

Department of Aging and Disability Services
State Unit on Aging
Nutrition Service Stakeholder Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 21, 2023
1:00pm – 2:30pm
Virtual TEAMS Meeting

Attendees: Erin Harkrader (SUA), Jannett Haughton (SUA), Brenda Foreman (SUA), Stan Mingione (Estuary Council of Seniors), Joel Sekorski (LHNWENP), Eugene Theroux (TVCCA), Deb Monahan (TVCCA), Mark Kovitch (New Opportunities), Yadira Perez (New Opportunities), Nancy Isa (CRT), Robyn Harper-Gulley (NCAAA), Kathy Chase (Senior Resources), Denise Andreas (SWCAA), Tyler Anderson (Robinson + Cole), Deb Polun (CAFCA), Jaime Smith (CT Bureau of Agricultural Development and Resource Conservation), Rick Liegl (City of Meriden), Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson (DSS), Oscar Gomez (Connecticut Civil Service Employee Association), Liany Arroyo (City of Hartford Health and Human Services)

Meeting began at 1:05pm.

Public Comment

No comments

Review Purpose of Meetings

Per CGS 319d Sec. 17a-302, purpose is to develop recommendations around administrative complexities in elderly nutrition program, establish quality control benchmarks (noting that there are many reporting requirements from ACL of data that *must* be collected) and move toward greater quality, efficiency and transparency. Noted that SUA, AAAs and ENPs have been working more together to align priorities and procedures.

Jamie Smith asked to clarify if these meetings are solely about senior nutrition. Advised that the Stakeholder Meetings are statutorily created in the Aging and Disability Services chapter of the Connecticut General Statutes, so senior nutrition is the focus, however, it's not just about Elderly Nutrition Programs (MOW and congregate) – we want to bring other stakeholders in to see where there are possible areas of intersection (SNAP, Farmer's Market coupons) and where we are missing those connections.

Update and Recap of Prior Meeting

Reviewed prior meeting minutes

ARPA Funds Update

Reviewed that ENPs were allocated \$3M in ARPA funds by state legislature. SUA's staff attorney worked with ENPs to define areas of greatest need – economic losses due to COVID-19 and capital expenditures. There have been budgets and justifications submitted, and SUA's staff attorney is working on beneficiary

agreements w/OPM. Once these are completed and signed off on by ENPs and OPM, funds will be available for disbursement.

Public Act No. 22-32 Data Collection

As part of revisions to CGS 319d Sec. 17a-305, SUA needs to report to legislature on several pieces of information including meal cost, administrative costs and reimbursement rates for Elderly Nutrition Providers (ENPs). The SUA asked ENPs for meal cost calculations based on workbook that was sent out, and we have received back from all the ENPs. SUA will need to go back to ENPs with some clarifying questions as there were clear differences in how the ENPs calculated their “true” meal cost. This was the first time this information has been asked for, so it is not surprising that we will need to clarify and streamline some of the information. This information will be reported to the legislature for July 1. Kathy Chase asked if a copy would be provided to AAAs and ENPs, and was told that, yes, this can be provided.

Prioritization Guidelines

When the new Form 5 Consumer Registration was created and rolled out in 2021, the intention was that with ADLs, Nutrition Risk section and Service Indicators section, AAAs and ENPs would be able to use data to prioritize clients as necessary or help define eligibility. It’s still the intention to move toward this, however, SUA is still looking at the methodology and calculation, as the tool that was thought of being used is creating scores that are too close together to be able to effectively prioritize. What SUA would ultimately like to create is standardized methodology for evaluating applicants and for doing reassessments.

Kathy Chase asked if other states were using something similar. Jannett Haughton responded “yes” and that between DETERMINE scale and information gleaned from other states, that’s how this was created. We are not immediately aware of other states with wait lists, but the high likelihood is that other states are experiencing similar challenges.

Mark Kovitch noted that everyone needs to be careful in how this is rolled out so clients aren’t being told they’re being taken off the program because somebody is “more important” and that sometimes, even when ENPs think someone doesn’t qualify, the AAA may tell them to put the person on the program anyway – this seemingly invalidates the purpose. Erin Harkrader pointed out that messaging is key for everything AAAs and ENPs are doing – with sunseting of COVID relief funds and reassessments, want to make sure that we have standardized or similar guidelines and messaging regarding who qualifies for the program, how determinations are made, etc. The state should always want clear and consistent messaging across the state so consumers aren’t getting one message in one region and a different message in a different region.

Rick Liegl stated we shouldn’t be talking about prioritization – we should be working on getting enough funding so that everyone in CT who needs a meal can get a home delivered meal. This is a desirable goal, but at this time, with the funding available, it ultimately comes down to advocating for more funding at the federal level, and state funding is based on Governor’s budget. SUA administers funds based on availability and set funding formulas and does not solely determine how much funding each agency or provider gets.

Other Resources (SNAP, Farmer's Market Coupons)

The group would like to figure out how ENPs can align with other food security resources and programs. Everybody was asked to consider this question and advance any ideas.

Rick Liegl asked whether there's one place where older adults can find out about food programs in their area. Per Jannett Haughton, 211 is best place for this as they have listings of these resources. Erin Harkrader also noted that Meals on Wheels America website has a meal provider finder that works with ZIP codes.

Jaime Smith is working on resource guide as well. It was requested if this could be shared with the group and that was agreed to. The SUA would also work to provide a link to these on the website in the future.

PHE Ending

Discussion that with Public Health Emergency ending, things will not change much about service delivery, however, providers will need to look at their service offerings. Grab-and-go meals are considered Home Delivered Meals (HDM) (Title III-C2 funding) so with there no longer being 100% transfer permissible between (Congregate Meals) Title III-C1 and Title III-C2, providers will need to consider what the best use of available funding is, and whether grab-and-go impacts ability to serve as many HDM clients as possible.

Invitations and Attendance

Attendees were asked to consider if there's anybody that should be invited who hasn't been. If so, please send to Erin and they will be included on the next call. In addition, please consider if there are any older adults who receive nutrition services that could be part of the call.

Other Business/Discussion

None. Next meeting is Tuesday, May 23 at 1:00pm.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30pm