

FOOD ACCESS

For more than ten years, FoodChange's Food Access department has helped New Yorkers understand, access, and navigate the federal Food Stamp Program (FSP) and assisted communities in moving towards more sustainable solutions to combat poverty. For those enrolled in the program, food stamps serve as a first line of defense against hunger.

Our food stamp-related activities comprise three projects:

Food Stamp Prescreening and Outreach: FoodChange's specialists provide information on eligibility and benefits, offer prescreening services, and assist low-income people with the food stamp application process. The outreach team visits more than 200 community-based, nonprofit, and other venues where potential clients can easily be reached. The in-person service is supplemented by toll-free phone information and prescreening, and an extensive media outreach campaign. The campaign has renamed food stamps as "the Food Card", seeking to promote a more positive perception of the FSP and educate New Yorkers about its benefits, eligibility criteria, and application process.

Food Stamp Training: FoodChange supplements its own prescreening and media outreach activities by offering technical assistance to community-based organizations throughout New York City. These partners widen the reach of federal FSP, the nation's premier nutrition program, and help more people apply. In partnership with The United Way of New York City, the Food Card Access Project trains several organizations in the specialized technical and operational skills needed to assess the food stamp eligibility of potential FSPO participants. In addition, FoodChange has a Food Stamp Trainer who provides general technical assistance to more than 100 community-based groups—food pantries, emergency food providers, and various government and church-based agencies—about the basics of the program including prescreening mechanisms.

In 2006, FoodChange and its partners screened more than **32,000** people for food stamp eligibility and responded to **29,000** phone inquiries.

Food Stamp Access: In order to enable the more than 700,000 potentially eligible New York City (NYC) residents to access food stamps, Food Access works cooperatively with the New York City Human Resources Administration, the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance, and the United States Department of Agriculture, to identify and address issues affecting FSP participation. In addition, FoodChange's Director, Food Access serves as Chair of the monthly NYC Food Stamp Task Force, which brings together advocates, legal service providers, social service providers, government officials, and others in a forum designed to educate, inform, and troubleshoot on FSP areas.

February 2007

