

ALASKA



FOOD COALITION

Volume Four, Number One

January 2011

“Hunger is a disease, but we have the cure to end senior hunger today. We just need the leadership and courage to get it done.”

- Enid A. Borden, President and CEO of Meals on Wheels Association of America

Advocating to End Senior Hunger

Addressing the Needs of Seniors

For seniors, poverty is the leading cause of hunger, living alone is another risk factor. Older Americans faced with hunger are more likely to report poor health; live at or below the poverty level; and be divorced, separated or living with a grandchild. Feeding America estimates the number of seniors facing hunger will increase nationally from 5 million to 9.5 million by 2025. A 2008 National Meals on Wheels Association of America report found 5 million Americans age 60 and over are worried about being able to put food on the table.

The Hunger in America 2010 study found 42% of adult pantry and kitchen clients in Alaska were 50 and older. Although only 8.5% are currently 65 and older, this number will only increase. Of those currently 65 and older, 57.8% told us they experienced low or very low food security. In 2009, over 20% of Alaskans ages 65 and older received a cash supplement in the form of the Senior Benefits Program ranging from \$125 to \$250 per month, based on income. That same year, 29% of all Adult Public Assistance recipients in Alaska were seniors with an average benefit of \$277.91. You can help end senior hunger by educating and advocating for full funding of senior nutrition programs.

Supplemental Food Programs

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that provides a monthly package of nutritious food and nutrition education for seniors over 60 who are at or below 130% of the federal poverty level - \$17,589 per year for a family of one. Food Bank of Alaska and Fairbanks Community Food Bank provide over 2,000 CSFP boxes each month to agencies in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak and Mat-Su.

The Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) is called the Food Stamp Program in Alaska. The federal government funds 100% of the food stamp benefit. The Division of Public Assistance issues Food Stamp benefits via the Alaska Quest card. The amount a household receives each month depends on the household's countable income and size of the household. Eligible households use the food stamp benefits to buy food products from authorized stores statewide. The gross monthly income test is based on 130% of the current Alaska poverty standard. In 2009, for seniors 60 to 65, the average food stamp benefit was \$160.72; \$99.23 for those 66 and over. Alaska food stamp recipients, 60 and over increased 22% from 11/08 to 11/09.

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dpa/programs/fstamps/>

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is a USDA commodity program that provides food items once a month to households at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. It is distributed by agencies across the state. For more information contact Fairbanks Community Food Bank or Food Bank of Alaska at the addresses listed below.

What You Can Do

The Senior Benefits Program was signed into law by Governor Palin in 2007. This program replaced the Senior Care Program and the Longevity Bonus in Alaska. Funding for the Senior Benefits Program ends this year. Legislation has been introduced in the Alaska State House (HB16, HB48) and Senate (SB21) to extend funding through June 30, 2015. Contact your state legislators and express your support for this important program. <http://w3.legis.state.ak.us/misc/districts.php>

Congress passed the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 in response to concern by policymakers about a lack of community social services for older persons. The original legislation established authority for grants to States for community planning and social services, research and development projects, and personnel training in the field of aging. The law also established the Administration on Aging (AoA) to administer the newly created grant programs and to serve as the Federal focal point on matters concerning older persons. These grants fund many state nutrition programs for seniors. Contact the Alaska congressional delegation and let them know you support funding the Older Americans Act. http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm?State=AK

http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/mem_contact_info.html?statdis=AK00

RESOURCES

AARP

http://www.aarp.org/giving-back/charitable-giving/info-11-2010/hungry_in_america_2010.html

Alaska Commission On Aging

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/acoa/>

US Department of Health and Social Services Department on Aging

http://www.aoa.gov/aoaroot/aoa_programs/oa/index.aspx

Meals on Wheels

<http://www.mowaa.org/page.aspx?pid=281>

Food Stamp Outreach and Senior Benefits Questions:

foodstamps@foodbankofalaska.org

USDA CSFP and TEFAP Programs:

Fairbanks Community Food Bank

<http://www.fairbanksfoodbank.org/programs/index.html>

Food Bank of Alaska

<http://www.foodbankofalaska.org/viewPage.php?ID=55>

The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available online: <http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml> for additional information, contact Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager: afc@foodbankofalaska.org

NEXT MONTH: The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act