



Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

Quick Tips: Older Americans Act (OAA) Basics

Quick Tips are informal documents about the OAA Title III-C Senior Nutrition Program (SNP). These sheets highlight flexibilities of the federal OAA statute and address common misunderstandings about the OAA. Below each point are links to reference materials and inspiration from successful program projects.¹

See [Nutrition Services of the Older Americans Act](#) for an overview of congregate and home-delivered nutrition, including eligibility and targeting requirements.



OAA Title III-C services are more than a meal. Along with providing healthy meals, these services promote better health and well-being through socialization with peers, nutrition education activities, and health promotion classes.

[Health Promotion](#) – ACL information on evidence-based programs.

[Health, Well-Being, and Social Connections in a Remote Environment](#) – Strategies to promote socialization of older adults.



Word-of-mouth and personal stories can be powerful marketing tools. More than 95% of seniors say they would recommend the OAA SNP to a friend, 94% report liking the meals they receive, and more than 75% report that the program improves their health.

[Congregate Meal Programs: A Value Proposition](#) – Infographic from ACL.

[Community Meal Program Invitation](#) – Customizable sample invitation from ACL.



Federal OAA regulations require services be made available to adults 60 and older who are in greatest social and economic need and the following persons:

- People who provide volunteer services during meal hours.
- People with disabilities who live in housing facilities where mainly older adults live and that also provide congregate nutrition services.
- People with disabilities who live with eligible older adults.
- Spouses (of any age) of people age 60 and older.

Services are not intended to reach every individual in the community, but should be targeted to:

- Low-income older adults.
- Minority older individuals.
- Older adults in rural communities.
- Older individuals with limited English proficiency.
- Older adults at risk of institutional care.

State units on aging (SUAs), area agencies on aging (AAAs), and local service providers may determine further eligibility and targeting based on the needs in a community.

[Service Equity in OAA Nutrition Programs](#) – Approaches and opportunities to serve diverse populations.



Program services should be based on the needs of the community. Identify older adults at the greatest social and economic need in your community.

Those at greatest risk may vary by region and could be a specific age group or an identified disparity within the community's eligible population.

[Senior Nutrition Program Quick Guide to Prioritizing Participants](#) – Considerations and next steps for prioritization.

[Quick Guide to Title III and Title VI Nutrition Partnership](#) – Guidance on ways to collaborate to meet the goals of the OAA.



OAA services cannot be denied based on citizenship or residency status.

Services should be targeted to older adults who are in the greatest social and economic need, with no consideration given to citizenship or residency status.

[COVID-19 Triage Guidelines for Food and Meal Needs](#) – University of Maryland guidelines for handling requests for services.



The OAA provides flexibility to local service providers to design meals that are appealing and culturally appropriate to program participants. Meals served in one community may not be appealing to participants in another community.

[Go and Dine](#) — New York café for takeout meals and vouchers.



“Person-centered” means program participants should have a say in the meals, nutrition education, and social activities being provided. Use comment cards, satisfaction surveys, taste tests, and pilot menus to help guide the program.

[Making Your Meal Program THRIVE \(YouTube\)](#) — University of Arizona Center on Aging project focused on ensuring emotionally safe, supportive, and inclusive environments.

Local providers may develop private pay and cost-sharing programs that are not



OAA-funded. Cost sharing is not permitted for OAA-funded congregate or home-delivered meal services.

[Establishing a Fee-for-Service Private Pay System](#) — Senior Nutrition Program guide.

Additional Quick Tip Sheets

- [Congregate Meals](#)
- [Home-delivered Meals](#)
- [Funding Options](#)
- [NSIP](#)
- [Nutrition Service Reporting](#)
- [SNP Nutrition Guidelines](#)

Find more resources at the [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#).

ⁱ In many areas the OAA gives SUAs the authority to add other requirements beyond those that are included in the OAA. So certain practices, which might be allowable under the OAA and perhaps included in this document, might be handled differently in some states or local areas. These documents only reflect information about the OAA nutrition program from a federal perspective; state and local variances are NOT covered.