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Sacramento seniors must earn twice federal poverty line

Sacramento Business Journal - by [Kathy Robertson](#) Staff writer

It takes more than \$21,500 a year for a senior who rents a one-bedroom apartment in the Sacramento region to make ends meet — more than twice the federal poverty guideline of \$10,830, a new study shows.

The cost of living for California seniors far outpaces the federal poverty guidelines in every county in California, according to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. The report was released prior to a Capitol hearing Tuesday on the need for a new elder index to evaluate the needs of seniors across the state.

“One size does not fit all,” Steven Wallace, associate director of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, said in a news release. “California’s high costs make a single national income standard like the federal poverty guidelines totally inadequate for seniors.”

The standard is based on the cost of food alone. The standard is used to determine income eligibility for many public programs, to allocate funding for other programs and as an evaluation measure when determining program effectiveness.

The federal government has acknowledged it is time to improve the outdated federal poverty guidelines and announced it will release a supplemental poverty measure in fall 2011.

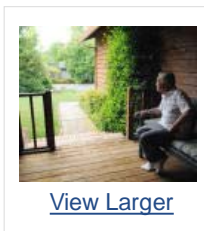
The new Elder Economic Security Standard Index — commonly known as the Elder Index — measures actual costs of basic necessities for older adults.

Introduced two years ago, the Elder Index is a county-specific benchmark that shows how much it costs to cover most basic needs. It includes food, housing, health care and transportation. Data released Tuesday was calculated using the most up-to-date information publicly available from several federal agencies.

Local numbers show:

- It takes \$18,293 a year to meet the basic needs of a single senior homeowner in El Dorado County who owns his or her home. It costs \$33,570 for an owner with a mortgage and \$21,532 for a single person who rents one-bedroom housing.
- In Placer County, it takes \$18,039 to meet the basic needs of a senior who owns his or her home, \$33,814 for a single senior with a mortgage and \$21,918 for a one-bedroom renter.
- The figures for Sacramento County are \$16,400 for a homeowner without a mortgage, \$30,659 for a homeowner with a mortgage and \$21,645 for a single renter of one-bedroom housing.
- Basic costs in Yolo County are \$16,933 for a homeowner without a mortgage, \$33,129 for a homeowner with a mortgage and \$21,644 for a single renter of one-bedroom housing.

Data show basic needs for seniors in local counties cost anywhere from \$5,570 to \$22,984 more than the national federal poverty guideline of \$10,830.



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