



## *Successful Partnerships*

# How the City of Chicago Uses **BenefitsCheckUp** to Screen Seniors for Eligible Benefits



Many older people need help paying for prescription drugs, health care, utilities and other basic needs. Ironically, millions of older Americans – especially those with limited incomes – are eligible for but not receiving benefits from existing federal, state and local programs. Ranging from heating and energy assistance to prescription savings programs to income supplements, there are many public programs available to seniors in need if they only knew about them and how to apply for them.

Thanks to BenefitsCheckUp®, help is available for seniors and those who care about them. Launched by the National Council on Aging (NCOA) in 2001, BenefitsCheckUp® is the nation's most comprehensive Web-based service to screen for some 1,550 benefits programs available to those 55 and over.

## BenefitsCheckUp Chicago – Screening the City's Seniors for Benefits

In Chicago, BenefitsCheckUp is part of the Department on Aging's program to assist seniors with a variety of support services that enhance their lives. This program uses a version of BenefitsCheckUp that is licensed to the City to screen Chicago's seniors for more than 70 city, state and federal benefits that they may qualify for. The program not only helps its older citizens find assistance but also helps them (and their caregivers) apply for benefits as well.

## Fruitful Partnership with Senior Centers

The Chicago Department on Aging began using BenefitsCheckUp in 2002, setting up five regional screening sites at senior centers and five smaller satellite sites throughout the city. Every day, BenefitsCheckUp is the first step for the seniors who come to these centers asking for help. Caseworkers reach out to homebound seniors as well. BenefitsCheckUp provides a printout that allows workers to go over with seniors point by point what types of assistance they qualify for.

The Department has made a determined effort to reach non-English speaking communities, establishing 15 more sites to serve those populations. This represents an ongoing vision of expanding services to traditionally underserved groups.

Word of mouth has proven to be the key to the success of BenefitsCheckUp in Chicago. People who have benefited from the program are eager to share their stories with friends. Plans for the future include increasing the program's reach to assist even more seniors, including establishing sites at cafes seniors frequent.

## BenefitsCheckUp Improves Life for Chicago Seniors

As of August 2007, more than \$500 million dollars in benefits have been identified for the city's seniors. In the last fiscal year alone, Chicago's BenefitsCheckUp program has screened 13,500 seniors for benefits eligibility. Many of those seniors have received nutritional support, tax help, prescription drug coverage and other benefits. This assistance means older citizens have more money to spend in the community, improving their standard of living as well as the local economy.

### Partnering with BenefitsCheckUp

**To discuss partnership opportunities with BenefitsCheckUp,**

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## BenefitsCheckUp

BenefitsCheckUp is an online decision-support and enrollment tool that helps organizations screen seniors with limited income and resources for over 1,550 public and private benefits including:

- Prescription drugs
- Heating bills
- Housing / Rent
- Meal programs
- Legal services
- Medical costs
- In-home services
- Tax relief
- Veteran's benefits
- Employment
- Volunteer work

And gives agencies:

- Single-page screenings format for fast data entry
- Printable screening questionnaires for enrollment events, mailing and pre-screening
- Over 250 Rx program application forms, searchable by drug or program name
- Reports that document the number of clients screened, their demographics and the programs for which they are eligible