

Requests for food, shelter up in 2005: Employed people seeking aid

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More Americans requested emergency food and shelter in U.S. cities last year than the year before, according to a national survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Some service providers were forced to turn clients away, and officials fear that caring for relocated hurricane victims could further inundate urban agencies in 2006.

Emergency food requests rose an average of 12 percent in the 24 cities surveyed—including San Francisco, Boston, Chicago, Detroit and Nashville—according to the December 19 report. Forty percent of those requests were from people with jobs; 54 percent came from children and their parents.

Requests for emergency shelter grew by 6 percent. Low-paying jobs and lack of affordable housing were the top causes of hunger and homelessness identified by city officials.

“The American way of life dictates that if you work hard you will move ahead or at the very least stave off poverty. However, today’s survey results prove that working families are increasingly at risk,” said Rod Bond of Sodexo, a food services company that sponsored the survey. “Working families are forced to choose between housing or groceries, heat or groceries, medicine or groceries.” *-Religion News Service*