

New Bedford Council on Aging to fight hunger among seniors

The New Bedford Council on Aging in partnership with the National Council on Aging (NCOA), has joined a nationwide effort to fight senior hunger by dramatically increasing participation by eligible seniors in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 9.8 million older adults experienced food insecurity, meaning they lack consistent access to adequate, nutritious food. Today, those numbers are quickly rising. SNAP is the nation's most effective and widest-reaching anti-hunger program. Research by Center for Budget and Policy Priorities shows that participation in SNAP reduces food insecurity overall by 30%, yet the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that only 48% of eligible older adults aged 60+ participate in the program.

The New Bedford Council on Aging is one of 40 organizations around the country that is stepping up its efforts to assist older adults in applying for SNAP. The organizations will use NCOA's free online BenefitsCheckUp® tool at www.BenefitsCheckUp.org to screen older adults with limited income for SNAP eligibility. The initiative aims to help at least 40,000 older adults enroll.

"We're proud to be part of a Senior SNAP Enrollment Initiative that has the potential to help tens of thousands of low-income older adults improve their health and financial security," said Debra Lee, the Director of the New Bedford Council on Aging. "Our organization has a strong history of helping older adults in need. We're confident that increasing SNAP enrollment with BenefitsCheckUp and other proven outreach methods will have a profound effect on lives of older adults in the City of New Bedford."

“We’ve heard from older adults and our local partners that accessing and paying for food is a critical need right now,” said Josh Hodges, NCOA Chief Customer Officer. “Food, on average, is the second-highest household expenditure for people aged 60+, and too often they have to stretch their food budget in order to make ends meet. That’s where SNAP can help.”

For more information, visit www.ncoa.org/SeniorHunger.