



Wider Opportunities for Women

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Wider Opportunities for Women Recognizes Medicare's 44th Birthday

The National Elder Economic Security Initiative, a project of Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), celebrates the 44th birthday of Medicare. WOW applauds the program's longevity and celebrates its critical role in providing health care coverage to our nation's elders. With the nation's health care system in the midst of major reform, there is no better time to emphasize the importance and success of Medicare in helping keeping seniors healthy and solvent.

"Medicare is crucial to seniors' economic security, but more can be done to ensure elders and their families are not overburdened by out-of-pocket health care expenses. Contrary to the myth that Medicare recipients don't really have to pay for health care, seniors often have additional costs including supplemental coverage to Medicare, resulting in significant co-pays, premiums and deductibles," said WOW Executive Director Joan Kuriansky.

According to WOW's Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index), health care is the second highest expense for elders in good health. National averages show that the median out-of-pocket medical costs for elders is over \$2,000 for elders in excellent health and almost \$3,000 for elders in poor health. That is 10-15% of what the typical woman over 65 needs annually to get by if she lives alone and rents her home. Furthermore, an elder's total expenses can double, or in some cases triple, if he or she has long-term care needs. To this end, WOW calls upon the Administration and U.S. Congress to make long-term care reform a part of broader health care reform efforts, such as through provisions outlined in the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports (CLASS) Act and the Empowered at Home Act.

Comprehensive data on what it takes elders to make ends meet in their communities, including a detailed look at health and home and community-based long-term care expenses, is now available through the [Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index](#) for the following states: [California](#), [Illinois](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [Wisconsin](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Minnesota](#), [New Jersey](#), [Connecticut](#), and [Michigan](#).

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The Elder Economic Security Initiative™, a project of Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), is a multi-year effort combining coalition building, research, advocacy and media outreach at the national, state and community levels to promote the economic well-being of elders and their families. WOW works nationally and in its home community of Washington DC to achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity for women and their families at all stages of life. For over 40 years, WOW has been a leader in the areas of nontraditional employment, job training and education, welfare to work and workforce development policy. Since 1995, WOW has been devoted to the self-sufficiency of women and their families through the national Family Economic Self-Sufficiency (FESS) Project. Through FESS, WOW reframed the national debate on social policies and programs from one that focuses on poverty to one that focuses on what it takes families to make ends meet. Building on FESS, WOW expanded to meet its intergenerational mission of economic independence for women and families at all stages of life with the Elder Economic Security Initiative. For more information about WOW's programs please visit www.wowonline.org or call WOW at 202-464-1596.

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