



Vermont  
Association of  
Area Agencies  
on Aging

P.O. Box 321  
Jericho, VT 05465  
(802) 578-7094  
[www.Vermont4A.org](http://www.Vermont4A.org)

**Member Agencies:**

Age Well  
Central Vermont Council on Aging  
Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging  
Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging  
Senior Solutions

Thank you for the opportunity to testify; I am Meg Burmeister, the Executive Director for the Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging.

There are 5 Area Agencies on Aging(AAA), overseen by DAIL, that provide the home delivered meals programs to older residents (60 and older) thru funding from the Older Americans Act. The 5 agencies are:

Age Well

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Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging

Senior Solutions

Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging

These meals provide 1/3 of the recommended daily intake as prescribed by the USDA. Menus are reviewed by a registered dietician with oversight by the AAA. The Older Americans Act long ago placed value on the grassroots approach to ensuring that community need was represented on a more local level, thus ensuring the ability to meet the unique needs of our beloved state. There are varied models of how meals programs relate to their geographic region. Several of the more populated models in the state do so through larger vendors (Trio) and others use a system of nonprofit meal providers.

When the pandemic began to take hold, the home delivered meals system nimbly adapted to a rules suspension by the Administration on Community Living which oversees the program from a federal level. The rule that was suspended stated that persons eligible are those individuals age 60 or over who are unable to leave home without considerable difficulty and/or assistance; **and** who experience a physical or mental condition making them unable to obtain food or prepare meals on a temporary or permanent basis. The rule suspension, which is still in effect,



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allowed us to respond to the emergency at hand and provide for those who were over 60 and felt the need for home delivered meals.

One of the complication with home delivered meals is that most of the drivers are volunteers and over 60 years old. Though we saw people decide to end their volunteerism, others stepped up to the plate, and the programs continued without a pause. Increased demand and increased numbers of meals per week quickly impacted the program. This surge has not subsided.

Congregate meals moved to take out for many meal sites, and home delivered meals increased. Since March we have seen between a 25% to 40% (differed by areas of the state) increase in need which has not reduced dramatically since the onset.

The Families First and Cares Act funding provided a generous allocation to support these efforts. Those funds came with the provision that they could be expended up until 9/30/2021. This funding allowed for the increased demand to be maintained. However, what none of us imagined is that we would experience the same demand now moving into its 11th month. Additionally, the Legislature authorized two additional distributions to support home-delivered meals. Those funds supported a higher rate of reimbursement to offset increased food costs.

We are currently working with DAIL to develop a comprehensive plan for managing the continued demand, as those funds are quickly depleting. We had imagined a reduction in demand, but we are not seeing that.