

**Nutrition Services Stakeholder Meeting  
December 5, 2023**

Attendance: Erin Estey (SUA), Shana Brierley (SUA), Jennifer Proto (ADS), Claudia Mejia (Senior Resources), Denise Andreas (SWCAA), Gretchen James (SWCAA), Jean Cronin (Cronin & Hughes), Jillian Ruisi (TEAM), Joel Sekorski (LHNWENP), Kathleen Nunez (TEAM), Kathy Chase (Senior Resources), Maureen McIntyre (NCAAAA), Shannon MacNeil (CRT), Spring Raymond (WCAAAA), Stan Mingeone (Estuary), Tania Parrent (LifeBridge), Natasha Tetrault (Town of Enfield), Claude Trapp (City of Hartford), Michael Werner (CWCSEO), Alison Dvorak (Senior Resources), Carmen Weber (RW Resources), Rhonda Evans (CAFCA), Robyn Harper Gulley (NCAAAA), Jaime Smith (Department of Agriculture), Megan Baker (CWCSEO), Laura Palmieri (RW Resources), Yadira Perez (NOI), Rick Liegl (City of Meriden)

**Public Comment**

None.

**Update and Recap**

E. Estey recapped prior meeting minutes.

**Nutrition Task Force**

E. Estey discussed that the Nutrition Task Force began meeting in August, shortly after the last Nutrition Services Stakeholder meeting. There is expected to be one more meeting in December, and then the task force will be drafting a report with recommendations. As of now, discussion has largely been around federal funding, payment schedules, and administrative streamlining. E. Estey advised that representatives from several Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and Elderly Nutrition Providers (ENP) participate in the task force and have brought forth recommendations from each side and recommended that if there are any questions, concerns, or desire to bring forth additional recommendations, to speak with either the other ENPs, or AAAs.

**Federal Funding Update**

E. Estey reminded all on the call that the Elderly Nutrition Program is primarily funded by the Older Americans Act advised that, as the federal government did not pass a budget in time for the beginning of the Federal Fiscal Year, a Continuing Resolution (CR) was passed that put funding in place for 10/1/2023 through 11/17/2023, for which Notices of Award were sent with funds that covered that amount of time. After that CR expired, another CR was put into place that keeps the government operating through 2/2/2024. E. Estey advised that the Administration for Community Living (ACL) said that Notices of Awards for that time period are expected be sent before the end of December.

**Nutrition Counseling**

S. Brierley discussed nutrition counseling and how it is reported. She advised that in reviewing service numbers from the past year, it looks like there is missing data or nutrition counseling is not being performed. She mentioned that she would like to come up with a method for tracking who is referred for nutrition counseling, as well as who refuses nutrition counseling, but invited comment and feedback about the feasibility of doing this.

K. Chase questioned what the purpose would be of doing this, as it would require additional work for already-busy staff. S. Brierley said that it would make us able to show that the work around nutrition counseling is being performed and referrals are being made for those who are considered at high nutrition risk, even if it does not result in someone participating, to which K. Chase said that it comes down to SUA trust in the AAAs and ENPs.

D. Andreas brought up that there is only a certain amount of funding available to do nutrition counseling, and that there are many more people who would be considered at high nutrition risk than there is funding to provide the nutrition counseling. She advised that the Southwest region has no trouble getting consumers to participate in nutrition counseling and could provide much more if the funding was available.

E. Estey mentioned that this is why SUA asked the question – nutrition counseling is an important intervention and it's important to understand what the barriers are, and how many consumers either don't want to participate, or can't be served due to funding.

S. Brierley thanked everyone for their input and encouraged attendees to reach out with any other ideas or concerns.

### **Congregate and Grab and Go Meals**

S. Brierley asked if any ENPs are experiencing issues around the congregate program, especially going into the winter months, or any requests to convert to grab and go meals.

T. Parrent said that LifeBridge congregate sites are staying steady and strong.

Y. Perez said that only 4 of 11 NOI congregate sites are currently operating due to low utilization. E. Estey asked if these are congregate sites within senior centers and Y. Perez advised yes. When asked if the senior centers themselves are experiencing low utilization overall, she responded that she did not know.

### **Emergency Meals and Weather Closures**

S. Brierley reminded everyone that with bad weather approaching, there may be closures of the program on inclement weather days and asked what, if any provisions, programs have made.

E. Theroux advised that TVCCA has already sent out their emergency meals.

D. Andreas advised that one provider in her region (CCFC) has provided frozen meals to their participants already. S. Brierley asked if there are ever any issues around power outages and losses of food. D. Andreas responded that this has not been an issue thus far, but that it is something to consider. She then said that the other provider in her region (RW Resources) is preparing to send out emergency meal packs.

K. Nunez advised that TEAM is in the process of sending out emergency meals on a staggered basis and that meals will be frozen, rather than shelf stable.

Y. Perez advised that New Opportunities will be unable to send emergency meals this year due to budgetary constraints.

### **Invitations and Attendance**

As always, please send names and contact information of anyone that you think should be invited to E. Estey. Forwarding the invitation is fine, however, if you want the person added to the regular invite list, please let E. Estey or S. Brierley know.

### **Other Business/Discussion**

J. Smith gave an update on the Senior Farmer's Market Nutrition Program, now that the season is closed. This year was the first year in which a debit-card style card was given to participants, rather than paper coupons. There were some challenges with the swipe card system, since this was the first year, however, people were receptive and overall happy. One big positive is that a lot of data was gathered as the result of using the cards. J. Smith advised that unfortunately, redemption this year was \$72,000 less than the previous year.

### **Proposed 2024 Meeting Schedule**

E. Estey asked if anyone had input on the proposed 2024 meeting schedule. No feedback given.