

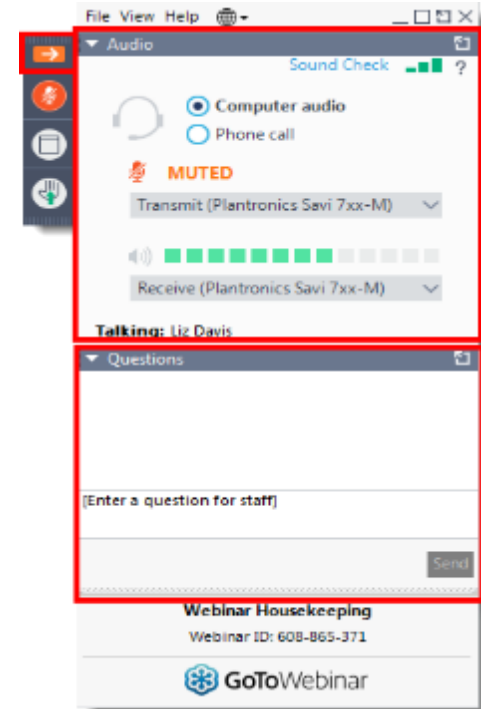
Social Engagement and Nutrition: Innovations for Today and the Future

March 23, 2021



Webinar Instructions

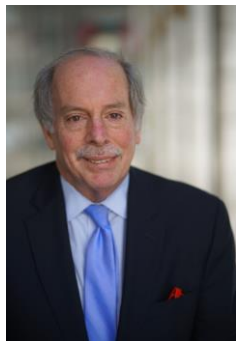
- **Audio options**
 - Use your computer speakers or dial in to the conference call
- **“Questions” box**
 - Q&A session will be at the **end** of the presentation, but feel free to submit your questions at any time during the presentation. Click on the dropdown arrow icon “▼” to pop out the questions box where you can type and submit your questions.
- **Webinar recording will be available**



engAGED

- National effort to increase social engagement among older adults, people with disabilities and their caregivers
- Administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
- 17 Project Advisory Committee members:
www.engagingolderadults.org/partnerships
- Funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging, which is part of the Administration for Community Living

Presenters



Robert Blancato

Executive Director, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)



Meredith Whitmire

Policy and Advocacy Director, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)



L. Carter Florence, DrPH

Senior Director, Strategy and Impact, Meals on Wheels America



Mary Beals-Luedtka

Director, Northern Arizona Council of Governments, Area Agency on Aging

Congregate Nutrition Programs and Social Engagement

Bob Blancato

Meredith Whitmire

NANASP

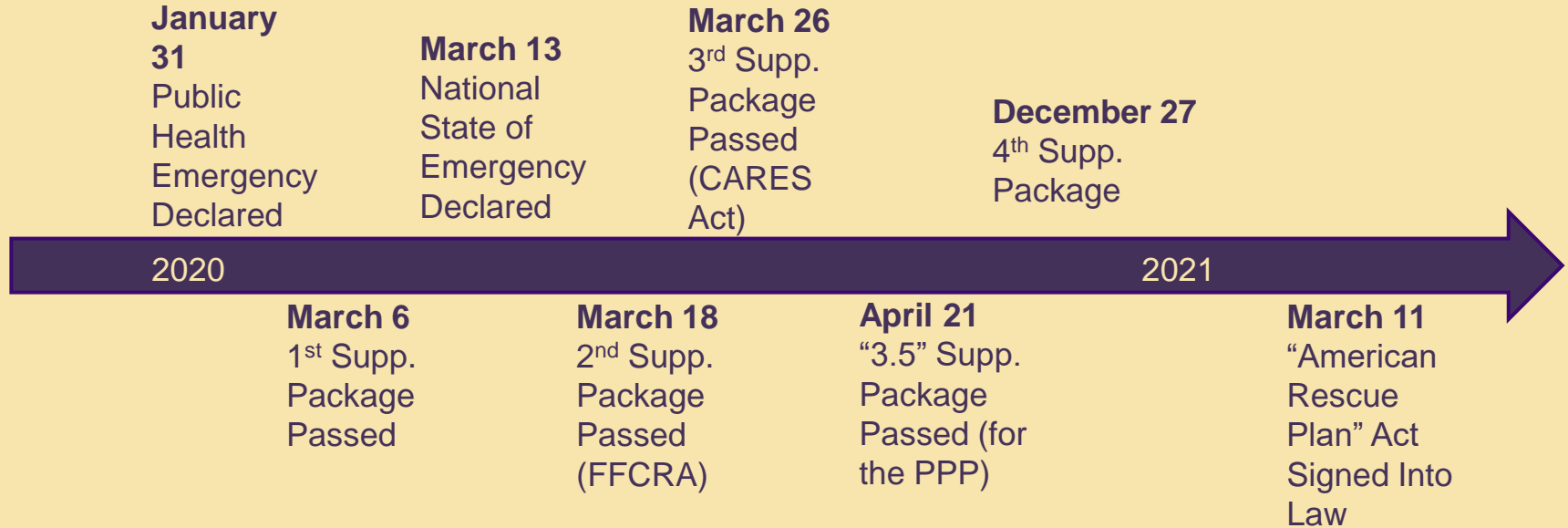
Introduction

- Before the pandemic, more than 1.5 million older adults received congregate meals and 850,000 received home-delivered meals
- The pandemic caused the biggest transformation in the congregate program's 49-year history
- Data not fully available yet, but the congregate program for most of the past year has been almost entirely a home-delivered meal program
 - Resulting in higher costs for food, transportation, technology, staff

Value of the OAA Nutrition Program

- Due to the visibility and value of the OAA nutrition program, it was identified early on as one that needed immediate relief
- \$250 million in emergency funds in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act in mid-March 2020
- And one year later, through four different bills, a total of over \$1.6 billion has been provided
- Next slide shows the timetable of actions taken

Washington's Pandemic Response So Far



Emergency Nutrition Funding (and Flexibility)

- In this case it was more than just about the money
- Flexibility has accompanied funding which has resulted in better overall use of the funds
 - Waiver of DRI requirements
 - Ability to transfer funding
 - Definition of “homebound”

Highlights of the American Rescue Plan

- Contains \$1.434 billion for Older Americans Act programs, including:
 - \$750 million for Title III-C nutrition
 - \$460 million for Title III-B supportive services, including vaccine-related services and social isolation
 - \$25 million for Title VI A/C (nutrition, supportive services, caregiver services)

COVID-19 Impact: Social Isolation

- One of the harsh realities of the conversion of the OAA nutrition program was a new group of older adults becoming homebound and isolated from their main source of socialization
- Also isolated from family, other friends

Social Isolation and Older Adults

- What are the solutions we can look to?
- Social isolation should be officially designated a public health emergency
 - The Stein Institute for Research at UCSD notes social isolation increases the odds of mortality by 30%
 - The related consequence of loneliness causes more than 162,000 deaths a year
 - We could then better coordinate existing resources and secure new ones
- We must also ensure further solutions are cognizant of needs related to equity in programs and services

Social Isolation (cont.)

- OAA nutrition program is key
- We all know this program was more than just about a meal
- It was about socialization and comradery
- We did a three-year study by NANASP on this funded by RRF and spoke to 300+ older adults in person
- Main finding: almost everyone's main reason for attending congregate programs was for **socialization**
- One of the many reasons for the **restoration** of the **congregate program** when it is fully safe to do so

Program Example: Integrating Services

- FeedMore WNY
 - Food bank and senior nutrition agency serving four counties in the Buffalo, New York area
 - Many of the older adults served needed multiple nutrition services even prior to the pandemic—congregate nutrition, home-delivered meals, SNAP, and food bank items
 - Many older adults in the region were part of “grandfamilies” who also received services funded by WIC through her agency for their grandchildren
 - The agencies’ merger and variety of services has provided a “360-degree view of community need”

Program Example: Pivoting to Tech

- Wood County Committee on Aging
 - Rural, non-profit agency in Ohio
 - Prior to the pandemic, the nutrition program served 6,500 annually, about 20 percent of the county's older adult population
 - All volunteers 70 years of age and older were placed on hiatus because they were high-risk for catching the virus
 - Pivoted to online programming/virtual congregate meals – and book clubs, fitness classes, and more!

Program Example: Moving It Outside

- Going low-tech is also an option!
- Torrington, CT's program has outdoor activities and celebrations to accompany their grab and go congregate meals
 - Themed meals, gardening, and outdoor exercise
- Also, NANASP provided a grant to the North Attleboro Council on Aging in MA to purchase a large tent for holding their own outdoor activities; expected to be ready to go by the end of the month

Pandemic Barriers and Challenges

- Digital divide
- Equity concerns
- Funding for these new services
- Also, some things can't be done online! Vaccines, certain screenings, etc.

Where Are Congregate Programs Going?

- Reopening is obviously the first challenge
 - Attracting old and new participants
 - New norms around social distancing, PPE?
 - Funding for marketing, renovating, etc.
- Will some of the flexibilities remain?
 - Relaxed DRIs, transfer authority?
 - What about grab and go vs. traditional congregate meals?

What's Old Is New

- Many of the same problems from before will be relevant again
 - Funding and program planning issues
 - Demographic shifts
 - Program perception issues
- Had worked pre-pandemic on a project to address these issues, the “Future of Congregate Programs” study
- Many of the suggested shifts have either happened or come into focus as needing to happen

Concepts from the Study

- Individual programs could consider ideas like:
 - Creating consumer focus groups
 - Engaging staff at all levels for new ideas and concepts
 - Converting competitors into partners
 - Learning and using new technology
 - Sharing ongoing innovative work

Congregate Programs and Social Connection

- The only way to ultimately sustain the congregate program is through providing means of social connection – they go hand in hand
- Need in-person congregate services ASAP for a lot of people
- But also need hybrid options, such as HDM participants “zooming” into congregate sites for lunch and activities
- Hybrid could also include being on site several days a week and having a virtual meal the other days

Conclusions

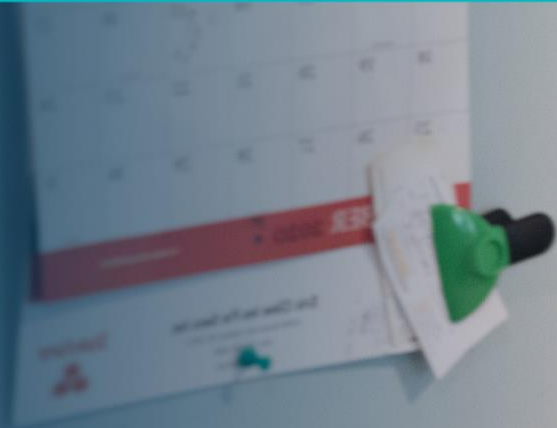
- We will have to do more than talk about the new normal
- Need to think in terms of the big reset for the nutrition program
- We need to:
 - Capture innovations that are scalable
 - Make new efforts to improve food quality along with access and affordability—food is health
 - Conduct robust outreach to reach those who we know belong in our programs but have not been reached
 - Collect data to determine the extent of older adult malnutrition
- We know our programs are up to this challenge!

Find Us Online...

- mwhitmire@nanasp.org – Meredith's email
- <http://nanasp.org> – our main site
- <http://nanasp.org/RetirementResearchFoundationGrant> - socialization study
- <http://nanasp.org/FutureOfCongregate> - congregate meals project

MEALS ON WHEELS AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

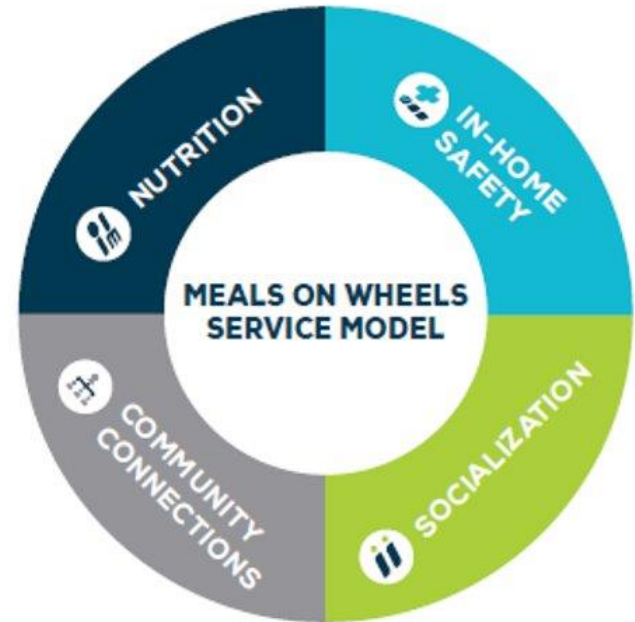
L. CARTER FLORENCE



SOCIALIZATION IS CORE TO OUR MODEL

MORE THAN A MEAL® MODEL

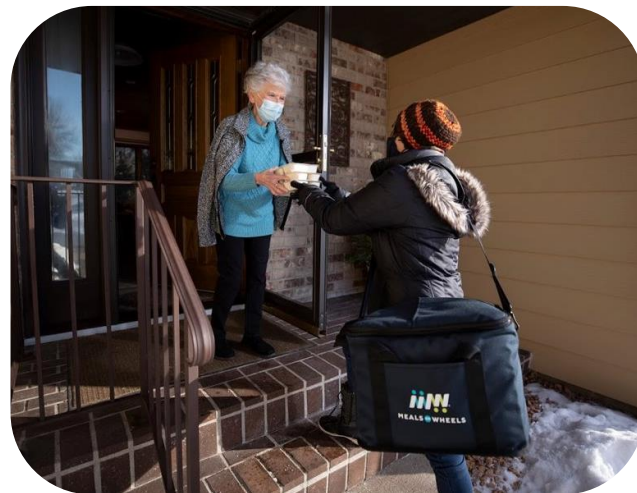
- Basic model – brief interaction at point of delivery
- Enhanced service model includes, but not limited to:
 - Friendly Visiting services – in-person or telephonic
 - Pet companionship supports
 - Creative Aging



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

PIVOTING TO SAFELY DELIVERY

- COVID-19 protocols to deliver meal and brief interaction
- Up-tick in telephonic wellness calls
- Moved traditionally in-person programming to virtual and/or telephonic delivery
- Messages of love – letters of encouragement
- At-home engagement kits – activity books to art classes



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

COVID-19 RESPONSE FUND

- At the end of 2020, about a quarter of programs used funds to increase connections with clients

490,382+

CHECK-IN CALLS MADE TO
HOMEBOUND CLIENTS

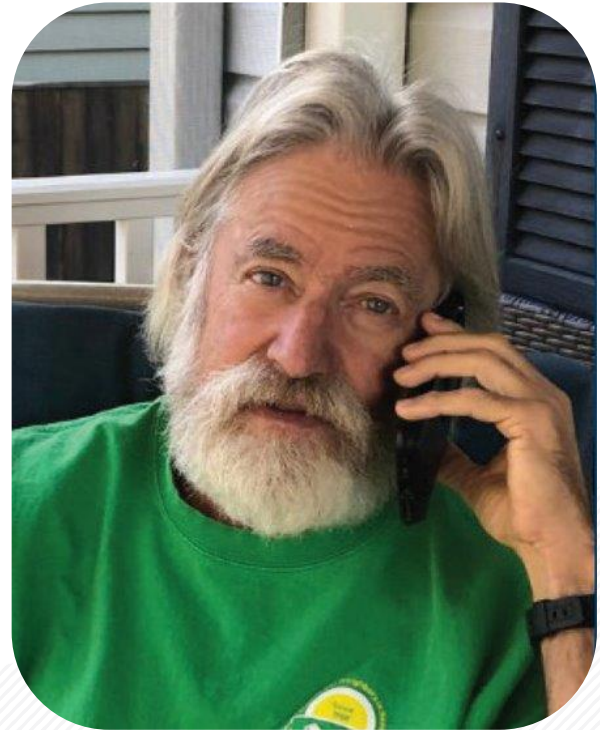
11,675

CARDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT
SHARED WITH HOMEBOUND
SENIORS

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

2 FIELD EXAMPLES

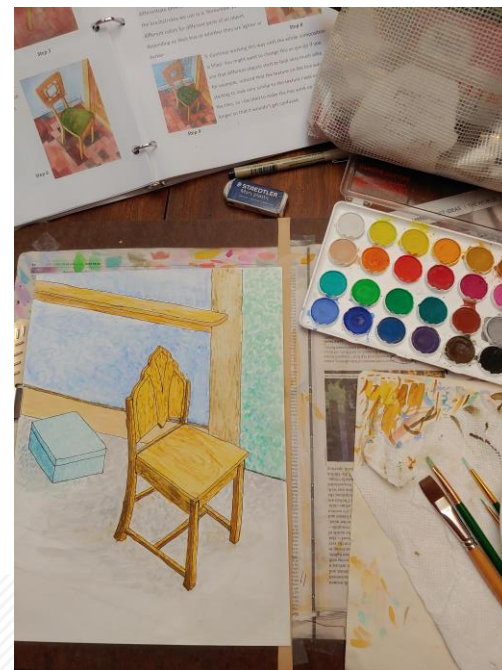
- Sunshine Calls
 - Partnership between Meals on Wheels Central Texas and Dell Medical School – The University of Texas at Austin
 - Empathy-focused 4-week calling program targeting at-risk older adults
 - <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2776786>



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

2 FIELD EXAMPLES

- Creative Care Kits
 - Central Vermont Council on Aging
 - Painting kits sent to homebound clients with instructions and supplies, culminating in a Virtual Art Show



FUTURE FORWARD

WHAT WILL CONTINUE OR RETURN POST-PANDEMIC?

- Reopening of congregate dining
- Opening back-up to in-person socialization programming
- Double-down on types of engagements offered – virtual, in-person, and other social supports



FUTURE FORWARD

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

MAKE GOOD GO FURTHER™

SUPPORT COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS

We'll provide targeted emergency grants and technical assistance to local programs to enable them to meet the nutrition, socialization and safety needs of the seniors they serve.

BUILD CAPACITY

We'll invest in infrastructure, training and technology to ensure Meals on Wheels America and our network stay strong and are prepared to address seniors' evolving needs and meet growing demand.

DRIVE INNOVATION

We'll conduct research and foster partnerships to identify new socialization, nutrition and safety interventions; pilot promising practices; evaluate outcomes; and, scale solutions that make the greatest impact.

THANK YOU!



L. Carter Florence

Senior Director, Strategy & Impact

Carter.Florence@mealsonwheelsamerica.org





TOGETHER, WE CAN DELIVER.®

STAYING CONNECTED



Mary Beals-Luedtka, Director
Northern Arizona Council of Governments
Area Agency on Aging



Re-Imagine Connecting

- No more Daily Wellness Checks - - - - Replaced with Reassurance Calls
 - Utilized staff from every NACOG Department that had time as well as our 2 Reassurance Staff that already call clients when Care Coordinators need them to.
 - Utilized Excel Spread Sheets for Each Volunteer or Staff person
 - Client Name, Phone #, Resident City, Care Coordinator and Phone #, AAA Staff Person in charge of this project and phone # , place for notes
 - Spread Sheets turned in to AAA every Friday to AAA Staff Person electronically
 - Each staff or volunteer is given a list of resources to have on hand and the toll free number for Area Agency on Aging



Who

- We called all of our Regular Case Managed Clients receiving meals
- We called all of the non-registered clients receiving emergency meals
- This continued until July of 2020 when emergency meals money was running out



iPad Project

- **Combatting Social Isolation – iPad Pilot Project**

- iPads to 11 Socially Isolated/Homebound Clients
- Created User Guide for training on basic use
- iPad Congregate Meal Program – Shared Meals with others in the project/at congregate meal sites
- Teach how to use email, FaceTime, iMessage, etc. – increased connectivity to family/friends
- Schedule and Deliver Virtual Activities for the pilot group to participate in
- Created Pre & Post Survey with Northern Arizona University to measure impacts of program
- Virtual Pet Project – Joy For All Pets – Critter Tales tie in



How Do You Expand?

- Partner with Local Volunteer Organization: People Who Care
- Develop an information sharing agreement that funnels clients with needs to both partner organizations. Creating win-win scenarios for fulfilling both Organization's goals/mission/vision.
- Utilize volunteers and/or AmeriCorps: Teach classes on using technology (Computers, iPads, and Smart Phones).
- Obtain access to provider for low cost hot spots: we are funding clients for 12 months and hope to extend that.



Activities and Socialization

- Virtual Health and Wellness Fairs – Presentations on Programs and Services, Nutrition, Activities, and Educational Entertainment utilizing AAA Staff and other community resources.
- Peace for the Holidays & Mindful Meditation Classes (Virtual/Telephonic) – to decrease stress and anxiety associated with the Holidays, the Pandemic, Social Isolation, and Past Trauma.
- Critter Tales (Virtual/Telephonic) – Socialization, story telling and grief sharing that takes place in guided conversation after a short informational presentation on various programs and services offered within the community (some pet related, some not).
- Swing in your seat – Seated Chair based swing dancing to increase activities and socialization for the mobility impaired. Currently delivered in outdoor settings only with precautions.
- Old Salts and Sages (Virtual/Telephonic) – Wisdom sharing and socialization that takes place in guided conversation.



For the Future

- Virtual and Telephonic Evidenced Based Health and Wellness Programs
 - Active Choices – Telephonic based wellness and exercise program
 - MOB-V – Virtual Matter of Balance workshops
- Bingocize Evidenced Based Health and Wellness Program
 - Can be delivered remotely or via in-person workshop settings (when safe to do so)
 - Program that mixes Health Education, Exercise, and Bingo



Northern Arizona Council of Governments
Area Agency on Aging

Mary Beals - Luedtka

- www.nacog.org/aging
- mluedtka@nacog.org
- Land line 928 213 5226
- Cell phone 928 458 3277
- FaceBook Area Agency on Aging NACOG

Share Your Innovations

- Please share your social engagement innovations with engAGED!
- All programs submitted will be considered for inclusion in a database of social engagement innovations

www.engagingolderadults.org/clearinghouse

Connect With Us!

- www.engagingolderadults.org
- Facebook: @engAGEDCenter
- Twitter: @engAGEDCenter
- info@engagingolderadults.org

Commit to Connect

- ACL campaign working to combat social isolation through:
 - Network of champions
 - Connection to resources
 - Establishment of partnerships
 - Sharing of successful initiatives



COMMIT TO
Connect

acl.gov/CommitToConnect

Questions and Discussion

Please use the questions tab in your GoToWebinar module to submit your questions or comments.

Thank You!

- Thank you for attending today's webinar!
- The recording will be available on www.engagingolderadults.org.