



SENIOR MEALS & SERVICES COALITION

The Senior Meals and Services Coalition represents 95 local trusted nonprofit organizations across the state delivering low cost, critical services that help older adults live in the community and support their family caregivers. **The Minnesota Association of Area Agencies on Aging convenes the coalition.**

ISSUE SUMMARY

Senior Meals

One in two older adults is at risk for malnutrition. In 2023, the Legislature made historic one-time investments in the Senior Nutrition Program. This funding, in combination with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) resources, has helped to temporarily decrease food insecurity that disproportionately affects older Minnesotans from lower-income and rural communities who may live in food deserts, have dementia, are experiencing physical decline, or lack access to transportation.

Due to the spend-out of federal pandemic funding alone, 487,000 fewer meals will be available to older adults in 2025 than in 2024, resulting in a loss of service to 1,900 seniors. The number of meals available in 2026 and beyond will shrink and more and more frail older adults will lose access to nutritious prepared meals. Inadequate nutrition impacts health, erodes quality of life, and contributes to rising health and long-term care costs.

- *Retain the one-time \$11M investment in the Senior Nutrition Program for an ongoing biennial appropriation that helps meet the basic need for food among a growing older adult population at risk of malnutrition. Require the Minnesota Board on Aging to release these funds over two years.*
- *Utilize administrative funding to ensure compliance with laws, regulations and state policies.*

Transportation and Senior Supportive Services

According to AARP, older adults on average stop driving at age 75. This places them at risk of isolation and of not receiving needed health care. Transportation services have historically been in short supply across the state and the need is growing. This also holds true for homemaker and chore services that help older adults live at home and avoid premature and expensive assisted living and nursing home care.

- *Create a Senior Supportive Services Program of the Minnesota Board on Aging in the 256.975 statute. The intent of the program is to fund the ongoing operations of providers to deliver services and not to fund time-limited initiatives.*
- *Appropriate \$4M over the biennium for the Senior Supportive Services Program with 50% of funds dedicated to provide assisted transportation services that support older adults who need help in and out of vehicles and entryways.*
- *Utilize administrative funding to ensure compliance with laws, regulations and state policies.*

Enhanced Adult Protection Services

A collaboration of counties and AAAs began in 2024 with time limited ARPA funds to address immediate challenges to health and safety experienced by vulnerable adults aged 18 and over. The program, WRAPS Resources, provides short-term “wraparound” services not otherwise available to vulnerable adults served by county Adult Protective Services (APS) in the northwest, southeast and metro regions of Minnesota.

This pilot program is demonstrating promising results. For example, the program has prevented housing evictions by paying back rent, assisted clients in making their spenddowns to maintain waived services, and facilitated deep cleaning and essential minor home repairs.

Eligible expenditures include consumable supplies such as food, clothing, medical equipment, cell phones, and personal hygiene and cleaning supplies. Emergency services can include rental and utility assistance, deep cleaning of homes, trash removal, emergency housing, and pest control. Purchased services have included home modifications, transportation for essential needs, yard cleanup, snow removal, wheelchair ramps, life alert monitors, and moving services. Average expenses for clients to date are \$1,250 per person.

- *Fund a study to be administered by the MN Department of Human Services, Aging and Adult Services Division, on the value of this innovative program to the state of Minnesota, participating counties and vulnerable adults. Make recommendations to the Legislature by January 2027 on continuation, quality improvements, if needed, and funding levels necessary for statewide expansion.*