

Use of food stamps on rise in Massachusetts

BOSTON (AP) — Advocates for the poor say the rising costs of food and fuel are driving up the use of food stamps in Massachusetts.

Records show that more than 500,000 people statewide received food stamps in April, up 11 percent from last year and up 67 per-

cent since 2003.

Massachusetts residents received about \$48 million in food stamp benefits this April, more than double the \$22 million they received in April 2003.

Patricia Baker of the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, a non-profit that advocates for the poor,

says the soaring cost of heating oil is helping drive food stamp use.

She says the federal program has also been made more accessible by a streamlined online application process and the addition of eight new offices to assist the poor and disabled.