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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **NCOA Awards Grants to 10 Organizations to Help Seniors, People with Disabilities Access Benefits**

*Washington, DC (February 16, 2011)*— The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is pleased to award grants to 10 organizations nationwide for the purpose of finding and enrolling economically vulnerable older Americans and younger adults with disabilities into public benefits programs.

Awarded through NCOA's National Center for Benefits Outreach and Enrollment ([www.CenterforBenefits.org](http://www.CenterforBenefits.org)), the grants support the development of person-centered, community-based systems for more seamless and efficient outreach and enrollment of eligible seniors and younger adults living with disabilities into public benefits through the creation of Benefits Enrollment Centers (BECs). The new BECs join the first 10 in assisting eligible seniors and younger adults with disabilities throughout the country to enroll in programs that help pay for prescription drugs, medical care, food or utilities.

"The economic downturn makes the work of Benefits Enrollment Centers even more important," said Jim Firman, president and CEO of NCOA. "Millions of low-income seniors and adults with disabilities are struggling to meet their basic needs. Many are simply not aware of all the programs available to help them achieve economic security, or they need assistance in applying for them."

Each BEC will receive up to \$130,000 to establish more effective systems to enroll seniors and adults with disabilities into the following programs: Medicare Part D Extra Help (Low-Income Subsidy); Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs); Medicaid; the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the federal Food Stamp program; State Pharmacy Assistance Programs (where available); and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP).

BECs have an ultimate goal of creating sustainable community- or state-based benefits enrollment systems that are as seamless as possible for consumers and their families and as cost-effective as possible for the government. They will help people who need one-on-one assistance with filling out benefits application forms, and use "person-centered" approaches, which encourage an individual to be screened and apply for multiple benefits at one time, rather than pursuing individual benefit programs one by one.

The BECs are funded under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging (AoA).

“Seniors and adults with disabilities need to know about the array of state and federal benefits for which they are eligible,” said Kathy Greenlee, Assistant Secretary for Aging. “The Benefits Enrollment Centers support AoA’s commitment to identify promising practices, especially those that use person-centered assistance and web-based decision support tools. These strategies offer a more complete and cost effective way to enroll these individuals so that they can receive the support they require.”

The following organizations are the recipients of the grants (listed alphabetically by state):

- **WISE & Healthy Aging, Santa Monica, CA**
- **Centura Health System, Denver, CO**
- **Senior Resources, Norwich, CT**
- **ElderSource, Jacksonville, FL**
- **City and County of Honolulu, Department of Community Services, Elderly Affairs Division, Honolulu, HI**
- **Legal Aid of the Bluegrass, Lexington, KY**
- **Isabella Geriatric Center, New York, NY**
- **Washington County Disability, Aging & Veteran Services, Hillsboro, OR**
- **AARP Foundation West Virginia, Charleston, WV**
- **Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups, Madison, WI**

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#### **About NCOA**

*The National Council on Aging is a non-profit service and advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCOA is a national voice for older Americans - especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged - and the community organizations that serve them. It brings together non-profit organizations, businesses and government to develop creative solutions that improve the lives of all older adults. NCOA works with thousands of organizations across the country to help seniors find jobs and benefits, improve their health, live independently and remain active in their communities. For more information, visit [www.NCOA.org](http://www.NCOA.org).*