

Elderly Nutrition Program

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Issue

Briefly describe Connecticut's Elderly Nutrition Program, specifically its eligibility requirements and funding sources.

Summary

The Department of Social Services (DSS) administers Connecticut's Elderly Nutrition Program through the five Area Agencies on Aging ([AAAs](#)). (The State Department on Aging (SDA) previously administered the program, but [PA 17-2, JSS](#) eliminated the department and generally transferred its functions, duties, and staff to DSS.) The program provides meals at over 171 congregate meal sites (known as "senior community cafes") or delivers them to the homes of participants too frail to cook or travel to congregate meal sites. The program is open to adults ages 60 and older, their spouses, and certain individuals with disabilities who meet functional eligibility criteria.

The Elderly Nutrition Program is primarily funded by the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) (also called Title III C-1 and C-2 funds for congregate and home-delivered meals, respectively) and a partial matching contribution from the state. In addition, DSS receives a federal Department of Agriculture performance-based Nutrition Services Incentive Program ([NSIP](#)) grant and a social services block grant.

DSS also provides home-delivered meals through the Connecticut Homecare Program for Elders (CHCPE), which provides home- and community-based services to frail elders as an alternative to nursing home care. Individuals must meet functional and financial eligibility criteria to receive services and, in some cases, pay a copay. (For additional information on CHCPE's meal services, see OLR Report [2015-R-0228](#).)

Elderly Nutrition Program

DSS administers the Elderly Nutrition Program through the five regional AAAs: Eastern, North Central, South Central, South Western, and Western Connecticut. These AAAs independently contract with 15 elderly nutrition service [providers](#) to deliver meals to the homes of eligible participants or in a congregate setting. The contracted per-meal price varies based on certain factors such as the program size, costs (e.g., a central kitchen or catering model), support levels (e.g., private donations and the number of volunteers), and voluntary participant contributions.

The program must provide participants at least one meal per day, five days per week that conforms to federal OAA nutrition standards. According to the federal Administration on Aging, all meals must meet the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) and provide at least one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes (e.g., nutrient requirements). Service providers may, within these standards, create meals that serve participants' needs.

Eligibility

Generally, the program is open to (1) individuals age 60 or older and their spouses regardless of age and (2) individuals with disabilities under age 60 who live with an older person. But eligibility differs based on whether the meal is home-delivered or served at a congregate meal site (e.g., community sites such as senior centers, elderly housing, and churches) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: People Eligible for Home-Delivered and Congregate Meals

<i>Home-Delivered Meals</i>	<i>Congregate Meals</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals age 60 or older who are homebound because of illness or an incapacitating disability, or who are otherwise isolated • The spouse of an individual age 60 or older, regardless of age, if the receipt of the meal is in the best interest of the individual age 60 or older • Individuals with disabilities younger than age 60 who live at home with a person who also receives home-delivered meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals age 60 or older • The spouse of an eligible participant, regardless of age • Individuals with disabilities younger than age 60 who reside in housing facilities occupied primarily by older persons at which congregate services are provided • Individuals volunteering for the nutrition program during meal hours, at the option of the nutrition project and on the same basis as meals are provided to elderly participants • Individuals with disabilities who live at home and accompany older eligible individuals

Source: SDA

The meals are free to participants, although voluntary contributions are encouraged. Because the program is not means-tested or an entitlement, DSS may reduce services or establish a waiting list when the demand for services exceeds available resources.

Funding

The program is primarily funded through the federal OAA and a partial matching contribution from the state. DSS also receives a federal Department of Agriculture performance-based Nutrition Services Incentive Program ([NSIP](#)) grant and a social services block grant. DSS distributes both the federal and state funds to the AAAs based on OAA, NSIP, and state funding formulas.

Table 2 provides program information for federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2011 to 2016, including funding sources and the number of participants and meals served.

Table 2: Elderly Nutrition Program Information for FFYs 2011 - 2016

Statewide Information	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Congregate Meal Recipients	18,554	18,008	17,209	16,467	16,107	16,674
Congregate Meals Served	832,916	811,055	775,709	748,042	729,393	734,261
Home Delivered Meal Recipients	6,239	6,340	6,314	6,194	6,471	6,227
Home Delivered Meals Served	1,235,921	1,258,156	1,278,797	1,279,961	1,362,602	1,388,069
Federal Title III C-1 Funds (congregate)	\$5,241,542	\$5,241,542	\$5,241,542	\$5,241,542	\$5,241,452	\$5,241,452
Federal Title III C-2 Funds (home delivered)	\$2,533,609	\$2,564,007	\$2,402,675	\$2,508,765	\$2,487,455	\$2,571,861
Federal NSIP Funds	\$1,504,816	\$1,423,479	\$1,341,616	\$1,460,498	\$1,502,950	\$1,538,793
State Nutrition Funds	\$2,495,942	\$2,313,688	\$2,495,942	\$2,508,482	\$2,508,482	\$2,508,482
OAA State Nutrition Match	\$150,327	\$150,237	\$142,811	\$143,681	\$143,682	\$143,682
Social Service Block Grant Funds	\$0	\$182,254	\$500,000	\$291,975	\$450,000	\$450,000
Total Annual Funding	\$11,926,236	\$11,875,207	\$12,124,586	\$12,154,943	\$12,334,021	\$12,454,270

Source: SDA

As Table 2 shows, in FFY 2016, the program served 2,122,330 meals to 22,901 participants. Program funding has remained relatively level during this time period, while the number of congregate meals has declined and the number of home delivered meals has increased. Providers have expressed concerns about sustaining the program given that program funding has not kept pace with increases in food and transportation costs. Providers are supplementing this funding gap with donations from private donors and program participants.

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