

Feeding Grandma 2023



A 2023 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. In 2020 and 2021 this also included grab-and-go, take-out, and drive-thru meal pick-up due to the pandemic.

This document provides the highlights and updated usage and cost information for Federal Fiscal Year 2021. Research citations for this “Feeding Grandma 2023” 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, 2021.

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

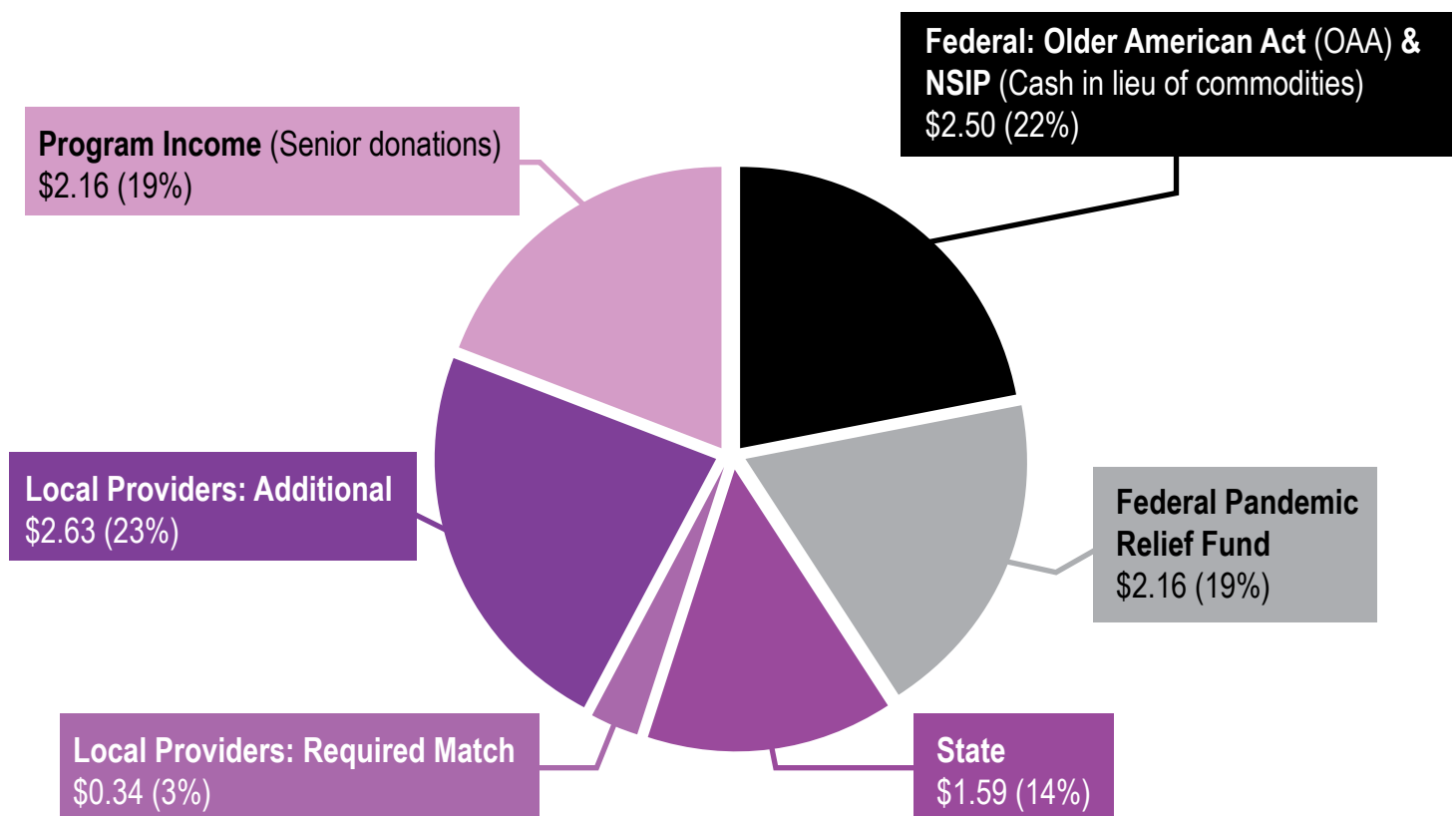
Save the State Medicaid Money

These older adults who participate in our nutrition programs have many of the characteristics that make them nursing home-eligible. In federal fiscal year 2021, 200 of the 14,827 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 2021 Genworth Financial cost of care survey, the average annual cost in a North Dakota nursing home is \$143,741. **This means the Medicaid cost to the state for nursing home care for these 200 people would have been over \$28.75 million in 2021 alone.**

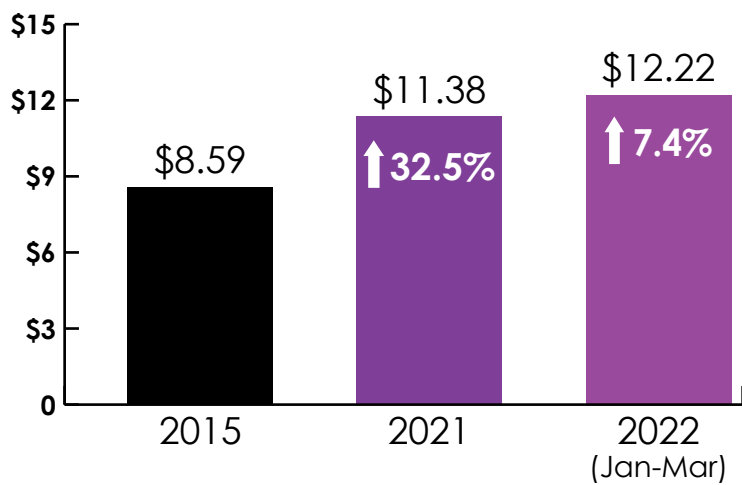
Congregate & Home Delivered Meals Funding is Lagging Behind Ever-increasing Costs and the Long-term Aging of the Population

In federal fiscal year 2021, the average full cost to provide a senior meal was \$11.38. Below is a chart identifying where the money came from in FFY 2021 for these senior meals.

Full Cost of a Senior Meal is \$11.38



IMPORTANT NOTE: The Federal OAA and State monies are the funds that reimburse agencies the unit rate for the meal. In 2021 Federal pandemic money and some State money funded most meals at a \$7/meal unit rate.



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 2021, a total of 1,316,006 meals (152,319 congregate and 1,163,687 home-delivered meals) were provided across the state.**

SOARING COSTS and USAGE

Inflation, supply and worker shortages are causing soaring increases in meal costs. Costs have increased 42% since 2015 and 7% in the first 3 months of 2022 alone. COVID-19 has been especially hard on the senior citizen population. Providers were deemed “essential” and stepped up to provide grab-n-go meals, take-out meals, and drive-thru meal pickup, as well as adding many people to the delivered meal programs. **Meals from FFY19 to FFY21 were up 21%.** Meal usage in the state remains high as agencies see increasing baby boomers utilizing these services and more seniors needing access to affordable and nutritious meals.

During the pandemic most federal and state reimbursement was increased to \$7/meal due to increased costs seen during this period. Costs are soaring and usage remains high. Agencies are only allocated federal and state funding for a portion of the meals they currently provide due to a cap on funding. **NDSSP is asking for the \$7/meal unit rate to be reinstated (versus the current rate of \$4.60/meal) and be paid on ALL congregate and home delivered meals. This is an increase in state funding of \$4.2 million per year. Without this additional funding providers will have no alternative other than to limit the number of meals we serve.**

Meal providers need to be able to depend on stable, basic meal rate funding for food, supply, and staffing costs. We try to utilize volunteers as best we can for our meal programs but many businesses are short staffed and have reduced or ended their volunteer meal deliveries; more people are working longer in life so that pool of young retired seniors is shrinking; high gas prices have caused some agencies to pay mileage; and some programs have had to pay people to deliver meals. All of this has put pressure on meal delivery programs at the same time as high usage by seniors. 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. **These meals help seniors remain in their homes and out of costly nursing homes.**

Take action to save Medicaid dollars and assist us in feeding seniors across the state nutritious and affordable meals by increasing the funding for ALL Title III senior meals. Thank you!