

Statement

Congregate Meals: A meal provided by a qualified nutrition project provider to an eligible individual in a congregate or group setting. Up to 25% of C-1 funds may be used for shelf-stable, pick-up, carry-out, drive-through, or similar meals (also referred to as “grab and go” meals). The meal is served in a program that is administered by SUAs and/or AAAs, meets all the requirements of the Older Americans Act and State/Local laws, and complies with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans (published by the Secretaries of the Department of Health and Human Services and the United States Department of Agriculture).

Additionally, the meal provides to each participating individual a minimum of one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes, established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, if one meal is served, two-thirds if two meals are served, and 100 percent if 3 meals are served; and meets all of the requirements as above.

Meals provided to individuals through means- tested programs may be included in the total meal count. These meals are to be identified by the funding source.

Home-Delivered Meals: A meal provided to a eligible individual in his/her place of residence or otherwise outside of a congregate setting. The meal is served in a program that is administered by SUAs and/or AAAs and meets all the requirements of the Older Americans Act and State/Local laws and complies with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans (published by the Secretaries of the Department of Health and Human Services and the United States Department of Agriculture).

Additionally, the meal provides to each participating individual a minimum of one- third of the Dietary Reference Intakes, established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, if one meal is served, two-thirds if two meals are served, and 100 percent if 3 meals are served; and meets all of the requirements as above. Meals provided to individuals through means-tested programs may be included in the total meal count. These meals are to be identified by the funding source.

Nutrition counseling and nutrition education are included in the MBA's definition of nutrition services. However, the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging, Inc. (MNRAAA) does not prioritize these services currently. If MNRAAA identifies a change is needed, the policy shall be updated to reflect the change.

The AAA will review analytics of the nutrition services. This shall include, but not be limited to patterns of utilization, prioritization of older adults with the greatest economic need (GEN) and greatest social need (GSN), and efficiency of the service.

Congregate Meals

1. Congregate meals are meals meeting federal Older Americans Act requirements to eligible individuals and consumed while congregating virtually or in-person. These requirements include providing the following:
 - a. A minimum of 33 1/3 percent of the DRIs for one meal per day.
 - b. A minimum of 66 2/3 percent of the DRIs for two meals per day.
 - c. A minimum of 100 percent of the DRIs for three meals per day. To a limited extent defined elsewhere in this policy, congregate meals may also be complemented with shelf-stable, pick-up, carry-out, drive-through, or similar meals paid for by Title III, part C-1 funds.

Home-Delivered Meals

2. Home-delivered meals are meals meeting federal OAA requirements for eligible individuals and consumed at their residence or otherwise outside of a congregate setting, as organized by a service provider. Meals may be provided via home delivery, pick-up, carry-out, drive-through, or similar meals.
3. Home delivered meal providers must deliver at least five meals per week. Home-delivered meal providers may deliver those meals in fewer than five days but must be open and available to provide nutrition services five days per week. This includes accommodating urgent service needs and requests. Home-delivered meal providers may deliver fewer than five meals per week to those clients requesting fewer meals per week.

Other Services

4. Nutrition education is information provided under Title III, parts C-1 or 2 which provide individuals with the knowledge and skills to make healthy food and beverage choices. Congregate and home-delivered nutrition services providers shall provide nutrition education, as appropriate, based on the needs of meal participants.
5. Nutrition counseling is a service provided under Title III, parts C-1 or 2 which must align with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Congregate and home delivered nutrition services providers shall provide nutrition counseling, as appropriate, based on the needs of meal participants, the availability of resources, and the expertise of a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist.
6. Other nutrition services include additional services provided under Title III, parts C-1 or 2 that may be provided to meet nutritional needs or preferences of eligible participants, such as weighted utensils, supplemental foods, oral nutrition supplements, or groceries.

Grab and Go Meals

Funding for Grab and Go Meals will come from C-1 funds. The following requirements for utilizing this program include:

- During disaster or emergency situations affecting the provision of nutrition services.
- To older individuals who have an occasional need for such a meal; and/or
- To older individuals who have a regular need for such a meal, based on an individualized assessment, when targeting services to those in greatest economic need (GEN) and greatest social need (GSN).

Nutrition Projects

1. Nutrition projects are defined as congregate dining sites or home-delivered meal programs that are open and providing service operate at least five days per week and provide meals as specified in this policy and the citations noted above.
 - a. Due to limited resources available to support this level of service intensity, exceptions to allow specific congregate dining sites to be open fewer than five days per week will be considered under certain circumstances and must be approved in advance by both MBA and the AAA. Certain circumstances include the following:
 - i. For congregate sites operating in rural areas. Refer to MBA Operations Policy Rural Minimum Expenditures for the definition of “rural”.
 - ii. To facilitate the provision of culturally specific or other congregate dining options for which a provider may only be able to operate fewer than five days/week or where there may be demand fewer than five days per week for this service.
 - iii. In no case can a congregate site operate fewer than three days per week.
 - iv. The AAA shall analyze congregate dining site locations, service demand by populations with high nutritional risk, and provider capacity to serve five days/week prior to seeking MBA approval to have any congregate dining sites operate fewer than five days/week.
 - v. Regardless of grab and go meals that may be available at a congregate site, each congregate site must be open and serve congregate meals at least five days per week unless approved by MNRAAA to operate fewer than five days per week based on the criteria in this policy. Grab and go meals are a complement to the congregate dining program.

Nutrition Standards

1. All provisions of these policies apply to both congregate and home-delivered nutrition projects unless otherwise stated.
2. Nutrition service providers must use at least the minimum Title III-C Nutrition Standards, which may be accessed at <https://acl.gov/senior-nutrition/nutrition-guidelines>. AAAs have the flexibility to establish higher standards than the minimum standards to meet local needs and circumstances.
3. The AAA shall award funds as available to provide nutrition projects, nutrition education, nutrition counseling, and other nutrition services to older persons. Title III C-1 and C-2 funds and state appropriations for meals shall be awarded on a calendar year basis. The AAA will make available the full amount of the New Obligational Authority for Nutrition each year.
4. Payments for meals shall be based on the number of monthly service unit counts in PeerPlace® for eligible individuals who received at least one unit of service during the service period multiplied by the relevant contractual rate. Payment should be made only for units of service delivered to eligible participants.
5. Service providers must ensure the following: for nutrition services, including both home-delivered meals and congregate dining: every unit of service reported for a given week must be tied to a specific person and a specific date of service. This data must be uploaded into PeerPlace® on a weekly basis. This can be done electronically through bar code scanning or, if preferred by the service provider, manually.

Menu and Meal Standards

1. Menus must be planned on a cycle basis for a minimum period of five weeks. Cycle menus and special menus must be planned and/or approved by a Licensed Dietitian or Licensed Nutritionist at the AAA or nutrition provider level.
2. Meals must provide at least one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) as established by the Food and Nutrition Board of the National Academy of Sciences Research Council and comply with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
3. The Older Americans Act (OAA) requires that all meals served using OAA funds adhere to the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans, provide a minimum of one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes.
4. If more than one meal is served daily, the combined meals must contain at least two-thirds of the RDA for two meals, and 100% of the RDA for three meals.

5. Liquid nutritional supplements may be used as a supplement to meals for individuals with special dietary needs, on a case-by-case basis. Prior to receiving liquid supplements, individuals will be assessed by a licensed dietitian or other qualified health professional, to determine nutritional needs appropriate for age, health condition, or illness and to identify special dietary needs and tolerances. The provider must have a system intact to monitor acceptability and consumption of liquid supplements, with follow-up visits as needed. The supplement chosen and amount dispensed must supply at least one-third of the RDA. A physician's order may be required. Nutrition funds may not be used to provide life support. While OAA Title III funds may be used to purchase liquid supplements, a liquid supplement by itself cannot be counted as a meal. When counting meals for purposes of the Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) funding or for OAA reporting purposes, "meals" containing only liquid supplements cannot be counted. If liquid supplements are served in addition to a meal that meets the OAA nutritional requirements, that meal plus the liquid supplement would count as one meal. Additionally, NSIP funds can only be used to purchase domestically produced foods; not liquid supplements.
6. Vitamin and mineral supplements may not be purchased with nutrition project funds.
7. At a minimum, special meal menus such as diabetic and low sodium meals shall be available. Low fat meals are recommended. The AAA or nutrition provider shall determine the calorie and sodium levels which will be offered. The nutrition provider will provide appropriate instructions to food preparation sites and caterers. Substitutes for the high sugar and sodium items on the regular menus must be available. Information describing modified diets must be accessible for referring agencies.
 - a. A physician's diet order may be required to receive special menu meals and shall be renewed as agreed upon with the physician.

Food Procurement, Health, and Safety Standards

1. All food procurement from a vendor must meet minimum food grades and standards as per Title III Nutrition Standards and Definitions.
2. All goods privately contributed to the nutrition program must meet those standards of quality, sanitation, and safety that apply to foods that are purchased commercially by the program.
3. Foods prepared or canned in the home may not be used in meals provided by the nutrition service providers. Foods that are uncooked and donated by participants may be used and may also be prepared for freezing at the sites for future use.

4. All service providers must adhere to state or local Board of Health Requirements for Food and Beverage Establishments and be subject to review by the Health Department Sanitarians. Exceptions to these regulations must be approved by the State Board of Health in writing.
5. Food temperatures at the time of service and at the time of delivery must adhere to temperatures specified by Minnesota Food Code, Minnesota Administrative Rule 4626.0395 <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4626.0395/>
6. Raw animal foods shall be cooked to temperatures specified by Minnesota Food Code, Minnesota Administrative Rule 4626.0340 <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/4626.0340/>
7. Nutrition programs must utilize temperature probes for checking food temperatures. In addition, refrigerators and freezers located at food preparation and service site must have thermometers.
8. Insulated hot and cold containers will be used on delivery routes to maintain food at acceptable temperatures.
9. All nutrition services preparation sites must be licensed and serving sites must be approved by the state and local Boards of Health.
10. Nutrition programs will certify food managers, as required by state and local health boards.

Food Assistance Programs

1. All nutrition providers under Title III must request reimbursement from the ACL for meals served to eligible participants through the MBA. A reliable reporting system must be in place to ensure accurate recording of Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) eligible meals.
2. To be eligible for NSIP reimbursement, a meal must meet all of the following criteria, as per the citations above.
 - a. The meals must meet federal OAA nutrition requirements. Including that that the meal meets the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Dietary Reference Intakes consistent with OAA Section 339.
 - b. The meals will be available under Title III of the OAA to individuals age 60 and over and their spouses, regardless of age, and may be made available to other eligible participants under the age of 60 which include
 - i. disabled individuals who reside in housing facilities occupied primarily by older individuals at which congregate nutrition service are provided.

- ii. individuals with disabilities who reside at home with and accompany older eligible individuals.
 - iii. individuals providing volunteer services during the meal hours.
- c. The meal or meals will be available under Title VI of the OAA to older Indians who have attained the minimum age determined by the tribe for services or older Hawaiians, age 60 and over, and may be available to other under age 60 eligible participants as defined under Title III of the OAA.
- d. The meals must be served by an agency which has a grant or contract with MNRAAA.
- e. The meal is served to an individual who has an opportunity to voluntarily contribute toward the cost of the meal.
- f. The meal is provided to the participant without a mandatory fee or on a means-tested basis. Although this may be a means for local organizations to subsidize the program, NSIP reimbursement cannot be authorized for meals with a set fee. Contributions may be collected but only on an understood voluntary basis.
- g. The earned NSIP reimbursement is guaranteed not to be used to supplant funds previously earmarked for services for older persons (i.e., replace funds that were awarded through grants/contracts for specific purposes).

Other Requirements

1. All nutrition service providers must establish ongoing outreach services to assure that the maximum number of low incomes, hard-to-reach, isolated, and withdrawn older people have the opportunity to participate, including older minorities, hearing impaired, and visually impaired older people.
2. All nutrition service providers must establish and carry out a systematic program of nutrition education. Nutrition education is required quarterly and recommended monthly. Providers will use the MBA/NAPIS service definition to develop nutrition education plans. Nutrition education plans will be approved by the licensed dietitian or licensed nutritionist.
3. Meal providers must establish methods for provision and/or referral to other supportive services such as transportation, in-home services, and housing assistance.
4. Each congregate nutrition site must post in a conspicuous location, the average total cost of the meal and service, and a suggested contribution schedule. All eligible participants must be given the opportunity to contribute towards the cost of the meal and service consistent with voluntary contributions.

5. Each service provider must periodically obtain the advice of people competent in the field of nutrition, older individuals who are participants, and persons knowledgeable in the needs of the elderly and solicit their input about effective delivery of service.