



Policy Blog: Impact of the Government Shutdown on the Charitable Food System in Central Pennsylvania

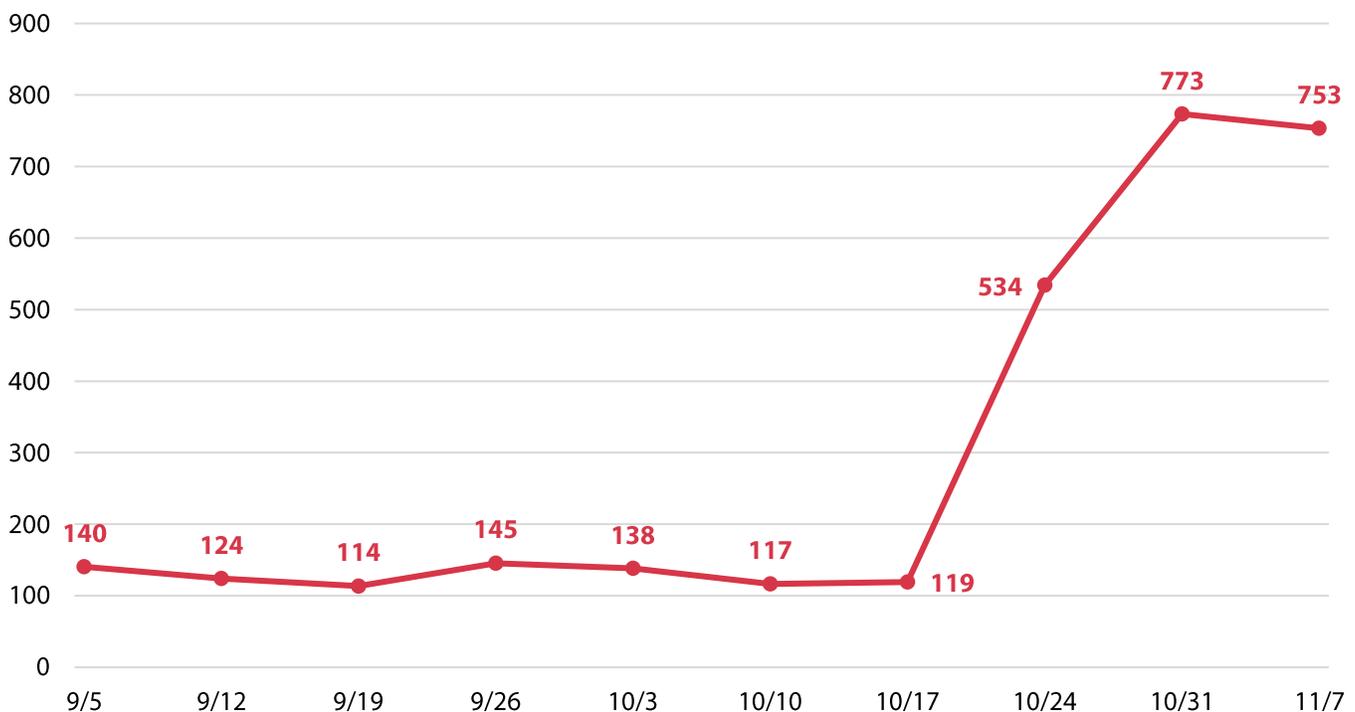
By Morgan Flood, Policy Research Specialist, and Zach Zook, SVP/Chief Strategy Officer

The federal government shutdown that began in October 2025 has had serious economic consequences for a wide swath of Americans, including federal workers who are furloughed or working without pay as well as [SNAP participants, who did not receive their full grocery assistance benefit as scheduled for November](#). In this policy blog, CPFIB Impact and Policy Research assesses the impact of the November SNAP outage on the need for charitable food assistance across central Pennsylvania as measured by the number of searches for help on CPFIB's Find Food tool and the number of services rendered to neighbors via Feeding America's paperless neighbor intake system for pantries.

CPFIB recently moved its [online Find Food tool](#) to Vivity, a platform that is much more user-friendly than its predecessor and that allows for more advanced analysis of search patterns. As shown in the graph below, the average daily number of searches for assistance coming from within the CPFIB's service territory has increased significantly over the course of the shutdown.

Search rates were relatively steady between 110 and 150 searches per day over the course of September and early October, but as SNAP recipients began to worry about if November benefits would be distributed in late October, searches skyrocketed – between the week ending on Friday October 17 and the week ending October 24, searches quadrupled, rising from an average daily rate of 119 searches to 534. The trend continued between October 24 and October 31, rising another 45% in that week over the previous week to 773 average daily searches, then roughly stabilized at about 750 daily searches during the week ending November 7.

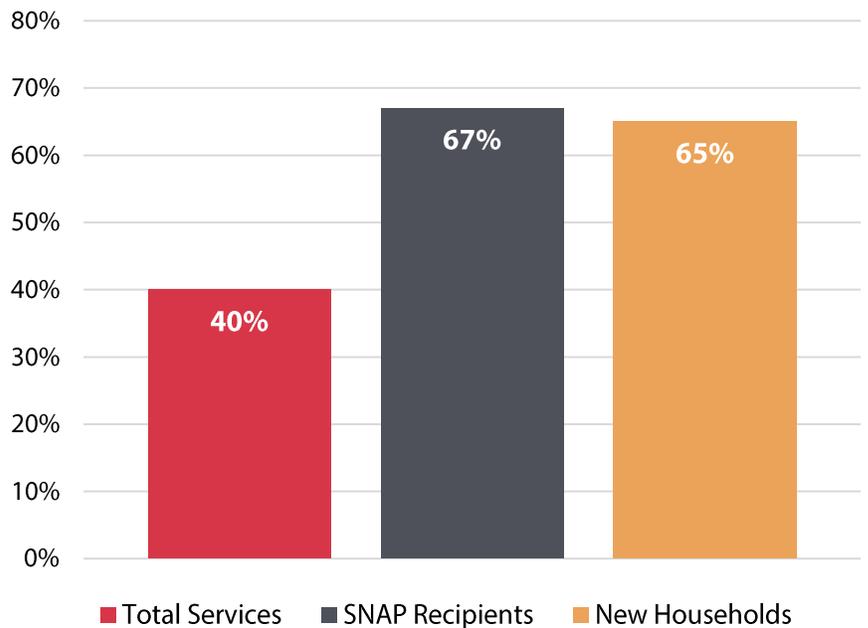
Average Daily Vivity Searches for Food Assistance in CPFIB Service Territory by Week, 9/1/25 - 11/7/25



Between the week ending October 17 and the week ending November 7, the average daily search rate for pantry assistance increased sixfold, rising from around 120 to more than 750 per day. In total, during the week of November 7, the first week in which SNAP benefits were late, more than 5,000 unique searches for assistance were made by residents of CPFIB's 27-county service area.

Pantry service records from Service Insights on MealConnect (SIMC), a paperless client intake system developed by Feeding America, also reflected a sharp increase in need for charitable food assistance due to SNAP benefits not having been paid. **Agencies that had been using SIMC since at least July 2024 rendered 40% more services to neighbors in need in the first week of November 2025 than during the same week in 2024. The increase was greater among neighbors who said they receive SNAP, at 67%.** The data further indicates that the SNAP outage drove neighbors who had not previously visited a food pantry to seek help, as there were 65% more intakes of individuals who had no prior service records in the system in early November 2025 than in the same time frame one year earlier.

Percent Increase in Pantry Services Provided via Service Insights on MealConnect over 2024, November 1- 7, 2025



Taken together, this data clearly shows the scale and importance of SNAP, a critical government support program that provides nine meals for each one the charitable food system shares with our neighbors under ordinary circumstances. This data also highlights the impressive degree to which the CPF's network of partner agencies and programs has risen to the occasion of serving our neighbors in this challenging time. If you or someone you know needs help, or if you are looking for a local food pantry to support with your time or dollars, [please visit our Vivery page](#) to find an agency near you.