

Policy Brief: Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

SAN DIEGO
HUNGER
COALITION



San Diego Hunger Coalition is calling for the return of SSI benefits to above the federal poverty level, so that no seniors or people with disabilities, including children, are at risk for hunger.

// **PROBLEM** – SSI Benefits Leave Disabled and Elderly Californians in Poverty

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a program funded jointly by the federal and state government of California to provide income support to seniors and people with disabilities, including children. Benefit levels for SSI recipients were severely cut to below federal poverty level during the Great Recession, leaving many California seniors and those with disabilities struggling to put food on the table. These cuts have made California the state with the highest poverty rate in the country.

// **NEED** - This Issue Affects Seniors, the Disabled, and Children in Large Number

Over 1.3 million Californians receive SSI because of age and/or disabilities that leave them with little to no ability to engage in paid employment. These Californians typically have incomes below \$889 per month, which is well below the poverty level (\$981 per month for single person) and about one-third the self-sufficiency standard for a single elder renting in San Diego County.*

Even worse, California is the only state in the nation in which beneficiaries of SSI cannot receive CalFresh (SNAP or “food stamps”), so they must rely entirely on SSI to pay for rent, food, transportation and utilities. In San Diego County -- the fourth most expensive city for housing in the U.S.** -- SSI recipients are clearly at serious risk for hunger, malnutrition and homelessness.

// **ASK** – SSI Benefits Leave Disabled and Elderly Californians in Poverty

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*Elder Economic Security Index for California, Insight Center for Community Economic Development, www.insightcced.org

**Bureau of Labor Statistics, Housing: Before, During, And After The Great Recession, <http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2014/housing/pdf/housing.pdf>

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// LOCAL IMPACT– How does this affect San Diegans?

The number of persons receiving SSI benefits in San Diego County is significant. In 2013, it was nearly 85,000. To break this down even further, in San Diego County, there were 23,867 people receiving SSI because of their age, and there were 60,960 people receiving SSI due to vision impairments and disabilities. Perhaps most notably, there were 6,435 children in the county that relied on SSI benefits to provide their basic needs due to disability.

If everyone received the full benefit for an individual living independently, it would bring upwards to \$7.75 million of additional funds into San Diego County each month. That is \$93.6 million boosting our local economy each year.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Please join us in our commitment to ensuring disabled and elderly Californians have adequate resources to purchase food.

-As an individual, you can sign this petition that will reach the policymakers in Sacramento: <http://bit.ly/CA4SSIPetition>

-As an organization, your group can join our coalition, CA4SSI, by adding your name to our list of over 200 groups committed to bettering the lives of 1.3 million Californians struggling against poverty and food insecurity: <http://bit.ly/CA4SSIPetition>. If you wish to be further engaged in our effort, please contact Parke Troutman at parke@sdhungercoalition.org

-As an organization, you can send a copy of the letter **by April 21st** of support found on our website at <http://www.sandiegohungercoalition.org/blog/ssi-direct-action>, changing out the highlighted areas to reflect your organization's logo and signature.