

## Seniors Struggling with Poverty

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Two out of every five elderly San Diegans go to bed each night without enough money to meet their basic needs, but many don't qualify for federal assistance. That's according to a report released Tuesday from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and Insight Center for Community Economic Development.



According to the study, over a hundred thousand San Diego seniors ages 65 and older earn more than the federal poverty level. That is \$10,830 dollars a year for a single senior. Paul Downey, is President and CEO of Senior Community Centers in San Diego.

"These are folks whose needs are not being met, but are not eligible for assistance from the government," Downey says.

For JoAnn Siegel a room at the Potiker Family Senior Residence in downtown San Diego is home and a blessing, but she admits times are tough.

"There used to be a Biblical saying that poverty is a curse, and you really feel like you're cursed when you don't have enough money to exist," Siegel says.

She lives on less than twelve thousand dollars a year, and lately she has been helping her unemployed daughter.

"That leaves me sometimes with a dollar, dollar and half, or 80 cents for the whole month," she says.

She gets food at the center, but she says she sometimes goes without other items.

"Basics like, stuff to wash clothes with," Siegel explains.

She is not alone. Forty percent of San Diego seniors don't have enough income to meet basic needs, but if they make over eleven thousand dollars a year, they're ineligible for federal aid. It's the same across the country.

"This is not the Mid-West," says 64 year old Ronald Schwartz who also lives at the Potiker Center. "Our real estate prices here, our taxes, cost of living is different and I don't think you can make a generic scenario out of the country."

"This is a crisis that we know is coming," says Paul Downey who explains the problem is only getting worse.

He says the Federal Poverty Level is antiquated.

"The methodology for determining the Federal Poverty Level is based on data from 1955," Downey says.

He returned Tuesday evening from Sacramento where he was lobbying for change.

"I told them we need to blow up the Federal Poverty Level. We need to come up with something that is actually based on research, based on science," he says.

He is intent on a system to help seniors like Siegel who are struggling to make ends meet.

Paul Downey says he is expecting a bill to be introduced in the assembly that would change the poverty level in California from just under \$11,000 to closer to \$23,000.