

Food Stamps Fail to Reach Many Villages

The Food Stamp program in Alaska has failed to reach many of the rural poor due to a lack of staff members to distribute and collect food stamp applications.

But, now with a \$58,639 grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Rural Alaska Community Action Program plans to expand the program to at least three new areas—Copper Center, Kodiak-Aleutian Islands, and the middle and upper Yukon.

Most of the grant will go to the State which administers the program under the Department of Health and Welfare, John Shively, deputy director of RURAL CAP, said.

The State will hire two staff workers for the Interior, one for the Copper-Center area and one for the Kodiak-Aleutian Islands area.

These workers, he continued, will distribute food stamp applications to the people, explain the program to them, and collect the completed forms.

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The proposed budget for next year's Food Stamp program provides for such an expansion, so the State will assume the responsibility for these areas, if the legislature approves the provision, Shively added.

As the result of a suit recently filed in the U.S. District Court by Alaska Legal Services on behalf of residents in the Fort Yukon area, the State Department of Health and Welfare was ordered to initiate the Food Stamp Program in the Fort Yukon area or discontinue the program entirely in Alaska.

In addition to hiring the four staff members for the Food Stamp Program, the grant will pay the salary of a RurAL CAP employee who will coordinate the Food Stamp Program with the State and will develop other health and health-related programs.

According to Shively, the employee, who is already on the job, is concentrating on developing an alcoholism education program for use in the junior and senior high schools.

This program and others developed will be initiated as funded.