

Feeding Grandma 2021



A 2021 Legislative Document
Provided by North Dakota
Senior Service Providers (NDSSP)
www.ndseniorservices.org

We Feed Seniors So They Can Remain Healthy and Independent

North Dakota Senior Service Providers (NDSSP) is a group of agencies that provides services to older adults across the entire state of North Dakota. Older Americans Act Title III Nutrition Programs are some of the services we provide. Funding for this program flows to the state from the federal Administration for Community Living and consists of two primary components:

- **Congregate Nutrition Services** - providing nutritious meals for seniors in a social, group setting
- **Home Delivered Nutrition Services** - providing meals for homebound seniors, also known as Home Delivered Meals and Meals on Wheels

This document provides the highlights and updated usage and cost information for Federal Fiscal Year 2019. Research citations for this “Feeding Grandma 2021” document can be found in the “2015 Feeding Grandpa” document available at www.ndseniorservices.org.

Congregate & Home Delivered Meals Are Cost Effective

Many of the chronic health conditions that result in frailty and disability, loss of independence, and reduced quality of life in older adults are preventable through low-cost lifestyle interventions, incorporating proper nutrition and physical activity. Clearly these meals save valuable health and long-term care dollars.



Source: Meals on Wheels America, 2019.

Congregate & Home Delivered Meals Promote Good Health

Nutritional status is closely associated with an older person's ability to function and remain independent. Hospitalized older adults suffer from many adverse effects when malnourished. Nutritious meals, tailored to older adults, reduce the risk of chronic diseases and related disabilities, prevent nutritional deficiency, and improve health over the long term.

Congregate & Home Delivered Meals

Save the State Medicaid Money

These older adults who participate in our nutrition programs have many of the characteristics that make them nursing home-eligible. In federal fiscal year 2019, 172 of the 4,801 home-delivered meal clients scored with 3+ ADL (Activities of Daily Living) limitations AND were Medicaid eligible. This is a conservative estimate of the nursing home-eligible clients receiving home delivered meals. According to the 2019 Genworth Financial cost of care survey, the average annual cost in a North Dakota nursing home is \$132,324. **This means the Medicaid cost to the state for nursing home care for these 172 people would have been over \$22.76 million in 2019 alone.**

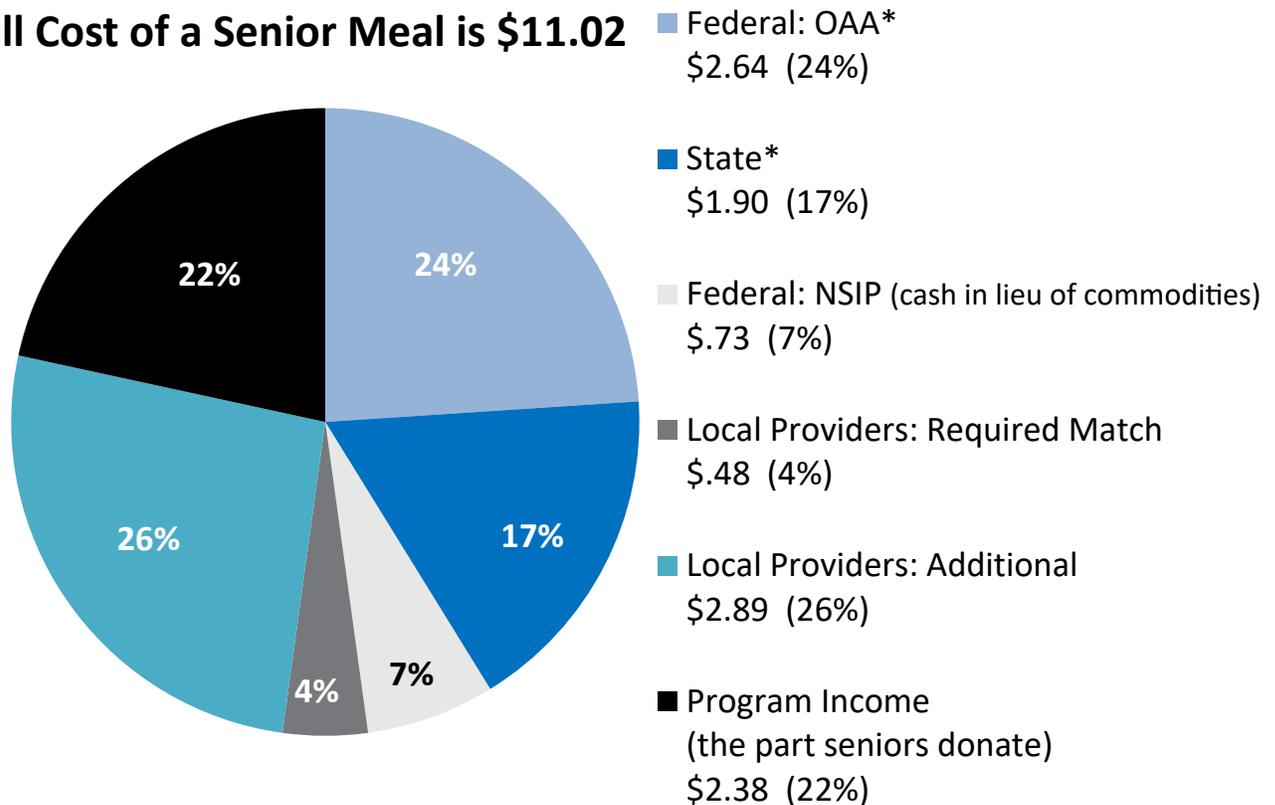
Congregate & Home Delivered Meals

Funding is Lagging Behind

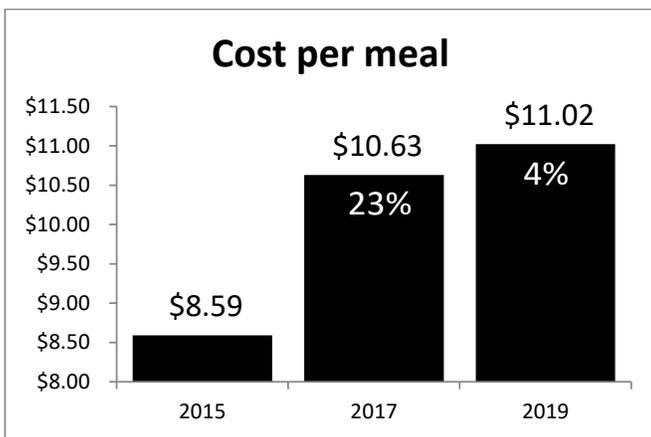
Ever-increasing Costs and the Long-term Aging of the Population

In federal fiscal year 2019, the average full cost to provide a senior meal was \$11.02. Below is a chart identifying where the money came from in FFY 2019 for these senior meals.

Full Cost of a Senior Meal is \$11.02



***IMPORTANT NOTE:** The Federal OAA and State monies are the funds that reimburse agencies the unit rate for the meal. **These two categories sum to only \$4.54 a meal and not the unit rate of \$4.60 per meal because there was not enough funding for all of the meals to be reimbursed at the unit rate in 2019. If 100% of the meals were reimbursed at the unit rate, these two figures would add up to \$4.60.**



The average cost of a senior meal continues to increase. While the state has provided additional funding in past sessions, it has not been enough to keep up with inflation. In federal fiscal year 2019, a total of 1,087,541 meals (546,066 congregate and 541,475 home-delivered meals) were provided across the state.

COVID-19 Response

Mid-March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down ALL congregate meal sites in North Dakota, per ND Aging Services mandate. Providers were deemed “essential” and stepped up to provide grab-n-go meals, take-out meals, and drive-thru meals, as well as adding many people to the Home Delivered Meals programs. Meals during the COVID-19 pandemic have increased over 40% over pre-pandemic times in some areas. While federal COVID-19 stimulus funds were allocated to help pay for these meals, the funding did not cover the full cost of the meal and will be spent out by 12/31/2020. Until there is an effective vaccine and all have been vaccinated, many of the state’s older adults will continue to utilize these safe methods of getting food. **The average cost of a senior meal continues to increase. 2020 has seen food shortages, increased costs for both food and supplies, and the need for Personal Protective Equipment for staff and meal volunteers. All of these things have caused a spike in meal costs across the state; however these costs are not reflected in the graphs, which only show data through June 30, 2019.**

The basic unit rate of \$4.60/meal has not changed since 2015. We are asking to be included with other Department of Human Services programs, which receive annual cost of living increases. Additionally, agencies are only allocated federal and state funding for a portion of the meals they provide. NDSSP is asking to be treated the same as other Department of Human Services providers. **We request that we be paid a basic unit rate, with annual cost of living increases, for ALL of the Title III meals provided across the state - not just a portion of them.**

Meal providers need to be able to depend on stable, basic rate funding for food, supply, and staffing costs. We try to utilize volunteers as best as we can for our meal programs, but we still have staffing costs. As our senior population continues to grow, we need to work collaboratively in a proactive way so essential services, such as senior meals, will not suffer as the state budget fluctuates. **These meals help seniors remain in their homes and out of costly nursing homes.**

Take action to save Medicaid dollars and support an increased basic unit rate for ALL Title III senior meals. Thank you!