



**Marin County  
Elderly Nutrition Program**

**Home Delivered Meals  
Client Information Guide**

**Administered by  
Marin County Division of Social Services,  
Aging and Adult Services**

**(415) 457-4636**

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Home Delivered Meal Program administered by the County of Marin Aging and Adult Services. The program is funded, in part, through the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965. It authorizes a wide array of service programs through a national network of 56 State Agencies on Aging, 629 Area Agencies on Aging, nearly 20,000 service providers, 244 Tribal organizations, and 2 Native Hawaiian organizations representing 400 Tribes. The OAA also includes community service employment for low-income older Americans; training, research, and demonstration activities in the field of aging; and vulnerable elder rights protection activities.

The Nutrition Program consists of two parts – congregate nutrition and home-delivered meals. The goals of the program are:

- to reduce hunger and food insecurity;
- to promote socialization of older individuals, and;
- to promote the health and well-being of older individuals by improving access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services.

The Congregate Nutrition Program provides one hot meal, five (5) days a week, except in rural areas where this may not be feasible. The Home-Delivered Meal Program provides one meal a day, which may consist of hot, cold, frozen, dried, canned, fresh or supplemental foods.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for the Home-Delivered Meal Program, you must:

- Be 60 years of age or older; be homebound (not able to drive) by reason of illness or disability, or otherwise isolated; *and* be considered frail according to federal and Marin County guidelines, having significant difficulty in two or more areas of functioning based on assessment.
- Be the spouse of someone who is eligible for and currently receiving meals.
- Be disabled as defined by the Center for Medicare/ Medicaid Service, which can be verified through SSDI or MediCare documentation, and live in the home of someone who is eligible for and currently receiving meals.

New client eligibility is assessed during an in-person interview with a staff member. Continued eligibility is re-assessed quarterly and is required for program participation.

## Starting Meal Service

Call (415) 457-4636 to learn about the program and to start service. You will be contacted by a staff member in the Nutrition Program. Depending on the need for service, and availability, you may be placed on a waiting list when you apply.

**When approved for home-delivered meals, you will be informed when meal service will begin, and the approximate time of the meal delivery (this will be a window of time when you will be expected to be available to accept the meal).**

Once you begin the meal program, one of our staff will telephone to arrange to come to your home for a brief interview and to answer any questions you may have about the program. The interview takes place within the first two weeks after your meal deliveries start, and usually lasts less than an hour. The home visit is an important component of your meal service and is required in order to continue service. During the home visit, the following information will be discussed:

- eligibility requirements for the meal program
- your health condition
- your living situation
- Safe food handling
- your voluntary contribution
- your opinion about the meals and delivery
- any further needs, questions or requests you may have
- participation in the annual survey

The staff will stay in touch with you by phone and also re-visit on an annual basis, for as long as you are receiving home-delivered meals. However, feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you might have.

## **Program Details**

- Meals are prepared daily by a third party vendor and delivered to distribution sites in your area.
- Meal delivery will take place within a three hour designated time window once or three times per week.
- You must be at home at the time of your meal delivery. You, or a caregiver, must be able to come to the door and receive the meal. If it is necessary to be away, please call (415) 457-4636 right away.
- Meals are delivered by program volunteers. Meal delivery may be delayed due to traffic or other circumstances beyond our control.
- Due to food safety issues, we cannot leave meals unattended, at the door, in the lobby, etc.
- Please provide our office with 7 days notice if you need to cancel a meal, or cancel service.
- Voluntary contributions made are not refunded in the event of a meal cancellation.

- If we have not been notified in advance that you will be away, and you do not answer the door, we may attempt to reach the person you have indicated as a back-up contact.
- If you are not eating your meal immediately after delivery, it should be refrigerated until you are ready to heat and eat. See instructions for safe re-heating.
- When contacting our office, and leaving messages at (415) 457-4636, please provide us with:
  - Your Name
  - Your Phone Number
  - Cancellation date(s) if you are suspending service temporarily or want to stop service permanently
  - Service re-start date
  - Any other information

If you are hospitalized, or do not require home-delivered meals for other reasons, we can suspend your service for up to four (4) weeks. Clients who are not able to resume meal delivery after four weeks will be discontinued to allow waiting clients to receive meals. Clients will need to re-apply for meal delivery prior to their return home, and may be placed on a wait list depending on availability.

## **Voluntary Contributions**

Funding for the Home-Delivered Meal Program does not cover the full cost of producing and delivering the meal. We ask for a voluntary contribution of \$3.50 per meal to cover partial of the meal cost. You are welcome to contribute more, if you are able. You will not be denied a meal if your circumstances prohibit you from contributing at this level. You will be provided with an envelope by your driver or in the mail to send in your donation. Additional contributions may be made by check, and sent to the provider delivering your meals. Please contact your delivery provider for further information.

Voluntary contributions are not refundable. We greatly appreciate your assistance to keep the meal program viable by making a voluntary contribution. All of your contributions directly fund the cost of producing and delivering meals.

## **Nutritional Standards**

Home-delivered meals must meet strict nutritional standards; they must incorporate the criteria of the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and provide a minimum of one-third of the recommended Dietary Reference Intakes. Professional dietitians oversee the program to ensure compliance with these and other regulations.

Meals are designed to be healthy, but may not be appropriate for those on special diets, such as diabetics or restricted-sodium.

## Dietary Guidelines for Older Adults

Older adults tend to need fewer calories as they age because they are not as physically active as they once were, and their metabolic rates slow down. Nevertheless, their bodies still require the same or higher levels, of nutrients for optimal health. Elderly obesity rates are on the rise, so moving regularly and consuming a diet of nutrient rich foods, with a calorie content matched to energy needs, is important.

The following foods, fluids and physical activities are recommended for older adults:

- Five servings daily of bright-colored fruits and vegetables such as carrots and broccoli; deep-colored fruit such as berries and peaches. Canned or dried fruits and vegetables and juices are acceptable, or choose less perishable fresh produce such as carrots, apples, oranges, potatoes, sweet potatoes or yams, and winter squash.
- Choose whole, enriched and fortified grains and cereals such as brown rice and 100% whole wheat bread.
- Two servings of low- and non-fat dairy products such as yogurt and low-lactose milk, cheese or fortified soy milk.
- Choose from a variety of protein sources such as dry beans and nuts and seeds, fish, poultry, lean meat, soy and eggs.
- Use liquid vegetable oils, soft spreads low in saturated and trans fat, avoid partially hydrogenated oils, and other solid fats.
- Prevent dehydration by drinking plenty of fluids such as water and fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Consume foods fortified with vitamin B12, such as fortified cereals, or dietary supplements.
- Keep enough emergency food (non-perishable) on hand for at least three (3) days of meals in case your meal cannot be delivered due to an emergency.
- If you are on a modified diet, such as low sodium, diabetic or other, read the labels and choose foods appropriate to your diet restriction.
- Reduce daily sodium intake to less than 1,500 mg. Use spices to replace salt.
- Consume less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fatty acids by replacing them with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids.
- Consume less than 300 mg per day of dietary cholesterol.

- Limit the consumption of foods that contain refined grains, especially refined grain foods that contain solid fats, added sugars, and sodium.
- If alcohol is consumed, it should be consumed in moderation—up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. Individuals taking medications that can interact with alcohol, and those with specific medical conditions should refrain from alcohol use.
- Do some physical activity every day, such as walking, resistance training and light cleaning.

## **Food Safety**

We are committed to serving nutritious food of the highest quality. Until the food is delivered to your doorstep, it is handled with extreme care and safety to eliminate the risk of developing harmful bacteria. Bacteria that cause food-borne illness are usually killed during the cooking process, but when cooked food stays at room temperature, bacteria begin to multiply. Some bacteria may produce poisons, which are not destroyed by reheating and can make you sick.

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water when handling food.
- Keep all storage, cooking and eating areas clean. Wash cooking and eating utensils after every use.
- Clean food contact surfaces, and fruits and vegetables. Meat and poultry should not be washed or rinsed.
- Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods while shopping, preparing, or storing foods.
- Refrigerate perishable food promptly and defrost foods properly in the refrigerator.
- Cook foods to a safe temperature to kill microorganisms. If you do not heat and eat your meal, refrigerate it immediately to keep your meal safe. Reheat meal to at least 165 degrees or approximately 30 minutes in a 350-degree oven, or 3-5 minutes in a microwave oven.
- Keep food out of the danger zone, 41-135 degrees. Do not leave meals on a stovetop, space heater, and kitchen counter or in an oven with the pilot light on.
- Perishable food, such as meat, salads, fruit and bread, should be used within 2 days of delivery.
- Avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk or any products made from unpasteurized milk, raw or partially cooked eggs or foods containing raw eggs, raw or undercooked meat and poultry, unpasteurized juices, and raw sprouts.

- If you have any doubt as to the safety of the food, throw it out.

## **Reheating Instructions**

Your meal has been packed in a three-compartment tray made of paper and lined with a durable plastic. It is oven and microwave safe and is recyclable.

In the oven:

- Remove the plastic film covering the food.
- Place container on a cookie sheet in center of oven.
- Reheat at 350-degrees for 30 minutes or until internal temperature is 165 degrees F. It should be steamy and bubbly.

In the microwave:

- Reheat on high for 3 to 5 minutes or until internal temperature is 165 degrees F.

Reheating times may vary due to individual ovens and microwaves.

## **Consumer Rights**

If you have a complaint about the services you are receiving, you have a right to pursue the following corrective steps:

### **First Step**

Report your service complaint to the home-delivered meals coordinator that provides delivery services.

### **Second Step**

As a program contract through the County of Marin Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, Aging and Adult Services, Aging and Adult Services staff can further facilitate the complaint process. Contact Aging and Adult Services at (415) 457-4636.

Remember you have a right to consumer satisfaction and you have a right to these steps in your grievance process.

## **Suspensions and Terminations**

Clients can be temporarily suspended, or terminated from the home-delivered meals program. Organizations serving older adults in the community have the right to work in a safe environment, and have staff treated with courtesy and respect. There are limited resources available to serve clients in the program, and there are people awaiting service. In order to serve the maximum number of eligible clients effectively, we reserve the right to suspend or terminate service in the home delivered meal program for the following reasons:

- Making unreasonable demands for service
- Operating a motor vehicle
- Misrepresenting the need for service
- Personally threatening and/or offensive language
- Threatening or erratic behavior
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Three unsuccessful delivery attempts (no-one is at home to receive the meal)
- Excessive cancellations without providing 24 hours notice

In lieu of immediate termination for any of the above reasons, staff will attempt to contact you by telephone to alert you to the problem. This is considered a verbal warning, and you will be informed that if the problem behavior persists, you will be suspended from the program. If the problem persists, you will be notified in writing that services are to be suspended for a period of thirty (30) days. You must contact us at the end of the service suspension if you wish service to be resumed. You may be placed on a waiting list. Depending on the nature of the problem, and if a continued problem exists, clients may be terminated from the program. You have the right of appeal (see Appeals Process).

## **Appeals Process**

Any individual denied services, or suspended or terminated from services, has the right to appeal the decision. Appeals must be made in writing, within 30 days of the date of service suspension/termination. Appeals should be mailed to:

Amy Dietz  
Marin County Aging and Adult Services  
10 North San Pedro Road, Suite 1023,  
San Rafael, CA. 94903.

A panel including Aging and Adult staff, Marin Commission on Aging representative, and meal provider representative will review the request for an appeal. You will be notified in writing of the decision of the appeals panel within 30 days of receiving your request for an appeal.

## **For Further Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about the home-delivered meals program, please contact us at (415) 457-4636.