Beyond the Meal
The Value of Socialization in Older American Act
Congregate Nutrition Programs
FEBRUARY 19, 2019

Presenters
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The Retirement Research Foundation
- Mission: To improve the quality of life for our nation’s older adults.
- RRF is one of the first private foundations devoted exclusively to aging and retirement issues.
- Headquarters in Chicago, IL
- Thank you to our Senior Program Officer Nancy Zwalbele, Ph.D.
Goal: To take the information collected from our last 2 years of studying the value of socialization for older adults who participate in Congregate Nutrition Programs under the Older Americans Act and lead a national grassroots advocacy campaign.

The Older Americans Act (OAA)

- The three purposes of the nutrition programs of OAA as stipulated in the law are to
  - (1) Reduce hunger and food insecurity,
  - (2) Promote socialization of older individuals, and
  - (3) Promote the health and well-being outcomes of older individuals by assisting them to access nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services to delay the onset of adverse health conditions resulting from poor nutritional health or sedentary behavior.

Project Timeline

- Year 3 of Grant Begins (July 15, 2018)
- Denver Site Visit (September 2018)
- Wisconsin Site Visit/ Survey Collection (October 2018)
- Poster Presentation at GSA (November 2018)
- North Carolina Site Visit (December 2018)
- Oregon Site Visit (February 2019)
Bob’s Speaking Engagements

- Arizona Aging Summit
- Florida Council on Aging Conference
- FNCE (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Conference)
- International Council on Active Aging Conference
- Remarkable Integration PETC AAA Conference
- Sefo Conference
- State Society on Aging of NY Conference
- Village to Village Network Conference

Stria Article on our Findings

“Our work is some of the first to examine the socialization opportunity of the program. Other research up to this point has mostly focused on the benefits for the meal itself and nutrition education provided at the site.”

ASA Poster Presentation 2019

- “The Value of Socialization in the Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Program”
- Wednesday, April 17th
- 8:30 – 10:30am
NANASP 2019 Conference

“Advocating Beyond the Meal”

- Friday, May 17th from 11:15am – 12:15pm
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Participant Survey Questions

- What is your gender?
- What is your relationship status?
- What race/ethnicity best describes you?
- What do you like best about socializing during the congregate meal program?
- How do you arrive at the congregate meal site?
- How frequently do you receive meals at the congregate meal site?
- Since participating in the program, has your knowledge of good nutrition increased?
- Since participating in the program, are you exercising more?
- Has your health improved since you started visiting the congregate meal site?
- Do you have more friends now than before you started visiting the site?
- Do you believe enough time is allowed for socialization?

Survey Collection Across 3 Years

- More than 3,000 surveys collected from Congregate Nutrition Program sites
- 95 program provider surveys completed
- 12 states participated
- 25+ programs participated
Wisconsin Survey Collection 2018

- 5 counties, 2 Tribes
- 84% of program participants said they believe their site allows enough time for socialization
- 76% of program participants say they have more friends now than before they started visiting the site

Infographic: Wisconsin Survey Results

Wisconsin Survey Provider Results

- More than 50% were rural locations
- More than 50% the program was part of local government
- Estimated participant age range: 62-80+
- 100% said socialization is very important to participants at their site
Program Activities

In-Person Site Visits Year 3

Executive Director Bob Blancato has conducted the following site visits so far:

- Volunteers of America Colorado Branch
- Wild Rose Community Center, WI
- Duplin County Services for the Aged, NC

Upcoming this week:
- February 21st in Oregon with Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici at Elsie Stuhr Center (Beaverton)
- February 22nd in Washington State

Colorado

- September 2018
  - Part 1: Visit with VOA staff who operate 30 congregate nutrition sites in Denver Metro area
  - Part 2: Visit to the Eagle View Center for Active Adults
    - Met by Alexandra Alonso, community liaison and constituent advocate for Senator Michael Bennett of Colorado
    - 25 older adults, unanimous agreement that socialization was main reason they attended
Wisconsin

- October 2018
- Rural Site
- Of the 20 older adults, all but one, cited socialization as their main reason they attend the program
- Dorothy the Volunteer (12 years)

North Carolina

- December 2018
- Bob as special guest for holiday event
- All but one person (of the six interviewed) said that socialization was their main reason for attending
- Interview with local reporter

Funding: A Look Ahead

- Crystal ball very cloudy
- We know a few things going in
- Trump budget will be late due to shutdown, making everything else too
- 2 year budget agreement ends 9/30, what replaces it?
- Do we go backward (sequestration) or forward (more progressive budgets)?
FY2020 Advocacy

- Work already underway at the national advocacy level to build on recent successes in funding increases for the OAA
  - Including $59 million in FY18 and $10 million in FY19 for IIIc nutrition; $35 million for IIIb supportive services
  - Under the terms of the existing OAA, funding levels should be increased by 3 percent across the board
  - Time will tell
  - Lot of work will have to be done by everyone

OAA Reauthorization

- Scheduled for this year
- Developments as of date:
  - Rep. Bobby Scott is now Chair of Education and Labor; Rep. Suzanne Bonamici is Chair of the Civil Rights and Human Services Subcommittee (with jurisdiction over OAA)
  - Senate pretty much same, except Sen. Enzi is now Chair of the HELP Primary Health and Retirement Security Subcommittee (with jurisdiction over OAA)
  - No indication of Admin plans
  - Could take one of 3 approaches: status quo; principles; full-blown legislative proposal

LCAO and the OAA Reauthorization

- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- Also individual group work
- NANAP has made recommendations
  - Evaluation of per meal reimbursement rates at state and regional levels
  - Simplifying and clarifying process for existing authority to transfer funds between Title III C1 and C2
New Look for the OAA?

- Opportunity for new look for OAA from 2 directions
- Azar’s emphasis on social determinants of health
  - OAA has been in this space from the start
  - Could generate more Admin interest in the OAA
- Medicare Advantage and nutrition
  - An additional funding source for CBOs
  - Also could generate more interest in the OAA from CMS

New NANASP Research Page

RRF Grant Resource Database
- Webinar Recordings
- Infographics
- Articles
- Survey Tool
- Site Visit Photos
- Presentation Slides
Conclusions

- Congregate Nutrition Programs provide more than a meal
- Many older adults are living alone
- Increased funding for programs could increase health and well-being for older adults living in the community
- Connection to the importance of the social determinants of health
- More research and analysis needed

Questions?

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