



ELDER LAW OF MICHIGAN, INC.

Update on the Michigan Elder Economic Security Initiative October 2008

A reminder about the purpose of the Michigan Elder Economic Security Initiative?

The Michigan Elder Economic Security Initiative (the Initiative) is a multi-year project of Elder Law of Michigan, Inc. (ELM), as the lead service organization, and a broad-based statewide coalition, comprised of action-oriented researchers, policymakers, nonprofit service organizations, advocacy groups, political leaders, chambers of commerce and foundations throughout Michigan. The Initiative offers a conceptual framework and concrete tools to shape public policies and programs to promote the economic well being of older adults, whether they have the capacity to be fully self-reliant or are in need of certain public supports to age in place with dignity. A primary goal is to change the conversation from “poverty” to “economic sufficiency” for adults age 65 and older.

Underpinning the Initiative is the **Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index** (the Index), a tool which will be developed for use by policy makers, older adults, program providers, leaders in the aging advocacy community and the public at large. The Elder Economic Security Standard Index is a measure of income **that adults age 65** and older require to maintain their independence in the community and meet their daily costs of living, including affordable and appropriate housing and health care. The development and use of the Index promotes a measure of income that respects the autonomy goals of older adults, rather than a measure of what we all struggle to avoid: abject poverty.

What has Michigan accomplished to date?

- ELM has created a draft of a strategic plan for the Initiative. Copies will be available shortly for stakeholders to review.
- Kate White is working to be part of the Michigan Poverty Summit and to participate on a panel. A table has been secured and will provide basic information on EESI to attendees.



ELDER LAW OF MICHIGAN, INC.

- The leader of the national Initiative, Washington, D.C.-based Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), in partnership with the University of Massachusetts-Boston Gerontology Institute, is developing Michigan's Index, demonstrating how much income our seniors actually need to live securely. **The final report is expected in May 2009.**
- The Index will be broken down by county, so Michigan will have 83 separate reports. The four counties the Michigan project is presently targeting for in-depth analysis are Wayne, Kent, Alpena and Delta.
- The Michigan Initiative is continually seeking additional partners for the coalition. We presently have more than 30 organizations and individuals represented. ELM Executive Director Kate White has been meeting with officials from numerous organizations to discuss the project and its impact on the state.
- WOW is interviewing an older adult who wants to share their story to promote the need for the EESI. If you come across other people like this, it is a valuable tool to give the project a tangible name and face.
- Grantee meeting and hill visits: On October 23 and 24 Kate White will attend a grantee meeting at the WOW offices in Washington and participate in visits to select members of Michigan's Congressional delegation to promote the Initiative.
- ELM is now working to get the Initiative on the agenda for the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce Mackinac Policy Conference in May 2009. Preliminary meetings are underway to discuss a media event or presentation at the conference. A second meeting with the Chamber is scheduled for 10/27/08.
- ELM has also added Christine Caswell, a legal intern attending the Thomas M. Cooley School of Law, to the project. Previously, Christine worked in the communications field for 25 years, spending 14 years at a grant-funded state traffic-safety project and the past 19 years as a free-lance writer.
- ELM has begun to explore opportunities to secure foundation funding for this work. Concept papers are in process and grantmakers are being reviewed to find "good fits."
- ELM and OSA have discussed holding a Transportation Summit to discuss transportation issues and solutions for older adults in Michigan. Planning is continuing.
- A draft committee structure has been created. **Please see the attached. If you would like to join a committee, please contact Christine Caswell at ccaswell@elderlawofmi.org.**

Next Steps!

Although this is anticipated to be a five-year project, the Initiative has a number of short-term goals to accomplish by the end of 2008. They include:

- Selecting two additional income supports (Policy Committee, on 10/29/08)
- Holding a preliminary data and stakeholder meeting in either mid-December or early 2009
- Researching likely foundations and funders for project support (ELM and WOW ongoing)



ELDER LAW OF MICHIGAN, INC.

- Drafting concept papers and Letters of Inquiry for additional funding for the Initiative (ELM and WOW, by 12/31/08)
- Finalizing a committee structure and committee members (by 12/31/08)
- Locating other stakeholders who should be engaged
- Begin planning for a launch event to highlight the research findings (to be held in May 2009)