

MARC Aging and Adult Services — Home Delivered Meals Fact Sheet

Background:

MARC's Department of Aging and Adult Services is the Area Agency on Aging for Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri. Combined, these counties have about 150,000 residents age 65 or older.

We contract with vendors to provide home-delivered meals to 2,500 homebound older adults and people with disabilities. We also work with 17 senior centers to provide congregate meals for an average of 630 people each weekday.

We work with dietitians to ensure that the quality, nutritional value and portion size of meals meets clients' needs.

Funding for meals comes from state and federal funding as well as contributions from meal recipients. The amount of funding we receive has remained essentially flat since 2009, while the need for meals has grown significantly.



What has changed:

For years, MARC contracted for daily delivery of hot meals to participating residents. In certain areas, this delivery method had significant limitations:

- Hot meals could only be delivered to people within a reasonable distance from a senior center. People outside those boundaries were ineligible.
- The average cost per meal on routes without volunteer drivers was over \$8. Available funds did not meet the need in our service area, and we maintained waiting lists.
- In some cases, transportation costs more than doubled the cost of each meal.

In 2017, the Commission on Aging and MARC Board of Directors approved a new delivery method that allows us to serve more residents over a broader geography.

- This allows us to serve all five counties, regardless of senior center location and brings us into compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Participants receive a meal pack each week with five complete meals, including frozen entrées, side dishes, bread, milk and juice.
- The average cost per meal is now \$5.62, allowing us to serve more residents. The waiting lists will be eliminated.
- Weekly delivery cuts transportation costs significantly, allowing more meals to go to more people.
- Meal recipients have more choices. In most areas, they can choose from nine meal pack options, including Homestyle Comfort, Classic Cuisine, All American, Country Favorites, Texas Blue Plate, Latin Flavors, Neighborhood Recipes, Rise and Shine (breakfast) and Vegetarian Delight.

Issues and resolution:

Most clients are adapting well to the new system, and those who we couldn't serve before due to location or lack of funds are especially grateful. However, some clients have expressed concerns about the new system. People often have strong preferences about food, and they do not hesitate to contact our office, public officials or the media if they are unhappy. We welcome clients' comments and are committed to addressing any problems quickly and diligently.

We work closely with our vendors to ensure that high-quality, nutritious and tasty meals are available, and regularly update menus.

If centers have volunteer drivers, they can continue to deliver hot meals to existing clients in their service areas. If we have no transportation costs, we can stay within budget. The drivers may have to pick up meals in a different location. We are hoping that the capacity of volunteer networks will greatly increase in the future.

We are confident that the benefits of the new system outweigh the concerns. In October, we will be able to serve all individuals on the current waitlist who are at risk of malnutrition or hospitalization, and who could not be served under the old program.

How to sign up:

The most direct way for clients to be screened for eligibility and service priority is to directly call MARC's Information and Referral line at 816-421-4980 or (toll free) 800-591-7948.

The program is designed for adults 60+, and individuals with disabilities who are 18-59. The other basic qualification is that you are considered "homebound" or have difficulty leaving their homes.

When clients call the above number, they are screened for eligibility and priority, and can also receive information on additional help or resources in the community. If they are eligible and a priority, then an in-home assessment is scheduled and service begins shortly thereafter.

Mid-America Regional Council
600 Broadway, Suite 200
Kansas City, MO 64105
816-474-4240 | www.marc.org

