

California seniors eligible for food aid not applying for it

By Joan Aragone, AARP Bulletin

Bob Hyman, a retired salesman with health problems, stocks up at the weekly food pantry at his subsidized senior housing facility. From food provided by the San Francisco Food Bank, he selects carrots, cabbage, potatoes, celery, onions, apples, pears, canned beans, bread and rice.

“It’s a good program, and it helps,” he said. “It’s free. I’m thankful.” Chicken, which was formerly offered, hasn’t been available for months. He buys eggs occasionally at a nearby grocery store, “but it’s expensive.”

Hyman, 79, lives on a monthly income after rent of less than \$700 from Social Security and a pension. He takes public transportation, eats \$2 lunches at another senior housing facility and cooks at home. He dismissed any need for government food assistance. “I’m thrifty and smart about food,” he said.

Hyman is one of the estimated 90 percent of Californians over 60 who are eligible for the state’s CalFresh food assistance program but don’t participate.

Read the whole story