

## **FY2022 Title III-C1 Congregate Meal Service Narrative**

### **Overview**

The Agency on Aging Northeastern Illinois is seeking applications from organizations interested in providing Older Americans Act Title III-C1 Congregate Meal services. Nutrition services are provided to assist older adults to live independently by promoting better health through improved nutrition and reduced isolation through a program coordinated with other supportive services. As outlined in the Older Americans Act, the purposes of this program are:

- To reduce hunger and food insecurity;
- To promote socialization of older individuals; and
- To promote the health and well-being of older individuals by assisting such individuals to gain access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services to delay the onset of adverse health conditions resulting from poor nutritional health or sedentary behavior.

Meals are to be provided throughout the county to provide maximum coverage of the service area. Nutrition providers are expected to have an active role in the network of organizations providing services to older adults and work collaboratively with other service providers.

### ***Statement on Serving Populations in Greatest Economic and Social Need***

As outlined in the *AgeGuide General Service Requirements*, providers must assign priority, in the provision of services, to older adults in greatest economic and social need (“target populations”), at a rate at least in proportion to the incidence level of each group within the county. To achieve this outcome, providers must develop strategic plans to reach and provide services to these target populations which are defined in the federal Older American’s Act and the Illinois Act on the Aging as the following:

- Older adults with income at or below federal poverty guidelines,
- Minority older adults,
- Older adults age 75+,
- Older adults living alone,
- Older adults with Limited English Proficiency,
- Older adults who are frail,
- Older adults with severe disabilities,
- Older adults with dementia and related disorders (and their caretakers), and
- Older adults at risk for institutional placement.
- The Illinois Act on the Aging [20 ILCS 105/3.11] expanded the definition of “greatest social need” to the need caused by noneconomic factors that restrict an individual's ability to perform normal daily tasks or that threaten one’s capacity to live independently.
  - These factors include:
    - Physical or mental disability,
    - Language barriers and,
    - Cultural or social isolation caused by, among other things, racial and ethnic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or HIV status.

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### **Service Design**

Congregate meal sites should be located in easily accessible areas with a high concentration of older adults in greatest social or economic need. Examples of meal sites include senior centers, township buildings, park district buildings, senior housing developments, places of worship, banquet halls, and other civic organization buildings. All nutrition sites must be open to all eligible clients regardless of an individual's membership or affiliation with the host site organization. Congregate meal sites in restaurants are allowable with approved menus and approval of the AgeGuide.

All nutrition sites must pass a local health department inspection at least annually. A site manager with valid Certified Food Protection Manager certification must be present when the site is operating. All other staff and volunteers handling food must be trained in safe food handling practices and have completed a background check.

Meal quality, food presentation, customer choice and site atmosphere have been found to be important to the success of congregate meal programs. Although disposable paper and plastic service ware is allowable, more appealing non-disposable service ware is preferred.

Congregate meal sites should be a place of warm and authentic social interaction around a quality meal. The dining space should have an inviting and attractive atmosphere and be conducive to socialization and a pleasant meal experience. Providers should be culturally competent and responsive to diverse populations, including providing barrier-free access to inquirers who speak languages other than English and inquirers with hearing or speech impairments. Procedures to welcome and assist newcomers with making friends and socializing should be in place.

Meals provided must meet nutritional analysis requirements, or menu plan requirements, as detailed in the Nutrition Standards. Menus must be planned in advance of service and approved by a Registered Dietitian. Menus should be appetizing offering a variety of flavors, colors, and textures. A hot meal should be served; however, cold meals may be provided occasionally as appropriate.

III-C1 service providers will be required to perform the following activities:

1. Congregate meal sites should provide at least one meal a day, five or more days a week. However, the Agency on Aging may grant exceptions if the nutrition provider submits documentation of the need for an exception and serves meals at least 5 days per week throughout the service area.
2. Allocated cost per unit (Title III C1 funds divided by units) will not exceed \$7.50 per unit. Total cost per unit will be reasonable and justifiable based on the report "Older Americans Act Nutrition Program Evaluation: Meal Cost Analysis" Mathematica Policy Research, September 25, 2015. A reasonable cost increase may be used to extrapolate cost from the date of the study forward. Grant applicants should provide written explanation of how projected cost per unit agrees with this information.

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3. Nutrition providers are responsible for collecting all necessary client registration information using the Illinois Department on Aging Registration for Congregate Meals form, ensuring this information is kept confidential, and timely and complete data entry into AgingIS. The purpose of this information is to meet all state and federal reporting requirements.
4. Clients are to be given the opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the cost of the meal. A confidential system of collecting voluntary donations from clients is to be established and implemented. Clients may not be denied a meal because they cannot or will not contribute to the cost of the meal.
5. Nutrition education is to be presented at least two times per year and it is strongly recommended that nutrition education be provided quarterly and more frequently if possible. The purpose of nutrition education is to inform individuals about available facts and information that will promote improved food selection, eating habits, nutrition and health-related practices. Material presented should be from credible sources with valid credentials in nutrition science. AgeGuide staff are available to assist nutrition providers with suggestions of topics and sources of information.
6. Nutrition programs must have written plans to address adjustments to program design and delivery in the event of a natural disaster and/or pandemic emergencies and disasters. If feasible, congregate meal clients should be provided with emergency shelf stable meals. See Nutrition Standards for more specifics on shelf stable meals.
7. The nutrition provider is to collect input and feedback from program participants. The Area Agency on Aging may mandate a specific survey instrument or specific survey questions be used and results reported to the Area Agency.
8. Adhere to the AgeGuide General Service Requirements and the program specific requirements as well as reporting requirements for these services, including completion of an annual demographic data report for Be responsible for reporting requirements for these services. Visit the Agency on Aging website ([www.ageguide.org](http://www.ageguide.org)) for additional information on reporting requirements.