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Myths and Facts about Food Stamp Benefits and the Elderly

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MYTH: Food stamps are welfare.

FACT: The Food Stamp Program is a nutrition assistance program. It helps low income people buy nutritious foods. It is not welfare.

2

MYTH: Elderly people only receive \$10 a month in food stamp benefits.

FACT: Our fiscal year 2003 statistics showed:

- elderly people who lived alone received an average of \$53 a month; and,
- elderly people not living alone received an average benefit of \$123 a month.

3

MYTH: Elderly people cannot own or be buying a home. If they own or are buying a home, the government will take it.

FACT: Individuals can own or buy a home and still get food stamps. The home and its lot are not counted as a resource in the Food Stamp Program. The Food Stamp Program does not require a person to sign away their home.

4

MYTH: Elderly people must go to the food stamp office for an interview.

FACT: If an elderly person is not able to go to the food stamp office, he or she may request a telephone interview. The person may also ask a relative, pastor, neighbor, etc., to attend the interview as an authorized representative. Applicants for and recipients of SSI may also apply for food stamp benefits at the Social Security Office.

5

MYTH: You have to go to the food stamp office every few months to keep getting benefits.

FACT: Elderly people can get benefits for up to two years at a time. You don't have to go back to the office unless there are specific changes to your case. You can also ask for a telephone interview. Or a friend or family member can go for you.

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MYTH: Elderly people are only allowed \$2,000 in resources.

FACT: The resources limit for elderly households or households containing one elderly person is up to \$3,000.

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MYTH: Elderly people do not receive credit for medical and prescription drug bills.

FACT: Medical expenses that exceed \$35 a month may be deducted unless an insurance company or someone who is not a household member pays for them. Only the amount over \$35 can be deducted.

8

MYTH: Food stamps are only for families with children.

FACT: Food stamps are for eligible individuals and families, including the elderly.

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MYTH: Other people need food stamps more than the elderly individuals. If an elderly person is certified for food stamps, he or she will be taking them away from others who have more of a need.

FACT: The Food Stamp Program is an entitlement program. In other words, everyone who applies and who is determined to be eligible will get food stamp benefits.

10

MYTH: Elderly households who receive food stamps will not be able to receive meals-on-wheels.

FACT: Households can receive food stamps and still get meals-on-wheels. In fact, households who are currently paying cash for their meals can save money because food stamps can be used to purchase the meals.

