



Seniors Face a “Perfect Storm” of Hunger \$15.2 Million Needed to Sustain Services

- **1,382,782 meals for 18,686 seniors and individuals with disabilities will be unfunded in SFY 2025.** Area Agency on Aging (AAA) nutrition programs provide hot meals at community sites, senior center food pantries, mobile food pantries, meals on wheels, and other nutrition services. We face the loss of 39% of nutrition funding.
- **Meals combat loneliness.** Some clients say their hot meal is the only time they socialize during the week. Loneliness and isolation have far-reaching impacts, with health consequences as bad as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. AAA programs fund group meals which foster community connections and mutual care, as well as home-delivered meals which ensure people who are not able to leave the house have some human contact. If clients are having trouble, meal providers may be able to connect people to essential social services to avert a crisis.
- **Meals prevent hospitalization and delay residential care.** Seniors and people with disabilities are at particular risk of frailty and falls if they do not have adequate nutrition including high-protein foods. Seniors who are food insecure are 65% more likely to be diabetic. They are also more likely to suffer from conditions such as congestive heart failure, high blood pressure, asthma, obesity, and gum disease. Hospitalization can lead to a frail person losing so much muscle that they become too weak to return home and need to find a scarce placement in an adult family home or other residential care setting.
- **Meals sustain community safety nets.** AAA meal programs fund dozens of community-based organizations which have expanded to serve hot meals to 30% more seniors and people with disabilities in recent years. Senior centers serve as hubs for volunteers delivering meals as well as other services such as haircuts and foot care. AAA nutrition funding leverages volunteer hours and complimentary services to enhance clients’ independence and dignity.

Nutrition Services: Individual and Community Impact

Home Delivered Meals

Seattle: It is so nice to see a smiling face when my meals are delivered. Sometimes I can feel so alone and apart from the world in my home. The program is so valuable to me.

Vancouver: Mary was a nurse for 40 years. She understands the importance of good nutrition. But over the past year, it became harder for Mary to afford nutritious, high-quality food. "Inflation caused a great change in my life," she said. After six months of eating mostly Cheerios and tuna fish, a friend helped Mary sign up for meal delivery through Meals on Wheels People – and Mary said it saved her life: "I'm alive because of what you guys do. I probably was going to starve to death. Now, I've got actual real food to eat every day."

Group Meals

Richland: We got a call from a daughter who was really concerned about her mom. After her dad died a year ago, her mom was struggling with depression and was "wasting away." We sent meals on wheels out, and at first, she would barely open the door to take the meal. Over time, she got to know the volunteers and built friendships. Today, she volunteers to deliver meals and runs a widow's support group at the meal site with her friends.

Port Angeles: I'm homeless and live in a shelter. I come to the senior center for normalcy. The meals here put protein into me. I know I'm having a good meal.

Pasco: We have a meal site that serves cultural meals twice a week. One Hispanic gentleman who participates took me aside, he was so excited. He had just come from the doctor who said, "Whatever you are doing, keep doing it." He comes to the meal site with his friends, and thanks to the meals he is eating vegetables. They joined an exercise club together, and for the first time in ten years his diabetes is under control. He now brings friends to the meal site to "get healed."

Colton: We started by setting up a few tables, and people spread out to eat. They eventually congregated to one table or another with friends, as the group grew. Last week, the seniors at the site decided this is how they wanted their tables set up... like one big family!