



For Immediate Release

October 1, 2009

Contact: Alisha Howell

Wider Opportunities for Women

(202) 464-1596

ahowell@wowonline.org

Release of New York Data on Poverty Reinforces Need to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

State poverty data released Tuesday in New York shows that economic security is an elusive goal for families of all ages. Released this week by the American Community Survey, the overall poverty rate for 2008 was 13.6% in New York and for elders age 65 and over, the percentage of those in poverty was 11.8%. At a time when families of all ages are facing increased housing and health care costs, these poverty statistics reveal that growing numbers of New York workers, families and elders are struggling to get by.

In early 2010, in partnership with Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), Statewide Senior Action Council, Inc. will launch the New York Elder Economic Security Initiative™ (Initiative). The Initiative combines organizing, advocacy and education to promote the economic well-being of elders and their families. Underpinning the Initiative is the Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index), a more realistic measure of what it takes to make ends meet and age in place with dignity. The New York Elder Index is being used by local and state policymakers across the country to inform policy and program development, evaluation and planning.

“Because many more seniors must continue working into their retirement years, policies must be shaped to accommodate their need to develop new skills and to obtain flexible work arrangements. Like the many women who work part-time due to caregiving responsibilities, older workers deserve proportionate access to health, retirement and unemployment benefits, and they should be spared penalties on their pensions,” stated Joan Kuriansky, Executive Director of WOW.

Also critical is ensuring the economic security of older adults raising grandchildren. To this end, New York Statewide Senior Action Council recommends the following:

- **Implement Subsidized Guardianship** to provide caregivers, including grandparents, with payments similar to foster care payments and also allow caregivers to be guardians of their grandchildren, rather than the state.
- **Increase the Child Only Grant** for relative caregivers to make it more equal to the payments provided to foster care parents.

Justin Cunningham, Executive Director of Statewide added, “In New York, over 36,000 grandparents are raising grandchildren. This fact demonstrates that aging issues are truly intergenerational. State policies and programs must include the long-term goal of promoting economic security across the generations.”

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The New York StateWide Senior Action Council is a grassroots advocacy organization founded in 1972. Funded by our member contributions, private foundations and government support for particular projects, StateWide has its main office in Albany. Seniors serve as regional coordinators in some parts of the state. StateWide members elect a Board of Directors of 30 older persons from around the state. For more information, please visit www.nysenior.org.

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) leads two national networks promoting economic security within the United States: the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Project (FESS) focusing on the needs of low- income working families and the Elder Economic Security Initiative, addressing what income seniors require to age in place. WOW works in 35 states, the District of Columbia, and at the federal level to promote programs and policies that accurately measure the income and assistance needs of families and the elderly. For more information, please visit www.wowonline.org