

Promising Practices in Food Stamp Outreach Targeted to Seniors

Wisconsin – Through a two-year Food Stamp Program Outreach grant project funded in FY 2005, the City of Milwaukee Housing Authority teamed with Milwaukee County and Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services to schedule stops of its Mobil Benefits Van at public housing sites. Interviewing clients on the spot using four work stations inside the van made it possible for elderly and disabled residents to be qualified for benefits without having to make a long and sometimes intimidating trek to the local office. Ninety-nine percent of those interviewed were able to provide the necessary documentation to qualify that day and receive their EBT card within two days. *For more information, contact: Terence Ray, Housing Partnership Liaison, City of Milwaukee Housing Authority, 5011 W. Lisbon Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53210, (414) 286-5663, tray@milwaukee.gov.*

Michigan – Since its inception in 2002, Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly (MiCAFE) has assisted over 2,500 seniors in applying for food stamps and other public benefits.



As of May, 2007, approximately 74 percent of households assisted have been eligible for benefits that average \$70 a month. MiCAFE uses an internet-based application, visits senior and community centers, and trains volunteers to help seniors in ten counties. Key partners are the Michigan Department of Human Services and the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging. *For more information, contact: Kate White, Executive Director, Elder Law of Michigan, Inc., 3815 West Saint Joseph St., Suite C-200, Lansing, MI 48917, (517) 853-2368, kwhite@elderslaw.org, or visit www.micafeonline.org.*

Nevada – The State has long used a multi-program assistance application so clients could apply for any or all of the programs offered by the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, but this 17-page application has deterred many clients from applying for Food Stamp Program benefits. Through a two-year Food Stamp Program Outreach grant project funded in FY 2005, the Food Bank of Northern Nevada worked with the State to create an outreach application to be used by those who only want to apply for food stamps. The special 5-page application is much easier to complete and takes only 10 to 15 minutes. Elderly and single clients especially have been more willing to follow through the process with the shortened application. *For more information, contact: Nikki Firpo, Outreach Coordinator, Food Bank of Northern Nevada, 994 Packer Way, Sparks, NV 89431, (775) 331-3663, foodstamps@fbnn.org.*

Iowa – During October and November of 2004, the Department of Human Services conducted Food Stamp Program outreach in northwestern counties of the State through a partnership with Mid-Sioux Opportunity, Inc. who in turn worked with the Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP) and the Lyons County local Food Stamp Program office. Assistance was provided in completing applications, gathering necessary documentation and in following up on the initial application. Most of those assisted were elderly households. *For more information, contact: Linda Mount, Executive Officer, Iowa Department of Human Services, Des Moines IA 50317, 515-281-8259, lmount@dhs.state.ia.us.*



Texas – Outreach workers from Lone Star Legal Aid, conducting a one-year FY 2004 Food Stamp Program Outreach grant project that targeted seniors, realized they had difficulty keeping the attention of audiences at congregate meal sites and senior centers as these gatherings were important social functions. Instead of interrupting lunch with a speech, they created a presentation that would rotate slides automatically and run silently and continuously on the wall. This strategy dramatically improved the responses to their outreach. *For more information, contact: Susanne Sere, Lone Star Legal Aid, 1415 Fannin St., Third Floor, Houston, TX 77002, (713) 982-1968, ssere@lonestarlegal.org.*

Rhode Island – The Department of Human Services developed a videotape to inform elderly people about the Food Stamp Program. Recorded in English and Spanish, the 30-minute tape presents information on eligibility, nutrition, EBT, and what customers can buy with benefits. The videotape, aired on cable-TV and shown by staff in a variety of settings, such as senior housing sites and centers throughout the State, has helped elderly people better understand the program. *For more information, contact: Bob McDonough, Family and Adult Services Administrator, 401-462-6835, bmcdonough@dhs.ri.gov.*



Pennsylvania – The Department of Public Welfare was granted a two-year waiver by the Food and Nutrition Service allowing representatives of 19 faith- and community-based organizations to conduct the interview for initial certification for Food Stamp Program benefits. The waiver affects households composed of all elderly and/or disabled people who do not have earned income, and applies throughout the state. It is anticipated that it will benefit applicants both in time and money saved, and it should better utilize the time of eligibility staff. *For more information, contact: Donna Roe, Supervisor, PDPW, 717-772-7906, droe@state.pa.us.*

Arizona – In Yavapai County, Food Stamp Program outreach is conducted with food distribution by the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Food Plus (CSFP) participants, while waiting in line, are asked if they are participating in the Food Stamp Program. If not, they are referred to the Food Assistance and Nutrition for Seniors (FANS) representative, located in each of the towns in the County, to get more information and schedule an appointment. This continues to be a valuable outreach practice in Yavapai County. *For more information, contact: Peter Schlichting, Nutrition Director, Yavapai County Community Health Services, 1090 Commerce Drive, Prescott AZ 86305, 928-771-3138, peter.schlichting@co.yavapai.az.us.*



Kentucky – Counties in the Kentucky River region offer extended hours in the morning and evening, use a prescreening form, and hold orientations to discuss eligibility requirements for various assistance programs. Two workers from each county visit senior citizen groups and group homes for the elderly on a regular basis to educate them about Food Stamp Program requirements and the use of the EBT card. *For more information, contact: Division of Policy Development, Policy Support Section 502-564-7536.*

New Jersey – In 2003 the Department of Human Services implemented a project to increase participation by the elderly in which an outreach worker pre-screens potential applicants for eligibility at 20 sites and the screenings are tracked to determine whether applications were completed. *For more information, contact: Marybeth Schaedel, Coordinator of GA/Food Stamp Programs, 609-588-2197, mary.schaedel@dhs.state.nj.us.*

Virginia – The Richmond Department of Social Services offers several satellite offices in each section of the city as well as in area hospitals, and home visits are made to the elderly to assist them in making an application. Home visits or telephone interviews are available to all customers if they are too ill to come to the office or do not have an authorized representative. *For more information, contact: Doris Ryan, Richmond City Department of Social Services, 804-646-4110.*