



Mass. Elders Feeling Tough Economic Squeeze

By Kara Kouri,
Contributing Writer

BOSTON -- Massachusetts elders are having a tough time meeting basic housing expenses, and are feeling the squeeze in other areas as well, according to a new report on the economic status of the commonwealth's elders released Wednesday.

According to the Elder Standard study, single elders and elderly couples who live in Massachusetts cannot make ends meet at the poverty level or relying on the average Social Security payment without financial backing for housing and health care. Research shows health care costs are the second-largest expense for Massachusetts' elders, who need to purchase full supplemental health and prescription drug coverage.

The average Social Security payment for a retired couple in 2006 is \$19,776, according to the study. For every one out of nine retired couples, Social Security is the only source of income.

The report also showed that an elder living alone in Massachusetts needs between \$14,700 and \$28,100 annually to cover basic living costs. The study said the average annual Social Security payment of \$12,024 in 2006, is less than half of what some elders in the state receive to cover their basic expenses.

"When you look at just basic goods and services it is virtually impossible for elders to make ends meet. Income needs can be up to double their Social Security income," said Ramsey Alwin, associate director of National Programs for the Massachusetts Elder Economic Security Initiative at Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), which worked on the study.

The Elder Initiative builds on the work of the [Gerontology Institute](#) to develop a better means of economic security for Boston's senior citizens.

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