



REAUTHORIZE, FUND & PROTECT THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT KEY MESSAGES AND QUICK FACTS

Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Programs represent an essential, effective and critical public-private partnership through which 5,000+ community-based programs, with the help of millions of local supporters and volunteers, are addressing the growing problem of senior hunger and isolation in America. The nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety and wellness checks they deliver each day ensure our most vulnerable seniors are able to live more nourished and independent lives in their own homes, averting unnecessary visits to the hospital and premature institutionalization – thereby saving billions in healthcare costs.

That's why we're urging Congress to fund OAA Nutrition Programs – Congregate, Home-Delivered and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program – at the Administration's fiscal year 2016 request of \$854.6 million and an additional \$20 million for new nutrition innovation grants. We're also calling for a bipartisan reauthorization of the OAA that supports the infrastructure that feeds nearly 2.5 million seniors annually and to replace sequestration with a balanced plan that does not harm these vital services in fiscal year 2016 and beyond.

QUICK FACTS

- In 2013, **9.6 million Americans** over the age of 60 faced the threat of hunger. That's nearly 1 in 6
- **Nearly 2.5 million seniors** received home-delivered or congregate meals via Meals on Wheels programs
- **More than 2 million volunteers** helped prepare and deliver nearly **224 million meals** to seniors in need
- **Half a million veterans** received home-delivered or congregate meals via Meals on Wheels programs
- **92 percent of seniors** who receive home-delivered meals say it enables them to remain living at home

KEY MESSAGES

MEALS ON WHEELS SAVES TAXPAYER DOLLARS

Meals on Wheels programs across the country are saving significant taxpayer dollars by preventing unnecessary trips to the emergency room, reducing falls and hospital utilization, and delaying, or eliminating all together, the need for nursing home care. These are costs often incurred by Medicare and Medicaid.

There is increasing evidence, including our recently released *More Than a Meal* research study, demonstrating that Meals on Wheels improves health, reduces feelings of loneliness and isolation, decreases the rate of falls and fear of falling, helps seniors feel more safe and secure, and reduces worry about being able to remain in one's own home.

Investing in Meals on Wheels is a win-win. We can either invest a modest amount in proper nutrition for our seniors now, or spend significantly more on the adverse consequences that will be incurred in healthcare costs later. Falls alone cost our nation \$34 billion in direct medical expenses in 2013.

On average, a program can deliver Meals on Wheels to a senior for an entire year for the same cost as just one day in the hospital or one week in a nursing home. (*Approximately \$1,600 a year*)

OAA Nutrition Programs are one of the best examples of a successful public-private partnership, and its programs are working. For every \$1 of federal money invested, there is a leverage of over \$3 in other resources.

MEALS ON WHEELS SERVES OUR MOST VULNERABLE, AT RISK SENIORS

The one meal a day received by those fortunate enough to become Meals on Wheels clients represents half or more of their total daily food intake. The majority of clients are women 75 and older who live alone. They have multiple chronic conditions, such as diabetes or heart disease, take six or more medications daily and are functionally impaired.

A senior who receives or requests Meal on Wheels is significantly more likely to report poorer health, higher feelings of depression and anxiety, needing assistance preparing food, and tripping hazards in the home.

THE ESCALATING NEED

The gap between those struggling with hunger and those receiving nutritious meals through the OAA continues to widen year after year, and waiting lists are mounting in every state. Member programs of Meals on Wheels America that responded to a recent survey indicated an average waiting list of 135 people.

There are 9.6 million seniors – nearly 1 in 6 – struggling with hunger. This represents a 56% increase since the start of the recession in 2007 that is only likely to worsen as our population ages.

A recently-released government report found that about 83% of food insecure seniors and 83% of physically impaired seniors in 2013 did not receive meals through the OAA, but likely needed them.

MEALS ON WHEELS CLIENT PROFILE

Among those receiving home-delivered meals:

- 60% have 6-14 chronic health conditions
- 51% take 6-23 medications daily
- 29% have at least three limitations in activities such as bathing, getting dressed or going to the restroom
- 59% said that a single meal helps provide half or more of their total food for the day
- 89% said the meals helps them feel better
- 91% said the meals enable them to live at home

Among those receiving congregate meals:

- 40% have 6-14 chronic health conditions
- 29% take 6-23 medications daily
- 50% have at least one limitation in everyday activities such as grocery shopping or preparing meals
- 53% said that a single meal helps provide half or more of their total food for the day
- 76% said the meals help them feel better
- 59% said the meals enable them to live at home

MORE THAN A MEAL QUICK FACTS

Findings from a 2015 research study commissioned by Brown University's Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research by Meals on Wheels America found that those who receive or request Meals on Wheels services are significantly more vulnerable than a nationally representative sample of aging Americans. Specifically, seniors on Meals on Wheels waiting lists were significantly more likely to:

- Report poorer self-rated health (71% vs. 26%)
- Screen positive for depression (28% vs. 14%) and anxiety (31% vs. 16%)
- Report recent falls (27% vs. 10%) and fear of falling that limited their ability to stay active (79% vs. 42%)
- Require assistance with shopping for groceries (87% vs. 23%) and preparing food (69% vs. 20%)
- Have health and/or safety hazards both inside and outside the home (i.e., higher rates of tripping hazards, 24% vs. 10%, and home construction hazards, 13% vs. 7%)

MEALS ON WHEELS MEMBER PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

Meals on Wheels America Members, according to our 2014 Renewal Survey, reported that:

- 62% receive money from the federal government, 55% from state governments, 57% from local governments
- Approximately 53% serve clients in urban areas, 49% serve clients in suburban areas, and 70% serve clients in rural areas
- Approximately 61% of Members provide both home-delivered and congregate meals

For more information and resources, or to download State-by-State Senior Fact Sheets, visit – www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/facts.