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New 'Economic Security' Standard Accounts for California Cost-of-Living

Forty-seven percent of California seniors' incomes do not cover basic costs, including health care, food and housing, according to a **report released today**, the **San Jose Mercury News** reports (de Sá, *San Jose Mercury News*, 2/24).

Researchers from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the Oakland-based Insight Center for Community Economic Development developed the Elder Economic Security Standard, which takes into account the cost of living in each California county (Hendricks, **San Francisco Chronicle**, 2/24).

Susan Smith, director of ICCED's California for Economic Security project, said that the measure is intended as an alternative to the official federal poverty index, which she says is outdated and does not reflect regional cost-of-living differences (O'Brien, **Contra Costa Times**, 2/23).

Hardest-Hit Counties, Populations

According to the report, Imperial and San Francisco counties have the highest percentages of economically insecure seniors at 67% and 61%, respectively.

In addition, the report indicates that single women, people over age 75 and people who rent their homes are least secure financially. Hispanic, black and Asian-American seniors also have high levels of economic insecurity, according to the report.

Goal

Researchers are urging the state to use the new economic security standard to determine eligibility for means-tested state programs (*San Jose Mercury News*, 2/24).

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