Understanding Nutrition: Primer Module on Nutrition Services for Older Americans

The Older Americans Act, first adopted by Congress in 1965 and most recently amended in 2006, authorizes a number of programs to mitigate food insecurity for low-income seniors, including the Elderly Nutrition Program and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program. Federal law also authorizes the Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program; and until recently, California funded a Brown Bag Program.

**Elderly Nutrition Program**

The Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP) is intended to reduce food insecurity, improve nutritional intake, promote socialization, and support health among seniors at risk of losing their independence.

The federal Administration on Aging (AOA) oversees the ENP, which is administered in California by the state’s Department of Aging (CDA) and Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs). Locally, ENP is operated by Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and their service providers.

ENP does not have federal entitlement status; federal funding for the program is determined by a Congressional appropriation. Federal funds for ENP are allocated to each state based on the number of residents who are 60 years of age and older.

ENP provides congregate and home-delivered meals. Each meal served through ENP must align with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and provide at least one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes. ENP participants are not subject to income eligibility criteria, but services are focused on seniors with the greatest economic or social need.

**Elderly Nutrition Program – Congregate Nutrition Services**

Congregate Nutrition Services, established in 1972, provides meals in group settings to adults 60 years of age or older and the spouses of adults in this age range. Meals may also be served to disabled individuals who reside with an individual 60 years of age or older, individuals who volunteer during meal service times, and disabled individuals in residential facilities that predominately house individuals 60 years of age and older. Meals are offered free of charge to participants, though donations are accepted. In addition to meals, participants may receive other nutrition services such as screening, education, or counseling.

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*Tribal Organizations operating the Elderly Nutrition Program may set alternate age criteria.*
In Fiscal Year (FY) 2009-10, Congregate Nutrition Services in California received approximately $77.8 million in federal, state, and county funds, as well as more than $9.9 million in private donations. In FY 2009-10, 172,000 seniors (representing three percent of Californians aged 60 years and older) participated in ENP Congregate Nutrition Services, receiving nearly 7.7 million meals, or nearly 31,000 meals a day.

**Elderly Nutrition Program – Home-Delivered Meal Services**

Home-Delivered Meal Services, established in 1978, provides meals to individuals 60 years of age or older who are homebound. Individuals who are married to homebound individuals in this age range and disabled individuals who reside with a homebound individual in this age range may also participate in the program. Meals are offered free of charge to participants. In addition to meals, participants may receive other nutrition services such as screening, education, or counseling.

In FY 2009-10, ENP Home-Delivered Meal Services in California received $70.1 million in federal, state, and county funds, as well as $7.3 million in private donations. In FY 2009-10, 56,000 California seniors (representing less than one percent of those 60 and older) participated in ENP Home-Delivered Meal Services, receiving 10.7 million meals, or nearly 43,000 meals a day.

**Nutrition Services Incentive Program**

The Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) was first established in 1974 by the Older Americans Act (OAA) as the Nutrition Program for the Elderly under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The federal Administration on Aging (AoA) was granted oversight of the program in 2003.

NSIP provides supplementary funding for states and tribal organizations operating ENP Congregate Meal Services and Home-Delivered Meal Services. These programs have the option to receive commodities and/or Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) funding. The State of California has opted solely for NSIP. Funding for NSIP is based on final meal count numbers.

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**Commonly Used Acronyms**

- Administration on Aging (AoA)
- Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)
- Brown Bag Program (BBP)
- California Department of Aging (CDA)
- California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)
- Elderly Nutrition Program (ENP)
- Indian Tribal Organizations (ITO)
- Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)
- Older Americans Act (OAA)
- Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

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**Notes:**

- American Community Survey 2010 data for this age group retrieved from [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml)
- Based on 250 days a year.
- Tribal Organizations operating the Elderly Nutrition Program may set alternate age criteria.
from the "prior, prior" year, so for example, funding for FY 2010-11 was based on FY 2008-09 meal counts. This approach allows providers more flexibility to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

For more information on nutrition services authorized by the OAA, see:


**Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program**
The Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is administered and fully funded by USDA. Within California, the program is administered by the state's Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). Locally, the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) operate the program. Indian Tribal Organizations (ITO) may also administer the program within California, though none did in FY 2010-2011.  

SFMNP does not have federal entitlement status; program funding is determined by a Congressional appropriation. Federal funds are provided to state agencies and ITOs in the form of grants, up to 10 percent of which may be used for administrative costs.

Individuals 60 years of age and older, whose household incomes do not exceed 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, are eligible for SFMNP. Federal regulations set SFMNP benefit levels at no less than $20 and no more than $50 per household per year. California’s benefit level is set at $20.

**How SFMNP Operates**
In California, SFMNP provides eligible seniors with a booklet containing ten $2 checks that may be used to purchase fresh fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh herbs at Certified Farmers’ Markets, roadside stands, and community-supported agriculture programs during the harvest season (designated as May through November in California). Vendors must be approved by CDFA in order to accept SFMNP benefits from participants.

CDFA has partnered with the California’s Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to certify farmers and farmers’ markets to accept SFMNP benefits. CDFA partners with California’s 32 local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to distribute SFMNP benefits to participants.

In 2011, 40,000 Californians participated in SFMNP and were served by 1,100 farmers at 435 Certified Farmers Markets. During that same year, California received approximately $800,000 in federal SFMNP funding.
For more information about SFMNP, see:

- The California Department of Food and Agriculture’s SFMNP page:  
  [http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/seniorfarmersmrktnutritionprgm/](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/seniorfarmersmrktnutritionprgm/)
- The United States Department of Agriculture’s SFMNP overview page:  

Brown Bag Program

Established in 1981, the state-funded Brown Bag Program (BBP) is authorized under the Older Californians Act of 1980. In FY 2009-10, local BBP providers were issued three months of funding to phase out the program. As of FY 2010-11, all support from the State General Fund was eliminated. Though state funding is not currently available for BBP, the program is still authorized in statute, and some local Brown Bag Programs continue with funds from various alternative sources.

BBP was operated through the California Department of Aging in partnership with local Area Agencies on Aging and their service providers. The program distributed surplus and donated food items at various locations throughout the state. Food provided through BBP was free of charge to participants, though voluntary payments could be accepted.

BBP served individuals 60 years of age and older whose incomes did not exceed the California State Supplementary Income/State Supplemental Payment (SSI/SSP) rate provided to blind SSI/SSP recipients. If adequate food and funding were available, local BBP providers had the option to serve individuals whose incomes were up to 125 percent of the SSI/SSP rate for the blind.

For more information about the Brown Bag Program, see:

- The California Department of Aging BBP page  
- California Department of Aging Brown Bag Program Narrative  

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*For details on SSI/SSP benefit levels, please see: [http://ssa.gov/pubs/11125.html#pay](http://ssa.gov/pubs/11125.html#pay)*
END NOTES

1 California Department of Aging, personal communication, June 23, 2011.


3 Ibid.

4 California Department of Aging, personal communication, June 23, 2011.


6 Ibid.


9 California Department of Food and Agriculture, personal communication, September 29, 2011.

10 Ibid.

11 California Department of Aging, personal communication, June 23, 2011.

12 Ibid.
FOR MORE INFORMATION

This module on nutrition services for older Americans is one component of Understanding Nutrition: A Primer on Programs and Policies in California. Go to www.ccrwf.org to access additional modules.

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