

# NUTRITION PROGRAMS GAP ANALYSIS FOR OLDER NEVADANS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Food insecurity affects Nevadans of all ages but older adults face a significant health impact when they lack consistent access to enough food. Food insecurity is a condition that is assessed and represented in USDA reports. It is a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food (1).

On February 12, 2014, Governor Brian Sandoval established the Governor's Council on Food Security (GCFS) per Executive Order 2014-03. The GCFS was established within the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) Office of Food Security (OFS) and tasked with effectively improving the quality of life and health of Nevadans by increasing food security throughout the state. GCFS is the recognized advisory board on strategies to improve food security, whereas the Governor's Commission on Aging (CoA) is the recognized advisory body on strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of older adults in Nevada.

To better understand how the current food system works in addressing the needs of food insecure older Nevadans, how funding for these programs is distributed, and what the trends and projections are for the population, the OFS commissioned a gap analysis. To oversee the development of this gap analysis, a Stakeholder Study Group (SSG) was convened and included members from food banks, state and local government, nonprofit organizations, and local coalitions. The SSG was responsible for approving research questions, identifying key informants, and developing strategies and recommendations.

Social Entrepreneurs, Inc. (SEI) conducted research to understand the current and projected environmental factors facing older Nevadans in the context of food insecurity. Data was collected from state sources, sponsors of food programs that reach older Nevadans, and independent research was conducted on demographics, projections, and trends. SEI mapped food security resources by county, and SSG members provided additional data and maps. Finally, budgets and other funding data were collected to help identify gaps. Key informant interviews with individuals identified by the SSG as having specialized knowledge about the food service

### QUICK FACTS

- About 80,000 older Nevadans (ages 60 years and older) were food insecure in 2016
- Nevada will see a 36% increase in the older adult population over the next ten years
- Therefore, it is estimated by 2025, 17,000 more older Nevadans will need nutrition services than those today, totaling almost 100,000 older Nevadans
- One in three older Nevadans had a disability in 2015
- Over 40% of older Nevadans lived alone in 2015
- Two out of three older Nevadans were considered burdened or very burdened with the cost of housing in 2013
- Nearly 90% of older Nevadans rely on Social Security benefits

spectrum in Nevada were conducted to gather insight regarding the critical issues facing older Nevadans who do or may suffer from food insecurity.

## DATA SUMMARY

In 2015, the total population in Nevada of those 65 years and older was 380,706, representing 13.6% of the state's total population. Population estimates by the Nevada State Demographer show that by 2025, Nevadans who are 65 years or older will make up approximately 16.5% of the population (2). Nevada's older adult population is anticipated to increase by 36% over the next 10 years. Currently, 14.8% of older Nevadans are food insecure. While trends in food insecurity have improved in recent years, the percentage will continue to rise as the population grows unless strategies are implemented to address the concern.

Research and data from SSG members illustrated several barriers to addressing the needs of food insecure older Nevadans:

- ❖ Federal nutrition benefits are under-utilized by eligible older adults in Nevada.
- ❖ Pantries cover the largest percentage of food insecure older Nevadans served through charitable means, which will likely increase disproportionately to the growth of other nutrition services due to program requirements, caseload restrictions, and program costs; yet pantries do not receive any dedicated funds for food purchases or services such as home delivery.
- ❖ Meal sponsors are burdened by expenses that far exceed the per meal reimbursement provided by state, local, and federal government funds resulting in wait lists, reduced days of meal service (or fewer delivered meals), and threatens the very existence of program providers/sponsors.
- ❖ Cost per meal reductions won't fully satisfy the gap between operational costs and reimbursement. Although the Nevada Legislature raised per meal reimbursements for sponsors for new meals provided to clients previously on the waiting list, additional increases may be needed and warranted.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research and key informant interviews, the SSG developed recommendations under three broad categories of Policy, Operations, and Funding.

### POLICY

- Establish the Governor's Council on Food Security as a permanent advisory committee, board, or commission.
- Maximize food access by encouraging utilization of all available food programs for which older Nevadans and their dependents are eligible.
- Provide the Gap Analysis to the Governor's Council on Food Security and the Governor's Commission on Aging for review, adoption, and implementation as appropriate.
- Support person-centered planning and service delivery through a "no wrong door" approach for all providers of nutrition services and create a continuum of nutrition services.
- Collaborate with transportation services to promote access to food.
- The Governor's Council on Food Security should regularly review food and nutrition state plan proposals to make recommendations related to senior nutrition.

- Provide the Aging and Disability Services Division's (ADSD) Meal Cost Study (Fall 2018) to the Governor's Council on Food Security and the Governor's Commission on Aging to develop recommendations based on the study's results.
- Request the Governor's Council on Food Security and the Governor's Commission on Aging support advocacy efforts to oppose changes to SNAP that increase stigma and eliminate entitlement.

## OPERATIONS

- Implement strategies to encourage and reduce barriers to SNAP participation among eligible older adults.
  - Lengthen certification period to promote participation
  - Work with the Division of Welfare and Social Services (DWSS), Senior Farmers' Market Coupon Program, EBT access at Farmers' Markets, and ADSD to implement new practices
  - Promote a SNAP enrollment drive among older Nevadans
- Support innovative approaches for home delivered groceries and meals through:
  - Reimbursable services (Medicaid and Medicare)
  - Food insecurity grant funds/success contracts through DHHS
  - SNAP redemptions via online grocery ordering
  - SNAP redemptions to support senior nutrition non-profit sponsors
  - Increase the number of programs and amount of funding for offering home-delivered groceries for self-prepared meals
  - Connect food delivery to social engagement
- Utilize banquet meals rescue for non-reimbursable meals for congregate settings.
- Support partnerships and capacity building to create greater efficiencies in programs that would allow for a greater number of older Nevadans to be served.
- Expand diversity of foods available through food banks and commodity foods to address client needs for animal protein and dairy as part of a balanced diet.

## FUNDING

- Support all efforts to secure Medicaid and Medicare funding for the reimbursement of nutrition related services.
- Request the Governor's Council on Food Security and the Governor's Commission on Aging support advocacy efforts to increase meal reimbursement rates based on the findings of the ADSD Rates Study to create parity between children and senior meal programs.
- Request the Governor's Council on Food Security and the Governor's Commission on Aging support advocacy efforts to Congress to increase funding for senior meal programs through the Older Americans Act and provide states greater flexibility in administration rules to meet local needs.