

Nutrition Services Stakeholder Meeting
August 13, 2024

Attendance: Erin Estey (BOA), Shana Brierley (BOA), Ellen Torgerson (AASCC), Denise Andreas (SWCAA), Mark Kovitch (New Opportunities), Gariann Chiarella (New Opportunities), Kathy Chase (ECAAA), Rose Booker (RW Solutions), Shanie Velazquez (LifeBridge), Natasha Tetreault (Town of Enfield), Robyn Harper-Gulley (NCAAA), Ruisi (TEAM), Kathleen Nunez (TEAM), In-Jee Lee (City of Hartford), Theresa Rivera (DSS), Allison Hughes (Department of Ag), Christian Duborg (CWCSEO Food Policy), Marcus Yancoskie (Rome Smith Kowalski), Sean Hughes (Hughes & Cronin), Spring Raymond (WCAAA), Mark Kovitch (New Opportunities)

Public Comment

None.

Update and Recap of Prior Meeting

S. Brierley recapped prior meeting minutes.

New Older Americans Act Reauthorization

E. Estey explained that last reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) was in 2020 and goes through September 30, 2024. Congress is now working on the next reauthorization, and there are a few proposed pieces that will affect the Nutrition Program. One piece that did not make it in was the proposal to combine C1 and C2 into one allocation, allowing states to make the determination of how to split up and allocate funds for HDM and congregate meals. This is a fairly regular point of discussion, so we may see it happen in the future. E. Estey advised that another proposed provision, supported by Sen. Murphy, is for preference in contracting to be given to community providers rather than national groups. There is language in the reauthorization about using Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) funding for innovations, however, since NSIP funding was reduced in the last budget, it remains to be seen if this will be a focus. During discussions about the reauthorization, Congress members have impressed the need for additional funding sufficient to provide services to everyone who would otherwise qualify. Regarding federal funding, E. Estey advised that the state is likely looking at flat funding and hopefully no reductions as in the FFY24 federal budget.

Elderly Nutrition Bill SB396

E. Estey gave updates on progress in addressing the provisions of the Elderly Nutrition bill that resulted from the Nutrition Task Force in SFY24.

Regarding the provision about streamlining of data collection, advised that Form 5 revisions are underway. AAAs were consulted about changes to the Form 5 – as the Form 5 is used for other OAA programs, any changes need to work for the other programs. The Service Indicators section will be removed and moved to a standalone prioritization tool. The original intention of the addition of the Service Indicators section was to assist in prioritization, but it makes the Form 5 overly long and there is not currently a way to utilize the data collected. There will also be some changes to the Form 5 to simplify language to make it easier to understand for a wider variety of users.

K. Chase asked when the Form 5 will be available and E. Estey advised that the revisions are underway and the intention is to have the Form 5 out to the AAAs by the end of the month to provide time for programs to get it out to staff and congregate sites, and make any adjustments necessary in their systems.

R. Harper-Gulley asked if the standalone prioritization tool will be entered into WellSky for tabulation. E. Estey advised that it has not yet been decided how to capture and hold the prioritization tool data. WellSky is one option, another may be a web-based form. As the BOA Research Analyst meets with AAA MIS coordinators over the coming months, we will be looking for input as to what would be the most useful. BOA has no set plans and we welcome input.

E. Estey also advised that the remaining data on the Form 5 is needed for the State Performance Report (SPR), and that some data that the AAAs and ENPs found useful but has dropped off will be moved over to the prioritization tool. BOA hopes to provide a presentation on the SPR in the coming months so programs understand what is done with the data that is collected.

Regarding the requirement that ADS and DSS work together to maximize SNAP benefit usage for older adults on the Nutrition program, ADS and DSS have had several meetings about how to do that. CAFCA will be presenting on SNAP Outreach at the next Stakeholders meeting, and will be working to provide non-Community Action Agency ENPs with information on how to refer program participants for assistance with applying for SNAP. ENPs that are also CAAs already have this ability, but the other ENPs potentially need those connections.

Regarding payments, ADS is issuing payments to AAAs within 30 days of request, subject to availability of funding, but the federal funding lag is still an issue.

New Sites, Menu Changes, Substitutions

S. Brierley reminded attendees that opening of new congregate sites, closures of sites, or moving of sites (even if temporary) need to be approved by the AAA before the change may be put into place. The AAA will then inform the BOA of the change. Similarly, any menu changes or substitutions should be communicated to the AAA who will in turn notify BOA. BOA should be aware of any changes or substitutions before doing site visits or audits.

Nutrition Education Plans

S. Brierley discussed the group working on the Nutrition Education Plan for FFY25. Most of the state's ENPs and AAAs have representation on the group, which is working toward one unified Nutrition Education Plan. S. Brierly advised that she has been participating in the group and is excited about the new and varied topics being discussed for the coming year.

D. Andreas asked if only one submission needs to be made for those participating in the work group and S. Brierley confirmed.

State Plan on Aging

E. Estey talked about the State Plan on Aging, which has been submitted to the Administration for Community Living (ACL) for approval. The State Plan, once approved, will cover FFY2025 – FFY2027 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2027). As it pertains to Nutrition specifically, there are goals and

priorities around linking the Nutrition and Health Promotion Programs to align around healthy aging and provide cross-referrals and promote chronic disease self-management and other evidence-based programs for congregate consumers. There is also a focus on fall prevention, which could tie in with the work being done by ENPs.

As previously mentioned, BOA is working on a standalone prioritization tool to be used in conjunction with the Form 5 when a program has a waiting list.

One other priority is addressing malnutrition. E. Estey advised that S. Brierley is looking to start a malnutrition workgroup, and if anyone has interest, to please reach out to her.

The finalized State Plan on Aging will be circulated once approved by ACL.

Bureau of Aging Presentations

E. Estey discussed upcoming meetings and that while the meetings are statutorily created to discuss operational efficiencies and streamlining, BOA would also like to provide information and presentations on additional programs that the BOA oversees. If anyone has particular interest in learning about other programs, let E. Estey and S. Brierley know.

ENP Fall and Spring Trainings

S. Brierley advised that she is looking to schedule upcoming bi-annual trainings for the ENPs and would like input on presentation topics that might be interesting. Two ideas discussed were mental health first aid, and oral health and its relationship to overall health. BOA is open to any other ideas that participants may have.

D. Andreas advised that she would like to think more about ideas, but that both ideas presented are very good. R. Harper-Gulley advised that while both sound like great topics, oral health is particularly interesting at this time.

Reminders

None.

Invitations and Attendance

No discussion.

Other Business/Discussion

A. Hughes discussed the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program. The program began a month earlier than past years, and there has already been \$200,000 in redemptions. Advised that participant enrollment is lower than anticipated – program is at about half the number of enrollees as last year. If anyone is in contact with senior housing buildings or senior centers that may want to participate, or that already participate, please push the program.

SFMNP is now doing pop-up farmer's markets, which take the farmers directly to senior housing buildings or senior centers, so participants can shop in the parking lot with a local farmer, rather than having to get transportation to a farmer's market. A. Hughes advised that there is a list of farmers

interested in participating in pop-ups, and many farmer's also accept SNAP, so that can maximize participant benefits in procuring fresh produce. There are currently 16 farmers participating.

R. Harper-Gulley said that the listing provided by Department of Ag has been very helpful for benefits access work at the AAAs.

D. Andreas advised that this is the first year that SWCAA has participated, and it has been a great experience. There is some amount of learning curve, but they are working through issues and they are glad to participate.

Next meeting Tuesday, November 12 at 1:00pm