

SENIOR NUTRITION PRIORITIES and DIRECTIONS 2009 – 2014

Introduction

Since the inception of the Senior Nutrition Program many demographic, societal and economic changes have taken place. These changes include an aging population; a population shift from small, rural communities to economic centers; increasing diversity; technological advances; and increased consumer sophistication. These changes, along with the economic pressures we are experiencing with higher gas and food prices and waning volunteerism, are the driving forces behind a new direction for meeting the nutrition needs of older Minnesotans.

The overarching **Goal** of the Senior Nutrition Program is to: **help older Minnesotans maintain their independence through access to healthful foods.** To achieve this goal, the Minnesota Board on Aging and its staff, the Area Agencies on Aging and the nutrition service providers are committed to working together as true partners. Each individual involved in the delivery of nutrition services has a valuable role to play in making a difference in the lives of older Minnesotans. Building on the successes of the program to this date, we will work together to implement the following priorities to strengthen the Senior Nutrition Program and promote innovation.

Priority 1 - Maximize Resources

Strategy 1. Target the most vulnerable.

Tactics

- Target older adults who are identified to be at high nutrition risk. Give priority to providing nutrition services to individuals who meet this criteria in both the congregate and home-delivered meals programs.
- Ensure that Older Americans Act targeting criteria are met. Balance the need for socialization with other needs.

Strategy 2. Achieve a collective understanding of available resources and identify ways to leverage these resources.

Tactics

- Establish Contracts Workgroup of providers, AAA staff, and MBA staff to update and streamline the contracting process. Conduct statewide re-RFP for CY 2010, using new contract forms and process. Include statewide standardized cost definitions, reviewed standards (aligned with minimum OAA requirements), and additional methods to minimize provider risk (including mid-course contract renegotiations).

- Clarify and maximize the use of Elderly Waiver, Alternative Care and Title III to provide nutrition services to older Minnesotans.
- Leverage other nutrition programs, including the Nutrition Assistance Program for Seniors (NAPS), Senior Farmers Market, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps).

Strategy 3. Expand the use of technology to achieve greater efficiencies, increase coordination and improve data collection.

Tactics

- Establish Data Workgroup to: 1) identify and facilitate implementation of technology that might include bar code cards, scannable forms and finger print tracking, 2) establish benchmarks to reach 100% participant survey form completion, and 3) identify statewide data components that will be utilized to inform nutrition program planning.
- Identify and incorporate a meaningful nutrition risk assessment into data collection and outcome evaluation to ensure effective targeting to those at high nutrition risk.

Strategy 4. Enhance nutrition education to empower consumers to make healthful choices

Tactics

- Partner with other organizations/networks that are focused on the health of older adults, including University of MN Food and Nutrition Network and University Extension.
- In collaboration with the MN Department of Health, disseminate evidence-based health promotion and disease prevention models statewide, including Eat Better Move More and Healthy Eating for Successful Living.

Priority 2 - Build Relationships in the Aging Network

Strategy 1. Rebuild trust at all levels.

Tactics

- Provide regular training for providers and AAAs to collectively address challenges in service delivery.
- Establish meeting schedule to ensure regular communication between providers, AAAs and MBA. Meetings include quarterly provider association meetings. Bring everyone together for at least one in-person meeting per year.

Strategy 2. Improve communication channels across Minnesota's aging network.

Tactics

- Establish a Listserv or an area on the MBA extranet or to share program forms, information, new ideas, and challenges related to providing nutrition services to older Minnesotans.
- Build and expand referral networks for providers including long term care and home health providers. Assure that nutrition services are included and linked to other services as appropriate.
- Develop and use a consistent message about the value of the Senior Nutrition Program that can be communicated to funding sources including state and local government.

Priority 3 - Improve Sustainability

Strategy 1. Develop new models to recruit and retain volunteers.

Tactics

- Learn from other states on ways to engage volunteers.
- Develop a process to assess the costs and benefits to using volunteers versus paid staff.

Strategy 2. Explore innovative methods of cost containment.

Tactics

- Incorporate the nutrition program into Choices for Independence.
- Determine cost and benefits of existing and new service delivery models, including bundled service delivery, frozen meals, group purchasing and/or a single caterer for multiple programs. Disseminate models identified as cost-effective statewide, as appropriate.

Strategy 3. Enhance methods to assure quality of service.

Tactics

- Define and measure quality standards based on metrics that include consumer preference, costs, current research and cultural needs.