



Wider Opportunities for Women



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New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department  
Takes the Lead to Achieve Economic Security for the State's Elders  
**Launches Multi-year Economic Security Initiative**

**NEW MEXICO** - The New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (ALTSD), in partnership with Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), is leading a statewide initiative to ensure that New Mexico's elders are able to age in place with dignity and economic security.

The New Mexico 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 New Mexico 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.

"New Mexico is honored to collaborate with WOW on the Elder Economic Security Initiative," said Cindy Padilla, Cabinet Secretary for the Aging and Long-Term Services Department. "Economic barriers are especially pronounced in New Mexico's elder population, and this population is growing rapidly. This economic tool will guide the Department and community partners to promote the independence and dignity of adults and persons living with disabilities and their families by advocating for social and economic policies that support autonomy, health, safety, economic well-being, and cultural diversity, thereby enabling them to live on their own terms in their own communities."

Paul Biderman, Executive Director of The Institute of Public Law (IPL) at the University of New Mexico School of Law applauded the partnership. "IPL is privileged to serve as a partner with the New Mexico

Aging and Long-Term Services Department and WOW in this important effort," he said. "We are particularly pleased that our contribution will be to elicit directly from elders their own stories and ideas for improving their economic situation. We believe that by facilitating collaboration among elders themselves and the government agencies committed to serving them, we can help to develop the most effective possible strategies to help elders lead healthier and more secure lives."

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 National Elder Economic Security Standard 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 New Mexico 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: Joan Grangenio-Thomas at 212-627-2404 or [joan@makewavesnotnoise.com](mailto:joan@makewavesnotnoise.com).

*The New Mexico ALTSD develops programs and unified public policies that address access and the delivery of integrated programs and services to adults in need, older adults, and persons with disabilities throughout New Mexico. The Department is charged with directing and managing a seamless, comprehensive, efficient, and cost-effective array of programs and services, which emphasize home- and community-based long-term care, healthy aging, and the prevention of adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation. The Secretary of the Aging and Long-Term Services Department is appointed by, and serves at the pleasure of, the Governor. For more information, please visit [www.nmaging.state.nm.us](http://www.nmaging.state.nm.us).*

*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](http://www.wowonline.org).*