

Covid-19 Triage Guidelines for Food and Meal Needs, Older Adults

The **Senior Nutrition Program (SNP)** provides meals to older adults, their spouses and to persons with disabilities who reside with older adults. The COVID-19 crisis is increasing requests for food because of the guidance to shelter at home, increased risk for seniors to go shopping, and loss of income or other supports. **This document is intended to help SNPs triage requests for services.**

First

Identify whether the person has sufficient food in the house using the question:

Is there enough food in your home for you to eat three meals today?

In situations where emergency delivery of food or meals is identified, act quickly to make arrangements or referrals to address that need.

Next

Regardless of whether the need is an emergency, further assessment should answer if assistance is needed with obtaining food, obtaining meals, and/or other services and supports to address food security.



Screening Questionnaire and Point Calculator provided on reverse.

The Researchers Behind this Tool

The research design and the assessment model was developed by **Nadine Sahyoun**, professor of nutrition epidemiology, and **Anna Vaudin**, graduate student in the college's Department of Nutrition and Food Science. Their work focuses on assessing the nutritional status of the older adult population and studying the relationship between nutrition risk factors and health outcomes.

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Some older adults need assistance obtaining FOOD.

They can prepare healthy meals but can't afford or access groceries (Priority levels B-D).

Other services and supports may be needed and include:

- Family, friends or volunteers who may be able to assist
- Food distribution programs including food pantries, faith based and non-profit organizations, USDA food box programs, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and others
- Assistance learning how to order food online, via apps or by phone
- Grocery delivery, Shopping assistance
- Financial or benefits assistance (SNAP, Housing, Medicaid, Medicare, other)
- Transportation access
- Nutrition education and counseling (managing a special diet, meal planning, other)

Some older adults need assistance obtaining MEALS.

They are not able to, and don't have anyone to help with, preparing healthy meals even if groceries were provided (Priority level A). The SNP is an appropriate resource for these individuals, since this program provides shelf-stable, fresh or frozen meals that require little or no preparation. *SNP often does not provide three meals per day.*

Other services and supports may be needed to provide meals and include:

- Health plans may provide meals, especially after hospital discharge, or for those with chronic conditions
- Assistance learning how to order meals online, via apps or by phone from restaurants or online meal providers
- Family, friends or volunteers who may be able to assist
- Community-based long term services and supports, ex. homemaker assistance
- Community resources including faith based and non-profit organizations
- Transportation access
- Nutrition education and counseling (managing a special diet, meal planning, other)
- Financial or benefits assistance (SNAP, Housing, Medicaid, transportation, other)

Step-By-Step Guidelines:

1. Identify the resources for food and meals in your service area. Suggestion: contact referral partners monthly to ensure resource lists are up-to-date.
2. Administer the Home-Delivered Meals Prioritization Tool and use the responses to assess the specific needs of the individual.
3. Based on client responses, direct the person to the appropriate resource. For example, if the person can prepare healthy meals but needs assistance getting groceries into the home, GROCERY shopping services or FOOD delivery should be considered as the most appropriate referral.
4. SNPs are encouraged to provide people who score in Priority levels A through C MEALS if supplies are sufficient.

Expanded Food Security Screener

Home-Delivered Meals Prioritization Tool (Covid Emergency)

Client Name _____

The following questions ask about your ability to get food and prepare meals. You are eligible for the service regardless of your income.

Proceed to Question 1a

1 a If you had groceries available, would you be able to use them to prepare hot meals?

YES

Proceed to Question 2

NO

Proceed to Question 1b

b Do you have reliable help with meal preparation?

YES

Proceed to Question 2

NO > STOP

Applicant is a Level A Priority

2 During the last two weeks...

a ...how often was this statement true? The food that we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more.

Often (1 point)

Sometimes (1 point)

Never (0 point)

b ...how often was this statement true? We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.

Often (1 point)

Sometimes (1 point)

Never (0 point)

c ...did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

YES (1 point)

NO (0 point)

d ...did you or other adults in your household ever skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

YES (1 point)

NO (0 point)

e ...did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?

YES (1 point)

NO (0 point)

f ...were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?

YES (1 point)

NO (0 point)

Add the points from questions 2a - f and enter it here:

3 Are you able to get groceries into your home when you need them?

YES - Select the point range below:

0 - 1 Points **Level E** Priority

2 - 6 Points **Level C** Priority

NO - Select the point range below:

0 - 1 Points **Level D** Priority

2 - 6 Points **Level B** Priority

See page one for recommended service(s) based on Priority Levels.

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