

Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization: Commonly Asked Questions from Capitol Hill

Q: What are the OAA nutrition programs?

A: There are three nutrition programs in the Older Americans Act: the congregate dining program, the home-delivered meals program, and the Nutrition Services Incentive Program. The **congregate dining program** provides meals, nutrition education, screening and counseling in congregate settings like senior centers, churches and senior housing facilities. The **home-delivered meals program** provides the same services to older adults that are homebound.

Finally, the **Nutrition Services Incentive Program** is a secondary program to help offset food costs by providing additional funding to states to purchase commodity foods.

Q: The Congressman/Congresswoman is really concerned about duplication of programs. How is this program unique?

A: OAA nutrition programs are uniquely targeted to serve the needs of vulnerable older adults, and studies by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and others have shown that they are effective in achieving their goal of improving the nutritional status of this population. Additionally, OAA nutrition programs differ from other programs in that OAA nutrition programs emphasize the importance of both nutrition and socialization in maintaining the health of older adults.

Q: What is the demand for OAA nutrition programs?

A: While there are no national data available on the waiting lists for meal programs, we know that the growing need for meal services continues to surpass available resources. According to a 2010 GAO survey of local Area Agencies on Aging, 22 percent of agencies reported that they were unable to serve all the clients who requested home-delivered meals, and 5 percent of agencies said they were unable to serve all clients who wished to participate in the congregate meals program. As the U.S. Census predicts that the number of Americans over age 65 will increase from 40 million in 2010 to 72 million in 2030, now is the time to ensure that all older adults who need nutrition assistance are able to obtain it.

Q: How many people in my state/district do these programs serve?

A: PIA staff will have a table showing the number of people served by congregate- and home-delivered meals in each state during the PPW Bootcamp. The information can also be at the following webpage: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Program_Results/SPR/2011/Index.aspx. Unfortunately district-level numbers are not available, but most members of the House still appreciate how many people in their state are being served by OAA nutrition programs.

Q: I understand that the Older Americans Act was due for reauthorization back in 2012. Why is it so urgent that we reauthorize now?

A: While OAA nutrition programs can continue to receive funding through the annual appropriations process, we think it is important to make sure the program is reauthorized every five years as required by law. Congress should recognize the critical role that these programs play in the lives of their constituents, and should work together to make sure that the law can be reauthorized. Now that reauthorization bills have been introduced in the Senate (by Senator Alexander, Tenn.), and as **July 14th, 2015** is the 50th anniversary of the Older Americans Act, we see this as an important window of opportunity to pass this reauthorization.