

**Nutrition Services Stakeholder Meeting
November 12, 2024**

Attendance: Erin Estey (ADS-BOA), Shana Brierley (ADS-BOA), Dan Giacomi (DSS), Jaime Smith (CT Dept of Ag), Theresa Rivera (DSS), Cassandra Norfleet-Johnson (DSS), Maureen McIntyre (NCAAA), Alison Dvorak (Senior Resources), Marie Allen (SWCAA), Spring Raymond (WCAAA), Robyn Harper-Gulley (NCAAA), Gretchen James (SWCAA), Denise Andreas (SWCAA), Ellen Torgerson (AASCC), Emily Marble (AASCC), Claudia Mejia (Senior Resources), Kathy Chase (Senior Resources), Christopher Blancarte (Senior Resources), Katrina Bresnahan (CAFCA), Rhonda Evans (CAFCA), Eugene Theroux (TVCCA), Gariann Chiarella (New Opportunities), Shanie Velazquez (LifeBridge), Mallory Daley (Hughes & Cronin), In-Jee Lee (City of Hartford), Stan Mingione (The Estuary), Jillian Ruisi (TEAM), Natasha Tetreault (Town of Enfield), Carmen Weber (RW Solutions), Nancy Isa (CRT)

Public Comment

None.

Update and Recap of Prior Meeting

None.

CAFCA SNAP Outreach Presentation

E. Estey advised that as part of Nutrition Task Force and SB196, ADS was tasked to work with DSS to maximize the usage of SNAP benefits for older adults. ADS is working with DSS to determine whether there is a way to cross-reference the ENP consumer roster with DSS's SNAP consumer roster, but have not yet found a solution. One other way to accomplish this directive is by ensuring that ENPs know where to refer consumers for help with SNAP, provided that they are not already a part of a Community Action Agency (CAA), which 4 of the state's ENPs are. While many times the AAA may be able to help consumers with application assistance, resources are stretched thin, and CAAs have people on staff specifically for the purposes of SNAP outreach and assistance.

R. Evans and K. Bresnahan from the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA) presented about CAAs and SNAP outreach. Per the CAFCA representatives, CAAs can help with presentations to consumers at congregate sites, can provide information to be included with home delivered meals, and can assist consumers in signing up for SNAP or with the redetermination process. K. Bresnahan will provide a map showing the 9 CAAs in the state and contact information for the SNAP Outreach Coordinators at each CAA so that ENPs may more easily know to whom consumers may be referred for assistance with SNAP.

Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program

J. Smith from CT Department of Agriculture gave an update on the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP).

Older Americans Act Reauthorization

E. Estey discussed that the Older Americans Act (OAA) was due for a reauthorization in 2024 for Federal Fiscal Year 2025 beginning October 1, 2024. The Senate Committee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions approved bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the OAA, however, neither the House nor Senate

has voted on the legislation yet. As Congress has been in recess and has only returned as of November 12, it remains to be seen what will happen with the reauthorization. The Continuing Resolution (CR) that was passed before the legislature went into recess takes us through December 20.

One thing that was proposed, but didn't make it into legislation, was to combine C1 (congregate) and C2 (home delivered meals) funds to offer additional flexibility and allow states to determine the distribution between HDM and CM that best reflects the needs of the state.

BOA has received questions about using C1 funds for grab-and-go meals. While the new OAA regulations have introduced the allowance to use C1 funds for grab-and-go meals, there are several steps the state would have to go through in order to institute that, including a state plan amendment approved by ACL. That allowance has very strict guidelines, it has not yet been determined whether the state plan will be amended to allow for it. Even if grab-and-go meals are to be permitted under C1, it would be under limited circumstances and not permitted as a regular method of meal distribution. This is a discussion between the BOA and the AAA Directors. At this time, it is not permissible to use C1 funds for grab-and-go meals. E. Estey advised that *the provision of grab-and-go meals using C2 funds is to be determined by the AAA* and providers should work with their AAA if they have any additional questions.

Federal Funding

E. Estey discussed that the federal government is under a CR, which means that a federal budget has not been passed for FFY25. The current CR maintains FFY24 levels of funding and is in place through December 20. With Congress returning, it remains to be seen whether a new budget can be passed, or another CR will be put into place. For FFY24, there was a cut to NSIP funding, which reduced the amount of funding for Nutrition overall. Congress has until December 20 to approve appropriations bills, or a new CR will be required.

Eligibility

E. Estey advised that there have been some questions regarding eligibility for the Elderly Nutrition Program, specifically around the requirement that participants in the Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program be homebound. Eligibility guidelines were reviewed first:

- Eligibility for HDM: 60+, under age spouse of eligible individual *who receives meals*, individual w/disability who lives with an eligible individual *who receives meals* – for both of those situations, it should be in the best interest of the eligible individual for the other person to receive a meal.
- Eligibility for Congregate Meals: 60+, under age spouse of eligible individual *who is having a meal*, volunteer, individual w/disability who resides in a building where there is a congregate meal program

As it regards “homebound” status, for HDM, state regulations state that an individual must be homebound and specifies that the person is homebound due to illness or disability, or is *otherwise isolated* [emphasis added]. Priority is to be given to those who are at Greatest Economic Need (GEN) and Greatest Social Need (GSN), which is where the *otherwise isolated* [emphasis added] comes in. Populations who are at GEN and GSN may be isolated due to a variety of factors (income, language barriers, rural location, disability, medical status).

Per the OAA regulations Sec. 1321.87(a)(2)(i): “(i) Eligibility criteria for homedelivered meals may include consideration of an individual’s ability to leave home unassisted, ability to shop for and prepare nutritious meals, degree of disability, or other relevant factors pertaining to their need for the service, including social need and economic need.”

Emergency Meals

S. Brierley reminded attendees that with cold weather coming, programs should be looking at emergency meal provision, and should let their AAAs know when emergency meals have been put into place. S. Brierley also reminded everyone that ENPs should let their AAAs know when a program will be closed due to inclement weather or emergency.

Wait Lists and Prioritization

S. Brierley discussed the goal for BOA of creating a freestanding, uniform prioritization tool so that in the event of a wait list, programs have a way to prioritize consumers and ensure that those with GEN and GSN are served. BOA would like input and feedback from AAAs and ENPs on this tool to ensure it works in the field and encompasses the information that would be helpful to prioritize consumers.

E. Torgerson asked whether the Nutrition Risk Score can be used to prioritize. E. Estey advised that that is one component that some programs consider when looking to prioritize consumers and also pointed out that the Service Indicator Section that was recently removed from the Form 5 was an effort to create a tool for prioritization. E. Estey advised that Nutrition Risk is certainly a factor that should be considered as part of prioritization.

D. Andreas asked if there was a particular format that was going to be used and whether the tool would be put into WellSky. E. Estey advised that BOA is open to many options, from paper forms that would be hand scored, to a tool that auto-tabulates the results.

R. Harper-Gulley stated that above all else, she would favor a tool that auto-tabulates.

S. Brierley and E. Estey requested that if anyone has any ideas, or would like to be part of a small work group, to please reach out.

State Performance Report

E. Estey advised that BOA is going into the State Performance Report (SPR) season and explained that the SPR shows the Administration for Community Living (ACL) what the state has done with OAA funds over the past FFY and how much we have accomplished. For the Nutrition program, BOA reports on meal counts, Nutrition Education and Nutrition Counseling sessions, and the demographics of Nutrition consumers, including functional status and nutrition risk. In addition, the SPR determines the state’s Nutrition Service Incentive Program (NSIP) allocation for the following FFY, which is a performance-based allocation based on the number of meals the state provided to eligible individuals as compared to the rest of the country. While other OAA funding allocations are based on the Interstate and Intrastate Funding Formulas, NSIP specifically looks at the number of meals served to eligible individuals.

E. Estey advised that once SPR is finalized, BOA will provide a recap of the data.

ENP Fall and Spring Trainings

S. Brierley advised that the fall ENP training is scheduled for mid-December. A save-the-date was sent to the AAAs, and the training is for nutrition staff at the AAAs and ENPs, as well as ENP directors. This training will have presentations by Angela Vazquez from BOA, who will present on the Bureau's Healthy Aging program, and the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, who will present about the correlation between oral health, nutrition, and overall health. S. Brierley also advised that BOA is looking for suggestions of topics for the spring training that would be of interest to AAA and ENP staff.

Proposed 2025 Meeting Schedule

- Tuesday, February 11 at 1:00pm
- Tuesday, May 13 at 1:00pm
- Tuesday, August 12 at 1:00pm
- Tuesday, November 18 at 1:00pm (shifted for Veteran's Day)

No comments were made regarding the proposed meeting schedule.