

Nutrition Services Stakeholder Meeting

November 18, 2025

Attendance: Erin Estey (ADS-BOA), Shana Brierley (ADS-BOA), Dan Giacomini (DSS), Jessica Rusate (DSS), Alison Dvorak (Senior Resources), Christopher Blancaret (Senior Resources), Gretchen James (SWCAA), Denise Andreas (SWCAA), Emily Marble (AoASCC), Maria Buontempo (AoASCC), Ellen Torgerson (AoASCC), Anthony Sanchez (WCAAA), Natasha Tetreault (Town of Enfield), Gariann Chiarella (New Opportunities, Inc), Joel Sekorski (LHNWENP), Lorri Lennon (CRT), Jullian Ruisi (TEAM, Inc), Katrina Bresnahan (CAFCA), In-Jee, Lee (City of Hartford), Shanie Velazquez (LifeBridge Community Services), Mesk Alhammadi (Yale), Stephanie Ocasio-Gonzalez (TEAM, Inc), Laura Palmieri (RW Solutions)

Public Comment

None.

Older Americans Act Reauthorization

E. Estey advised that the Older Americans Act (OAA), which was supposed to be reauthorized in 2024, has not been reauthorized. There have been discussions about bringing it forward again now that the shutdown is over, but there has not been movement. The Senate HELP Committee supports the reauthorization, however, it would need to pass the full legislature and there seem to be more pressing concerns and higher priorities. Per E. Estey, the state continues to receive funds and administer the program, even in the absence of a reauthorization, but the Bureau of Aging (BOA) will continue to keep stakeholders informed of changes.

Federal Funding

E. Estey advised that with the federal government shutdown having ended, BOA anticipates receiving notices of award within the next eight weeks. Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2026 funding is expected to be flat and in line with FFY2025 funding. BOA will receive funding through the end of January due to the Continuing Resolution (CR), and it remains to be seen whether there will be another CR or a budget passed.

Wait Lists and Prioritization

S. Brierley reminded programs that as wait lists are put into place, Elderly Nutrition Providers (ENPs) should keep their Agency on Aging (AAA) informed so that the AAA can advise BOA. S. Brierley also advised that when wait lists are put into place, services should be prioritized for those consumers who are at Greatest Economic Need and Greatest Social Need. E. Estey advised that while BOA understands that wait lists will be necessary where funding has not kept up with demand, it is important that ENPs and AAAs keep BOA informed so that the agency can respond to legislator or consumer inquiries.

Changes in Operations

S. Brierley asked that ENPs and AAAs keep BOA informed of any changes to meals sites or home delivered routes, including closures, new sites opening, changes to days or times of service, or reductions in service. This will keep BOA from going out to do a site monitoring visit at a closed site. D. Andreas asked if BOA would like to know about single-day closures for things like events or maintenance, to which S. Brierley answered “yes”.

Inclement Weather Delays/Closures

S. Brierley reminded programs to also advise BOA of closures or delays due to inclement weather, as well as regular notification to consumers and stakeholders.

Shelf Stables/Emergency Meals

With the advent of winter weather, S. Brierley reminded programs to make sure that shelf stable or emergency meals have been provided to consumers. E. Estey advised that emergency meals may be 3- or 5-meal shelf stable boxes, frozen meals, or double meals delivered in advance of expected inclement weather.

J. Sekorski advised that due to tight budgets, his program has had to reduce or eliminate emergency meals, though they make every effort to deliver double meals in advance of expected inclement weather. E. Estey acknowledged that budget is a concern, especially where there may not be closure days due to weather and then meals have been provided and paid for, but not utilized, so a better option for programs may be to deliver frozen meals or double meals in advance of a storm, since those meals are already in budget.

State Performance Report

E. Estey reviewed that the State Performance Report (SPR), the yearly federal report due to ACL, is upcoming. SPR reports on all services provided by the state in the previous federal fiscal year, including demographics of consumers and service level data. It is unknown what SPR will look like this year with fewer staff at ACL and no communication as of yet from ACL (largely due to the government shutdown) but we have the data and can pull it down regardless of how SPR goes.

Other Business/Discussion

E. Estey asked that programs keep BOA informed of any consumer feedback that they are hearing related to OAA programming or SNAP. Advised that BOA testified to the Appropriations Committee about the impacts to OAA of the government shutdown, and about the program’s ability to absorb consumers who have lost SNAP benefits (as the program is currently at capacity). Advised that November SNAP benefits were provided by the state even before the government reopened, but we don’t know what future months may look like. E. Estey reminded everyone that CAFCA presented on SNAP and Community Action Agencies (CAAs) that can help sign people up for SNAP or screen for benefits. A listing of local CAAs was provided after a prior meeting, but if anyone needs the listing again, they can reach out to E. Estey or S. Brierley. K. Bresnahan provided the listing in the meeting chat as well (www.cafca.org).

D. Giacomi from DSS advised that the Continuing Resolution funded SNAP through the end of the FFY, so benefits will be provided regardless of whether the federal government goes into another

shutdown, however, there will be some changes to eligibility and work requirements that may impact some of our consumers. D. Giacomini provided a link to the updated benefits pre-screener in the meeting chat (www.ct.gov/snap/abawd).

2026 Meeting Schedule

E. Estey reviewed proposed 2026 meeting schedule. No objections. 2026 meeting schedule as follows:

- Tuesday, February 10 at 1:00pm
- Tuesday, May 12 at 1:00pm
- Tuesday, August 11 at 1:00pm
- Tuesday, November 17 at 1:00pm (shifted for Veteran's Day)