



BUDGET FACT SHEET

SENIOR NUTRITION SERVICES

Declaration of War on Senior Hunger

PROPOSAL

Provide an additional \$12.5 million to the senior nutrition program in order to sustain a service level of feeding 6% of the nutritionally at-risk senior population. The increase in funds will allow area agencies on aging to provide an additional one half-million meals to California seniors who are the poorest and most needy.

NUTRITION IS A BASIC NEED

No one in California should go hungry, especially our parents and grandparents. But 36% of California's seniors do not have enough income to meet their basic needs of food, shelter, transportation, and medical care.

With the number of food-insecure seniors projected to increase by 50% when the majority of the Baby Boom Generation reaches age 60 in 2025, it is essential to provide a safety net of preventive nutrition that enables older adults to age well.

Approximately 36% of California seniors, some 2.7 million, don't have enough income to meet their basic needs with more than 1 million threatened by hunger each day. It is estimated that 1.3 million seniors in California are isolated, living alone.

FOR OLDER ADULTS, HUNGER HURTS

The provision of nutritious food is perhaps the most basic service, yet nutrition programs are being forced to cut corners, lay off staff, establish waiting lists for service, or, in some cases, close senior meal sites completely.

Without basic nutrition, no individual remains healthy for long, especially the frail senior or one recovering from a recent illness or injury. Food-insecure seniors are at greater risk for chronic health conditions and more likely to report poor health status.



"Aging is All About Living"®

Quality nutrition has been identified as an essential component of recovery from hospital stays as well, and without access to healthy nutritious food, readmissions to hospitals will increase rather than decrease costs. Augmenting senior nutrition programs is one of the most basic and simple solutions for reducing these costs.

HUNGER IMPACTS HEALTH

Senior nutrition deserves special attention as a strategy to reduce the health and medical needs of older Californians.

Studies show that there is a direct relationship between poverty and poor nutrition. Food-insecure seniors are 2.33 times more likely to report fair/poor health status and have a higher nutritional risk factor. Food-insecure seniors are at greater risk for chronic health conditions and experience depression, heart attacks, and congestive heart failure.

FUND A BASIC LEVEL OF SERVICES

The meal program reaches out to the older, frail seniors that are invisible and living throughout the community in all types of neighborhoods. Meal programs serve numerous seniors, including the hidden homeless and those who are socially isolated.

The State of California has the opportunity to declare war on senior hunger. It also has the potential to immediately offset the runaway costs of caring for its aging population by turning to proven strategies to improve senior health by investing in nutrition programs.

Augmentation of senior nutrition programs is the cornerstone for healthy aging. Although highly successful nutrition programs exist for seniors they are severely compromised by waiting lists and program closures.



"Aging is All About Living"®

UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR MORE FUNDING

Meal programs serve numerous seniors through home delivered meals and congregate sites. Congregate sites often reach out to the hidden homeless living in cars, etc. Home delivered meal programs focuses on the home-bound and socially isolated.

Home delivered meals are serving a small number of the nutritionally at-risk seniors. These meals are provided to people that are shut in and unable to get out of the house to go to a meal site. These seniors tend to be older, poorer and have multiple chronic conditions and suffer from isolation and loneliness. Many times the meals on wheels driver is the senior's only contact during the day. Almost 11 million home-delivered meals are served annually providing for some 55,000 older, frail Californians at an average of 4 meals a week. The average price of a home-delivered meal is \$7.50. The additional funding means that another 1,100,000 meals can be served annually to an additional 5,250 seniors.

Congregate meals provide an opportunity for socialization and connection to community resources and programming for those that attend. Socialization has been shown to increase health outcomes. Some 7 million congregate meals are served every year at an average of about \$12.50 in costs (and adds socialization and other health-related activities and benefits). The additional funding will allow nearly 400,000 additional congregate meals serving another 2,500 seniors.

No senior should have to go hungry, homeless, or become sick because of growing old in California.

SUPPORT

The budget request is supported by the California Association of Area Agencies on Aging, California Commission on Aging, the Congress of California Seniors, and the California Collaborative for Long Term Services and Supports.

Contact:
Derrell Kelch
Executive Director
916-443-2800