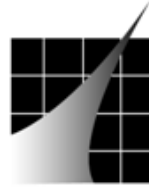




Wider Opportunities for Women



west virginia
Center on
Budget & Policy

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West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy
Takes the Lead to Achieve Economic Security for the State's Elders
Launches Multi-Year Economic Security Initiative

WEST VIRGINIA- The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, in partnership with Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), is leading a statewide initiative to ensure that West Virginia's elders are able to age in place with dignity and economic security.

The West Virginia Elder Economic Security Initiative (the Initiative) will provide guidelines and tools to shape public policies and programs to promote the economic well being of elders.

Through a combination of coalition building, research, education, advocacy and a media strategy at the community, state, and national levels, the Initiative will provide important new information to illustrate the basic costs that older adults in West Virginia face and how their financial security is affected when their life circumstances change. In addition, the Initiative will educate seniors about actual and projected living costs to inform their financial, employment, and life decisions, and help local agencies serving seniors set goals, assess needs, and design programs to help older adults age in place. A key component of the Initiative is the Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (the Elder Index), a realistic measure of the income needed for older adults to age in place with dignity.

"West Virginia is honored to partner with WOW on the Elder Economic Security Initiative," said Ted Boettner, executive director of the West Virginia Center for Budget and Policy. West Virginia has one of the highest percentages of elderly people. Many live in rural areas and do not have the income or services they need to maintain their independence. This economic tool will guide a statewide partnership for Elder Security and Long Term Care to develop and advocate for policies that will help West Virginians remain in their communities and age with dignity."

Nancy Tyler, chair of the Vision Shared Statewide Task Force on Long Term Care and counsel to the House of Delegates Health Committee, said "we are especially pleased that West Virginia will join other states in developing the information we need to make good policy and program decisions."

According to 2007 U.S. Census, over 38 million Americans live in poverty, with 9.5% of adults 65 and older living in poverty. Older women are almost twice as likely to live in poverty than older men. Poverty hits older women of color the hardest -- 23 percent of African-American and nearly 21 percent of Hispanic older women live in poverty. For women living alone, the rates are even higher.

"These figures are just the tip of the iceberg, given that the outdated federal poverty threshold fails to accurately document the hardship in our nation by ignoring today's true cost of living," said Joan Kuriansky, Executive Director of WOW. "The Elder Index measures the income seniors actually need to meet such basic expenses as housing and health care costs. Unlike the federal poverty threshold, the Elder Index is calibrated to household size, geographic area, and life circumstances, and broken down on a county-by-county basis."

In the years ahead, the Elder Economic Security Initiative will provide important information to policy makers, service providers, and advocates in West Virginia and across the U.S. as they develop programs and policies to ensure the economic independence of senior citizens.

For more information about the Elder Economic Security Initiative or to schedule interviews contact:

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The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy is a policy research organization that is nonpartisan, nonprofit, and statewide. The Center's research and analysis is designed to support informed public dialog and policy in West Virginia. The Center consults and collaborates with other organizations to ensure that its analyses are relevant and timely and strives to be a knowledgeable and respected source of credible information on public budget and fiscal issues for policymakers, advocates, media, and the public. For more information, please visit: <http://www.wvpolicy.org/default.html>.

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) leads two national networks promoting economic security within the United States: The Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project (FESS) focusing on the needs of low-income working families; and the Elder Economic Security Initiative, addressing what income seniors require to age in place. WOW works in 35 states, the District of Columbia, and at the federal level to promote programs and policies that accurately measure the income and assistance needs of families and the elderly. For more information, please visit www.wowonline.org.