



*Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.*  
**Washington Association of  
Area Agencies on Aging**

**In  
Partnership with  
Wider Opportunities for  
Women (WOW)**

**Presents the  
Washington Elder Economic  
Security Initiative™**

# WIDER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN



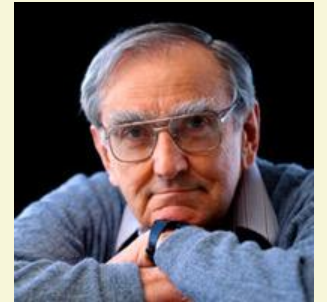
BUILDING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR ALL



# Today's Goals



- Introduce the Washington Elder Economic Security Initiative™ (Initiative)
- Describe the Washington Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index)
- Discuss solutions for allowing Washington elders to age in place



# Wider Opportunities for Women



[www.WOWonline.org](http://www.WOWonline.org)

- WOW is a national advocacy organization celebrating over 45 years of helping women and their families achieve economic independence and equality of opportunity.
- WOW's intergenerational vision and mission of economic independence for women and their families is met through the work of its national and local programs.



# Measuring Economic Security = Solutions



- **Family Economic Security Program**

- Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard

- **Elder Economic Security Initiative**

- Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index



- **Building Bridges to Economic Security Campaign**

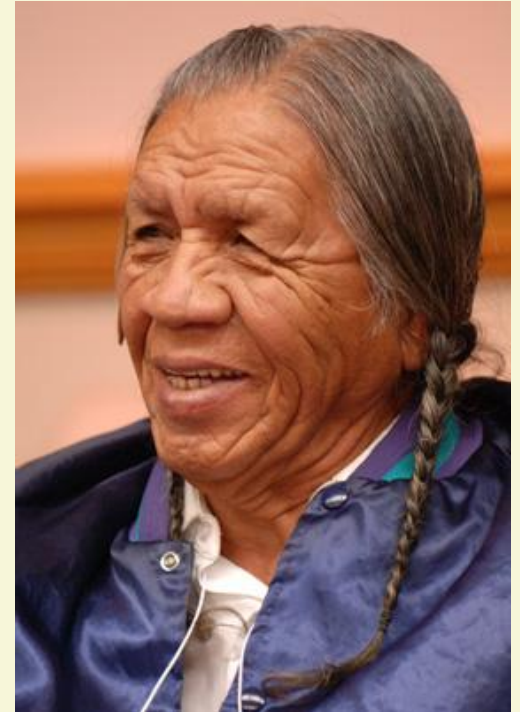
- National opinion research on “economic security” at all ages
- Bridging the generational divide with messaging and advocacy

# Building Elder Economic Security



## Elder Economic Security Initiative

- Multi-Year Project
- Conceptual Framework and Tools
- Public Dialogue and Paradigm Shift
- Bridge the Generations
- Policy and Program Change
- Development and Evaluation



# Building Elder Economic Security



**BLUE:** State Partners in the Elder Economic Security Initiative

# Translating Research to Action – the Elder Index



- Methodology developed in partnership with the **Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Boston** and a national advisory board of experts.

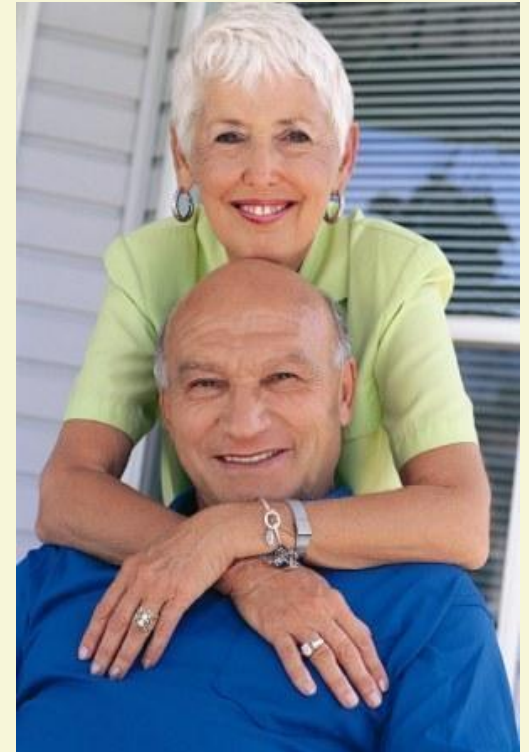
## The Elder Index (65+)

A new measure to illustrate the amount of income required to meet basic needs without public, private or informal assistance.

# Translating Research to Action – the Elder Index



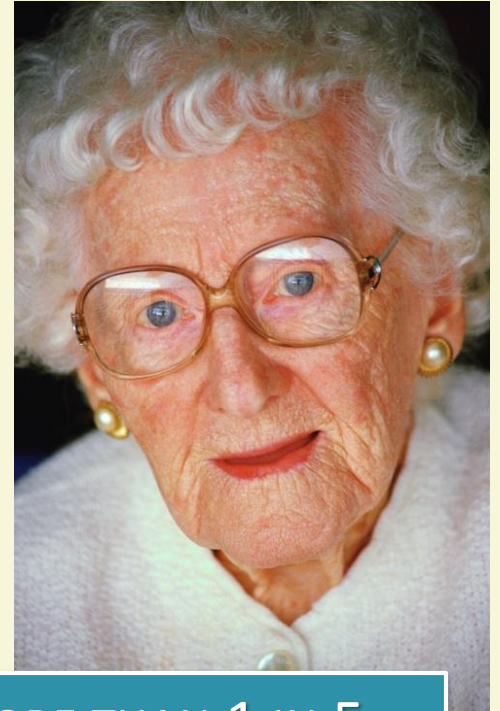
- Aging of the population will strain current support mechanisms.
- More **realistic** tools are needed to assess elders' economic needs and well-being.
- Outdated Federal Poverty Level (FPL) measures deprivation as opposed to economic security.



# Translating Research to Action – the Elder Index



**Social Security payments alone fail to provide economic security.** Furthermore, even those with retirement incomes that include individual retirement accounts, private savings and pensions may fall short of economic security.

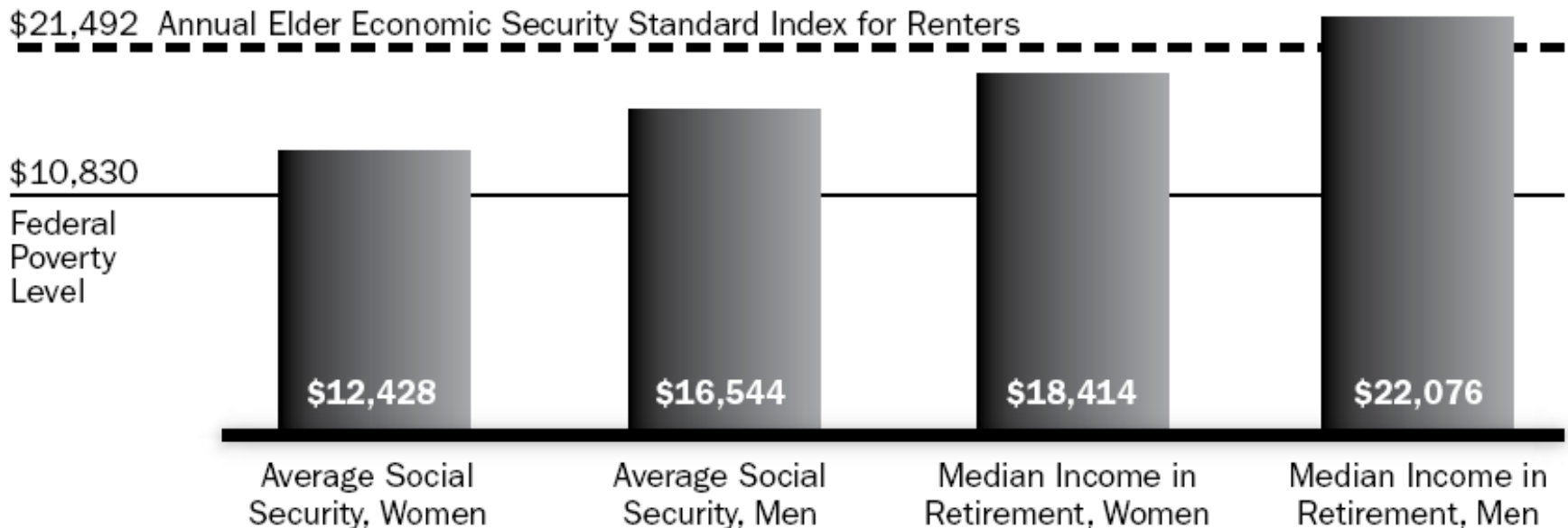


**MORE THAN 1 IN 5  
WASHINGTON ELDERS  
RELIES ON SOCIAL  
SECURITY INCOME  
ALONE.**

# Translating Research to Action – the Elder Index



**Figure 2: The Elder Economic Security Standard Index vs. Benchmark Annual Incomes for Single Elders in Washington, 2010**



Note: Income in retirement includes all personal income, other than public supports, of those without earnings.

Sources: US Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey PUMS data. Median income values inflated using BLS CPI inflator. Social Security Administration, "OASDI Beneficiaries by State and County, 2009." Average Social Security values inflated using SSA COLAs.

# Translating Research to Action – the Elder Index



“Receiving all available supports increases the elder’s economic security... with the largest increases coming from the Medicaid SpendDown program (17%) and the property tax exemption program (10%).”

**Table 3: The Impact of Public Supports on Economic Security for a Single Elder Homeowner without a Mortgage Living on Social Security, 2010**

		Income Plus...				
Monthly Income	\$1,116					Food + Rx +
Monthly Elder Economic Security Standard Index	\$1,662		Food + Rx Assistance	Food + Rx + Medical Assistance	Food + Rx + Medical + Energy Assistance	Food + Rx + Medical + Energy + Property Tax Assistance
Monthly Shortfall	-\$546	-\$530	-\$468	-\$174	-\$120	\$0
% Economic Security	67%	68%	70%	87%	90%	100%
Amount of Support		\$16	\$61	\$295	\$54	\$121

Note: Single, retired woman homeowner without a mortgage in good health living in King County on average Social Security payment for King County elder women (\$1,116/mn, \$13,393/yr), 2010.

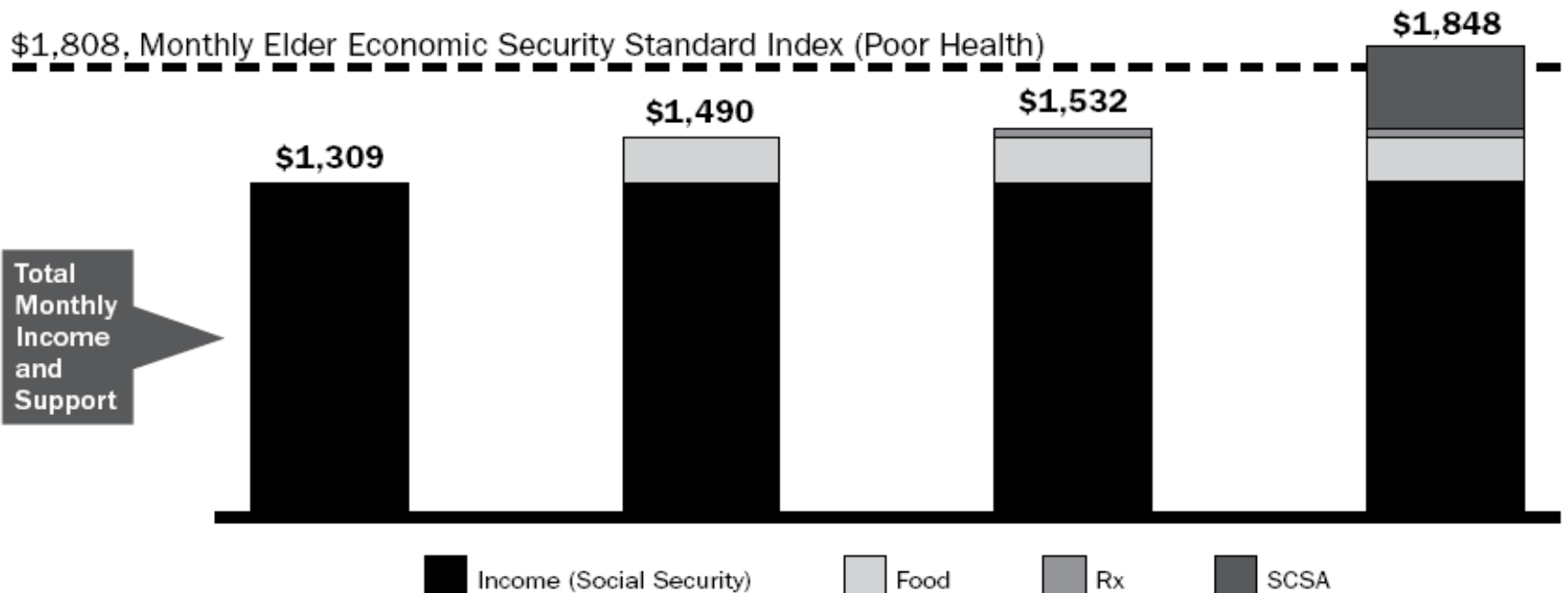
Source: Social Security Administration. \*Supplemental Security Record, 100 percent data, December 2009.\* Social Security value inflated using SSA COLAs.



# Translating Research to Action – the Elder Index



**Figure 3: The Impact of Public Supports and SCSA Services on Economic Security for a Single Elder Renter Living on a Low Fixed Income, 2010**



Note: Single, retired woman renter in poor health living in Yakima County on an income approximating 150% of the federal poverty level (\$1,309/mn, \$15,704/yr), 2010.

# Building Elder Economic Security



## Forging Policy and Program Change

- ❖ CAPACITY BUILDING
- ❖ DIRECT SERVICE
- ❖ POLICY
- ❖ OUTREACH
- ❖ ADVOCACY
- ❖ RESEARCH



# Developing Leaders and Capacity



- **MINNESOTA:** Selected as a grantee of NCOA's Elder Voices for Economic Security program and will engage Minnesotans from grassroots to state and federal policymakers in raising awareness of economic insecurity among older adults through video story collection.
- **WISCONSIN:** Selected as a grantee of the California Women's Foundation's Policy Institute, the Wisconsin Women's Network will train women advocates of all ages on how to develop policies that ensure communities can age with dignity, health and economic security.
- **NEW JERSEY:** The New Jersey Foundation for Aging was selected to work with the Women's Fund of New Jersey to replicate California Women's Foundation's Policy Institute.

# Enhancing Aging Services



- **Denise Grossman, Jefferson County Elderly Benefit Specialist**

“ About 23% of my clients live below the federal poverty level. It takes patience and creativity to look at the remaining 77% of my caseload and strategize with them about making their budget stretch to cover the basic essentials. It may mean advising someone to sell his or her home of 45 years in order to move into a subsidized apartment.”



**“The Elder Index gives us something tangible to explain to our clients. It helps us illustrate to the client that it’s not their fault.”**

# Creating Aging and Economic Security Policy



- **CALIFORNIA: Elder Economic Dignity Act (2009; 2010):** requiring mandated use of the Elder Index in strategic planning and care management assessments. Now introduced as the **Elder Economic Planning Act (2011)**.
- **CALIFORNIA: California Economic Security Taskforce (2010):** developing a two-year bi-partisan task force to issue recommendations to increase economic security among Californians 50% by 2020 using concrete measures.

# Informing Program Planning



- **Dr. Allen Glickman, Philadelphia Corporation on Aging**

“It often appears more people are maintaining decent incomes as they age in the area. This perception creates some difficulty when PCA is working with the city to provide services. Using a measure of economic security, rather than the federal poverty level demonstrates that there are far more people that still cannot afford services and yet desperately need assistance if they are to age in place and remain in their communities.”

**With the goal of promoting economic security as a central focus, PCA now uses 200% of FPL, a much closer approximation of economic security than 100% FPL, to shape its planning and research agenda.**

# Evaluating Services and Closing the Gap



- **Paul Downey, Senior Community Centers of San Diego**

The older San Diego residents served by Senior Community Centers do not earn enough to meet their basic needs. With housing and food assistance, however, their situation improves dramatically.

## Example of Program Impact

2008 Annual Elder Index for San Diego, CA = \$22,822

Potiker Family Senior Residence average rent: \$500 a month = -\$6,000

Older Americans Act meals (2x/day) = -\$1,700

Elder's expenses after assistance = \$15,000

- **Total Annual Benefit for Elder = \$7,700**
- **34% of elder's basic costs are covered**

# Raising Awareness

**“IT’S NOT YOUR FAULT”**



- Over **180** media hits and **450** presentations (2008 – 2010)
- Using messaging and the Elder Index to break down barriers to enrollment in public support programs
- Cited in publications by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the National Academy of Social Insurance, the Urban Institute and more...

**“YOU ARE NOT ALONE”**

“Study shows things are tough for state’s seniors”

- **Santa Fe New Mexican**

“Three in 10 W. VA Senior Can's Make Ends Meet”

- **The Charleston Gazette**



HEALTH / FINANCES / CONNECTING / GIVING / ENJOYING



### You are not alone in these hard times!

Families in Michigan are struggling to make ends meet. It's Not Your Fault! With rising costs and fixed incomes, older adults may not be able to make it on their own. AARP, the Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors, and the Michigan Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly (MiCAFE) have volunteers ready to talk to you about programs and services to make your life easier and help you remain independent.



## It's Not Your Fault!

Worried about making ends meet?  
**AARP Benefits QuickLINK** can help!  
Michigan Elder Economic Security Index

A project of the Michigan Elder Economic Security Initiative

### Michigan Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index

The Elder Index is a realistic determination of the basic costs for older citizens to make ends meet each month. The Elder Index is determined by county and includes variables such as the cost of housing, food, transportation, family size, health care, the individual's health situation, and necessary items like toothpaste and clothing. The data shows that older adults are having a hard time living independently. It's Not Your Fault! AARP Benefits QuickLINK can help!

**Wider Opportunities for Women** developed the Elder Economic Security Initiative of which the **Elder Index** is a key component. For more information about the Elder Economic Security Initiative, go to:

[www.wowonline.org/ourprograms/eesi/](http://www.wowonline.org/ourprograms/eesi/)



# Solutions – Building Elder Economic Security



## Forging Federal Policy Change

- ❖ Safeguarding Social Security
  - Vote on debt ceiling
- ❖ Defending income support programs
  - LIHEAP; Section 202; CSBG
- ❖ Institutionalizing the concepts
  - Older Americans Act (OAA) reauthorization



# Solutions – Building Elder Economic Security



## Forging Federal Policy Change

- ❖ Diversifying retirement savings
  - Implement universal retirement accounts (state-based)
- ❖ Advancing long-term care and supports
  - Employers and employees need to know: CLASS Act
  - Health care reform and rebalancing options

# Your State's Initiative: Opportunities Galore!



- **NEW** quantifiable support
- **NEW** data and information
- **BRIDGE** generations
- **BRIDGE** issue areas
- **TARGETED** advocacy
- **TARGETED** outreach



# Building Elder Economic Security



## FIND OUT MORE!

- [www.wowonline.org](http://www.wowonline.org)
- [www.agingwashington.org](http://www.agingwashington.org)

