



**For immediate release:
January 22, 2019**

Government shutdown causing uncertainty, angst among Rochester's food-insecure residents

Foodlink, community partners uniting to respond to community need

ROCHESTER – Foodlink and several local organizations on Tuesday gathered to discuss the government shutdown's impact on the emergency food system, and affirmed their commitment to respond to a rising need in the weeks and months ahead.

The federal shutdown, which reached 32 days on Tuesday and is the longest in our nation's history, has resulted in federal employees going unpaid, and has caused angst among the nearly 40 million Americans who rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to put food on the table every month. At this time, SNAP benefits have been distributed for February, although there has been no update about how the government will fund the program from March onward.

At an event Tuesday inside Foodlink's distribution center, officials at Foodlink, the Monroe County Department of Human Services, the United Way of Greater Rochester and 2-1-1/LIFE LINE all spoke about how the shutdown is impacting our community's most vulnerable populations – and what local organizations are doing to ensure people have the resources they need.

"Foodlink is always at the ready to collaborate with hundreds of its community partners when unexpected crises arise, and unfortunately, this government shutdown is having a dramatic impact on our emergency food system," said Julia Tedesco, President & CEO of Foodlink. "We're calling on members of our community to assist Foodlink and our network during this time of uncertainty. By donating or volunteering, you can help those who are directly impacted by the shutdown."

The shutdown caused millions of Americans to get their monthly SNAP benefits weeks in advance, which has forced families to stretch their food budgets. Commissioner Corinda Crossdale of the Monroe County Department of Human Services also spoke at the event, echoing the state's guidance that this advanced SNAP payment is for the entirety of February.

“The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) recently announced that most SNAP clients will receive their full February benefits early, due to the ongoing federal government shutdown,” Crossdale said. “However, it is important for everyone to know this is not an 'extra' or 'bonus' benefit, and households will not receive a second benefit for the month of February. We are urging individuals and families to carefully plan their food budgets accordingly. For more information, I encourage residents to visit OTDA’s website at otda.ny.gov.”

Tedesco made a couple other points clear in her remarks:

- Federal workers impacted by the shutdown should not be hesitant about visiting a local food pantry or soup kitchen for assistance. These agencies can and will assist all individuals in need of food, no matter the circumstance.
- All individuals in need of food should reach out to 2-1-1/LIFE LINE, which connects people to resources in their communities. 2-1-1 has listings of dozens of Foodlink partners – such as food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters – and other agencies that can serve those in need.

“At 2-1-1/LIFE LINE, a mission program of Goodwill of the Finger Lakes, we stand ready 24 hours a day, every day, to support our community, including the government employees affected by the furloughs,” said Deb Turner, 2-1-1/LIFE LINE Program Director. “With over 6,000 resources in our database, 2-1-1/LIFE LINE is the vital go-to resource for everyone in our community who may be in crisis or knows someone who may need help. We are here every day to provide you the support you need and connect you to resources and information that will assist you. You can reach 2-1-1 by dialing 2-1-1 to talk to a trained telecounselor, texting 898-211, chat at 211lifeline.org, or follow us on Facebook for resource updates.”

Foodlink also announced that it will work with key community partners, such as the United Way of Greater Rochester, to organize some additional emergency food distributions if the government shutdown continues into February.

“Our community is strong and resilient. We come together during crisis – just as we did during the storm this weekend checking in on our neighbors and loved ones,” said Jaime Saunders, President & CEO of United Way of Greater Rochester. “While we cannot affect the uncertainty of this situation nor predict when it will resolve, our nonprofit and government partners across the community are working diligently behind the scenes to address the local consequences and to ensure all of our neighbors are able to meet their most basic needs.”

More details on upcoming food distributions will be announced on Foodlink's website (www.foodlinkny.org) and social media channels (@foodlinkny).

About Foodlink

Foodlink is a community food resource center and the Feeding America food bank serving Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates counties. We leverage the power of food to transform lives, end hunger and build healthier communities. Through good stewardship, innovation and collaboration, Foodlink mobilizes a diverse network of partners and stakeholders to eradicate both the symptoms and root causes of hunger.

Our suite of food access programs provides new access points to nutritious and affordable food in underserved communities. Our team of nutrition educators empowers people at risk of diet-related illness with the skills and knowledge to make healthy choices. Our food banking operations distribute millions of pounds of food to a network of hundreds of human service agencies throughout our service area. The Foodlink Community Kitchen prepares and delivers thousands of meals daily for Rochester children, supports our regional agricultural economy by slicing locally grown apples, and hosts a one-of-a-kind career empowerment program to train individuals with barriers to employment for careers in the regional food industry. Learn more about how we are creating healthy futures for every community we serve at www.foodlinkny.org, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram at @foodlinkny.