

New Web site helps connect soup kitchens, needy

By [Christina Jacobson](#) via *Chi-Town Daily News*
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A new website that launched this week aims to make it easier for Chicago's needy to locate social services near them, including food pantries and soup kitchens.

The site, direct2food.org, was developed by the Illinois Food and Nutrition Advocacy Partnership. It's a database that lists food resources by zip code.

Program spokeswoman Maude Carroll says the site arose in reaction to the expected influx of people who will need food assistance in the coming months and years due to the national recession.

Jessica Terlikowski, a policy manager at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, helped launch the site and says it will come in handy for people with AIDS.

"It is essential for all people, but especially critical for people with chronic illnesses," says

The program is a partner with direct2housing.org, which connects people living with HIV/AIDS to affordable housing options.

The site wanted to combine both local meal and food shelves with government programs like food stamps.

"The site is a one stop shop for all resources. It's more comprehensive," said Terlikowski.

Those who worked on the site acknowledge that some of the people who would benefit most from the information are those who lack Web access.

According to a study conducted by The University of Illinois at Chicago, 25% of Chicagoans have no access to the Internet, and 15% have very limited use. Many of those who have no access are low-income people and families -- the same households that the website intends to help.

However, Carroll says, the site will also help caseworkers assisting clients without Web access.

"So, for people who are already on food assistance programs and do not have Internet, their case managers will," she says.

There are over 1,100 listings on the site. The more information about themselves users enter, the more tailored the results will be.