

Nutrition Services Stakeholders Meeting Minutes  
August 23, 2022  
1:00 pm

Department of Aging and Disability Services  
55 Farmington Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06105

Meeting began at 1:05 PM.

Meeting Participants

**TEAMS:** Jannett Haughton, Lara Stauning, Brenda Forman – Department of Aging and Disability Services/State Unit on Aging (ADS/SUA)  
Kathy Chase – Senior Resources (ECAAA); Denise Andreas – Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging SWCAA) and Independent Living; Robyn Harper-Gulley – North Central Area Agency on Aging (NCAAA); Joel Sekorski – Litchfield Hills/Northwest Elderly Nutrition Program (LH/NW ENP) and Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers; Michael Hebert – Western Connecticut Area Agency on Aging (WCAAA); Erin Harkrader – LifeBridge.

The meeting began with welcome and introduction of new attendees. This was followed by a briefing of the last meeting.

Discussion:

Updates:

- Meal Providers gave an update of current re-opening status of their program and operations of their programs.

**Litchfield Hills Northwest ENP:** Now at approximately 50%:50% of meals being served curbside and in house. The cost per meal has increased and is now nearing \$14.00. There has also been a decline in donations. Combining these two factors, they are looking at a deficit of somewhere near \$100,000. However, there has been an increase in the donations for their “Grab and Go” services, which exceeded expectations.

**Eastern Region:** Most meal sites are open but received news that one site will now be returning to “Grab and Go” due to an uptick of COVID among residents. Attendance is not back to where it was pre-COVID and some congregate participants have now been transitioned over to home-delivered meals.

**LifeBridge:** Is experiencing similar issues as the Litchfield Hills Northwest Program with low donations. However, with the home-delivered meal donations, things seem okay unlike the congregate. Most sites are now open except for one that had remained closed and 2 with modified services. There have also some gains in attendance at some sites. There is a plan in place to deliver shelf-stable meals should there be a quick change and a site must be closed due to increased COVID rates.

- It appears that participants have gotten into the habit of not donating during COVID.
- One region is now sending out bills or reminders to everyone as was customarily done for home-delivered meal participants hoping to improve their status. Others were in support of this idea and plan to adopt it.

- There have also been a lot of turnovers with Senior center staff so most of the new management are not familiar with the program and the importance of encouraging donations so some in-services are being planned.
- SWCAA: All sites are open and some are doing well. However, there is one that is struggling due to a building issue. The government building that houses the Stamford Senior Center and its café is closed to the public so the cafeteria is not open. The building now is only at about 50% capacity and the restaurant is unable to open at the usual length of time due to cost. However, participants can still get a meal and the senior center has provided a space so that those who want to dine together can stay and have their meal. All meals are now being made to order.
- SUA update regarding the use of \$3 million ARPA funding through PA 22-118: The SUA has been awarded several pockets of money. Staff has been working with OPM and has prioritized the funding for the ENP.
  - SUA is currently calculating how much each ENP will receive
  - ENPs will be asked to submit a proposal as to how the funds will be spent
  - ENPs will also be asked to submit an estimated budget for their project.
  - SUA hopes to know by the end of this week the estimated amount each ENP will receive
  - SUA is meeting with OPM this week to discuss method of calculation.
  - Funds must be spent or obligated by 12/31/24 and obligated funds must be used spent by 12/31/26.
  - It can be used for –Repairs or replacement of or repairs of vehicle or vehicles, and/or to respond to the negative economic impact felt by non-profits because of COVID-19; infrastructure, having to hire staff due to loss of volunteers, labor cost, reduced donations, increased costs for fuel, materials, food, etc.
  - Reporting of use of funds is expected.
  - For vehicles and some other capital expenditures, attestation of status will be required.
  - Information about requirements for these funds is also available on OPM's website.
  - SUA staff will distribute information regarding the portions of the allocation implementation form that will need to be completed by ENPs.
  - Funds will be disbursed based on NSIP formula
  - Survey was sent out to all ENPS to gather some information on their need which will assist in the decision making for OPM support.
  - Information that should be maintained by the ENPs in case of audit– How much money was lost in donations; cost of workforce needed to be hired; number of volunteers lost; increased cost of fuel, supplies, food, etc.
  - A budget template will be provided so that everyone uses the same one.
- Discussed challenges/things that were successful and whether they are sustainable:
  - How to bring in new people and make meals more appealing, with the changes in demographics of eligible persons, for example younger seniors who are retiring.
  - Some providers do not have the ability to do hands on of their meal processes. Some providers have more control over their meals process to do enhancement or work with the caterer to make changes above the standard meals. Example LH/NW, partners with a "crop share" and have his caterer uses some of the produce to reduce the cost of his meal and to enhance his meals with salads or just to provide a bag of fresh produce to his participants. He also uses the opportunity as an educational tool as he gives recipes on how to prepare them. He also makes preserves that he sells and puts that money back into the program.
  - Love ability to "Grab and Go". Hope it will continue
  - How to deal with increased cost

- Portion size worked well with the packaged meals during pandemic and reduced waste for providers
- Increase contact at curbside pick-up. Participants did socialize so may need to do more planned activities.
- Lunch Buddy system.
- Retaining partnership built – grocery stores, etc. example by creating new restaurant programs. At the beginning of the COVID pandemic, many partnerships were formed by the AAAs and ENPs between grocery stores and other organizations. Providers are being encouraged to keep these relationships going - e.g., start restaurant programs where possible so that they will be there in the future if needed and easier to fall back to.

Next Steps:

Update on distribution of ARPA funds

Collection of information for: "*Public Act No. 22-32*".

Meeting dates

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 22, 2022, at 1:00pm – 2:30pm via Teams.

The meeting ended at 2:33 pm.