

CENTRAL VERMONT COUNCIL ON AGING Nutrition/Wellness Director Bullet Points
Budget Hearing—zoom
February 8, 2021

Thank you for holding these budget hearings and for your time & service.

- My name is Kathy Paquet and I am the Director of Nutrition and Wellness for Central Vermont Council on Aging and have worked here for more than 30 years. I reside in Barre Town as a 3rd generation farmer.

One of five AAA nutrition directors

- As Nutrition Director, I have oversight of 12 contracts with local, community driven home-delivered (“MOW’s”) and congregate nutrition programs in central Vermont Older Vermonters.
- The NUTRITION SERVICE PROGRAM promotes access to nutritious meals, nutrition education, and nutrition counseling; it facilitates social contact; and conducts health promotion activities all which help older adults maintain their independence in their homes and communities. It also provides homebound participants with a primary access point for many home and community based services to help meet their health and nutrition needs.
- Funding for these programs varies based on the needs and resources of the community, and are made up of federal, state, local and private dollars.
- MEALS ON WHEELS SAVES TAXPAYER DOLLARS. Community-based senior nutrition programs, like Meals on Wheels, are saving taxpayer dollars by preventing unnecessary trips to the emergency room, reducing falls and hospitalizations, and delaying or preventing the need for nursing home care – costs of which are often incurred by Medicare and Medicaid. Funding Meals on Wheels is a smart, cost-effective investment. Investing a modest amount of state resources in nutrition and social services for our nation’s seniors could save significantly
- These dollars have not kept par with the rising costs of doing business.
 - The Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program is an effective and key public-private partnership through which 5,000+ community-based programs – aided by millions of local supporters and volunteers – are addressing the issues of senior hunger and isolation. The nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety checks they deliver each day help to ensure that our nation’s seniors live more nourished and independent lives in their own homes, thereby saving the country on costly and preventable healthcare expenditures. While the OAA Nutrition Program and its national network have been essential for decades, the recent onset of the COVID-19 health and economic crises resulted in skyrocketing demand for services provided by local Meals on Wheels programs and other community-based organizations.

Now more than ever, these programs are serving as lifelines to their communities and working tirelessly to navigate unprecedented challenges delivering nutritious meals and social connection

- Together we must invest more fully in meals on wheels to ensure vulnerable seniors in Vermont can remain healthier at home, avoiding more costly healthcare facilities.
 - Cost of 1 home-deliver meal: \$11.02 (\$11.15)
 - Cost of 1 day in the hospital: \$2,633 (\$2665)
 - Cost of 1 day in a nursing home: \$353 (\$357)
- In the CVCOA service area we saw almost a 30% increase in the need for meals on wheels in this COVID period and it's not over yet
- The majority of program participants had a positive impression of the program 88% of home-delivered meal participants rated the nutrition program overall as good or excellent
- Home-delivered meals must comply with the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide 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 Science.
- Approximately 85% of people with dementia and chronic illness are cared for exclusively in their own homes.
- CVCOA works with RSVP & LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDER to recruit, check & train volunteer drivers to not only deliver meals safely but to also check on well-being and refer client concerns to service providers.
- The NUTRITION SERVICE PROGRAM does not have a financial means test, but services target older adults with the greatest economic or social need. Participants are not charged for meals but are encouraged to contribute toward the total cost of the meal voluntarily. However, within site capacity, participants' inability or unwillingness to contribute does not deny them of meals or other services.
- Presently and as we look to the future, we are seeing a growing demand for more nutritious meals due to the increased population of older Vermonters. Our meal sites strive to meet this growing need. These are some of the factors increasing the demand for healthy meals in the aging population:

- The increased provision of home & community based long-term care services to older individuals rather than premature institutionalization.
- More early discharges from the hospitals of older individuals who may be sicker, weaker and in more need of supportive care at home, including MOW's.
- A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that food insecure adults had annual health care expenditures \$1,834 higher than food secure adults, for a cumulative median cost of \$687 million per state.
- 1. MEALS ON WHEELS SAVES TAXPAYER DOLLARS. Community-based senior nutrition programs, like Meals on Wheels, are saving taxpayer dollars by preventing unnecessary trips to the emergency room, reducing falls and hospitalizations, and delaying or preventing the need for nursing home care – costs of which are often incurred by Medicare and Medicaid. Funding Meals on Wheels is a smart, cost-effective investment. Investing a modest amount of federal resources in nutrition and social services for our nation's seniors could save significantly 1 Ziliak and Gunderson, 2020, The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2018 (report prepared for Feeding America), www.feedingamerica.org/research/senior-hunger-research/senior 2 U.S. Census Bureau, 2018, American Community Survey (ACS) Demographic Data, available on the Administration for Community Living's (ACL) AGing, Independence, and Disability (AGID) Program Data Portal, <https://agid.acl.gov/CustomTables/> 3 AARP, 2018, Loneliness and Social Connections: A National Survey of Adults 45 and Older, www.aarp.org/research/topics/life/info-2018/loneliness-social-connections.html 4 ACL, 2020, State Program Reports (SPR) 2005-2018, available on ACL's AGID, <https://agid.acl.gov/CustomTables/> 3 more spending on healthcare and long-term services by preventing adverse health effects and other costly consequences to our economy and healthcare system. Poor health outcomes and expenses associated with food insecurity and/or isolation among seniors, such as falls and malnutrition, are particularly costly. It has been estimated that older adult falls alone cost our nation \$50 billion in medical expenses, and the economic burden associated with older adult malnutrition is \$51 billion.^{5, 6} The OAA Nutrition Program represents one of the best examples of a successful public-private partnership, and its programs are working. Meals on Wheels improves self-reported 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. In fact, among seniors who receive home-delivered meals, about 9 out of 10 say the service:
 - Helps them live independently (94%)
 - Helps them to stay in their own home (94%)
 - Makes them feel better (90%)
 - Improves their

health (87%)⁷ On average, a program can deliver Meals on Wheels to a senior for an entire year for about the same cost as one day in the hospital or 10 days in a nursing home.

- The Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program is an effective and key public-private partnership through which 5,000+ community-based programs – aided by millions of local supporters and volunteers – are addressing the issues of senior hunger and isolation. The nutritious meals, friendly visits and safety checks they deliver each day help to ensure that our nation’s seniors live more nourished and independent lives in their own homes, thereby saving the country on costly and preventable healthcare expenditures. While the OAA Nutrition Program and its national network have been essential for decades, the recent onset of the COVID-19 health and economic crises resulted in skyrocketing demand for services provided by local Meals on Wheels programs and other community-based organizations. Now more than ever, these programs are serving as lifelines to their communities and working tirelessly to navigate unprecedented challenges delivering nutritious meals and social connection
- this is the time to increase state support. Senior nutrition programs across the state continue to see a dramatic increase in requests for meals and from a new pipeline of homebound older adults because of COVID-19, far surpassing the more 1 million meals seniors these programs had previously been serving annually. In addition, programs have incurred significant costs outside of standard operations to meet this influx in demand, including those required to convert congregate nutrition programs to home-delivered meals models; secure personal protective equipment (PPE); and cover increased food, transportation and storage costs. This must all be considered when determining future emergency funding. It’s clear the pandemic isn’t going away anytime soon and we must support the organizations on the frontlines ensuring older Vermonters can stay safe, secure, healthy and well nourished at home.
- We need increased funding and support for our older Vermonters now to prevent even greater social and economic consequences later.

Therefore, CENTRAL VERMONT COUNCIL ON AGING respectfully requests that you appropriate \$1 million increase /year for three years for Older Vermonters Nutrition.



Senior nutrition services help create healthy, safe, strong communities.