that anyone associated with the military, gets the resources they need, so I feel confident that that’s what they’re doing.”

The organization also covers Christian County, the home of Fort Campbell, but there’s been no increase in numbers there either, she said.

“We’re ready and prepared with whatever increases we might get,” Ruehling said. “We always encourage people no matter their situation to call a partner agency if they ever need food. No one should ever be without.”

In Louisville, Dare to Care has tubs at area Kroger stores so that shoppers can donate food while they shop for their own groceries, and Feeding America has the same.

Help from the community is vital, Gerard said.

“We always struggle to keep food on our shelves,” she said. “We would love for people to consider either our food pantry or any food pantry that’s close to their home, to consider bringing in some extra supplies, whether or not it’s furloughed workers or just the general public that has the challenges of meeting all their financial obligations, we could always use more assistance keeping our shelves full of food to be ready for those families.”

Ruehling said that many people tend to give at Christmas, but the need is year-round.

“I hate that a government shutdown has to bring light to this,” Ruehling said. “People have things happen and need food all times of the year and not just the holidays, and that’s what we see a lot of times too. We definitely don’t want a government shutdown to happen ever, but it’s a good reminder to say, ‘Hey, it’s still happening out there, just because Christmas is over.’”

## **LISA HORNUNG**

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of

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