



Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

Quick Tips: OAA Title III-C1, Congregate Meals

Quick Tips are informal documents about the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-C Senior Nutrition Program (SNP). These sheets highlight flexibilities of the federal OAA statute and address common misunderstandings about the OAA. Below each point are links to reference materials and inspiration from successful program projects.¹

| See [Nutrition Requirements of the Older Americans Act](#) for basic requirements.



The OAA avoids strict guidelines and allows for flexibility in the SNP. State units on aging (SUAs) are responsible for developing policies and guidance for services in their state or territory. The OAA allows for flexibility by offering participants choices in the program. For example:

- Choice of location, such as virtual options or restaurant voucher programs.
- Choice of activities and socialization opportunities.

[Understanding Title III-C Flexibilities for Nutrition Guidelines and Service Delivery](#) – A guide to OAA flexibilities related to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) and Daily Reference Intakes (DRIs).

[Senior Dine: Meeting the Meal Needs of Seniors](#) – Restaurant partnership meal site with swipe cards (video).



Senior Nutrition Programs can serve more than one meal each day. Sites may serve breakfast, lunch, or dinner, or may open on weekends to serve meals.

[The Dining Experience – Congregate Meal Policy Myth Busters](#) – Common myths and the facts about meal policies.

[Tips to Keep Those We Serve at the Table \(recording\)](#) and [takeaway sheet](#) – Webinar in a series on "powering up" congregate meal sites (sign-in required; free).



The OAA encourages choice in meals for participants. For example, salad bars can be planned as one part of a meal, such as a side salad, or they may be planned as the complete meal. Another way to provide choice is with menus that include options. Follow your SUA's policies and procedures on how to show that the nutrient requirements and other requirements of the OAA have been met.

[Salad Bar Guide](#) – FAQs and examples of successful salad bar programs.

[Choice Menu Quick Guide](#) – Increase participation by offering choices.



Participants may take food from their plate home, but only when permitted by state and local food safety codes. It is recommended to provide safe food handling education to participants. Over-production of food on purpose to allow for leftovers is not allowed.

[Food Service Basics for Non-Food Service Program Managers and Staff](#) – Covers service, storage, procurement, production, and food safety.

[Food Safety on the Go](#) – University of Maryland food safety training program.



Congregate sites can be located anywhere older adults gather, including senior centers, community centers, senior housing facilities, churches, parks, restaurants, hospitals, farmers markets, and multigenerational sites. Temporary or “pop-up” meal sites may be used for special events or to test new congregate locations.

[Innovation: Part Discipline, Part Creativity, All Possible Summary Brief](#)

[Iowa Cafe Summary Brief](#). For all materials, see “Collaborating with Community Partners on a Congregate Meal Delivery Model in Iowa” on [Innovative Models](#).



SNPs can use Title III-C1 funds to provide meals in non-traditional ways, including meal voucher programs, which allow for meals to be served in restaurants, grocery stores, or farmers' markets, for example. Meals must meet the OAA nutrition requirements. It is a best practice to have nutrition program staff present during mealtimes.

[Quick Guide to Working with Restaurants and Grocery Stores](#) – A five-step infographic.

[Mapping Your Partnership Assets](#) – Meals of Love restaurant partnership in Florida.
[Tips to Attract New Participants \(recording\)](#) and [takeaway sheet](#) (sign-in required).



The OAA allows up to 40% funds transfers between Title III-C1 and Title III-C2 services and up to 30% funds transfers between Title III-B and Title III-C. SUAs may request waivers to increase those amounts, within established limits.

[Senior Nutrition Program Spending](#) – Allocating funds.

[Sustainability and Revenue Generation](#) – Summary brief.

Additional Quick Tip Sheets

- [Home-delivered Meals](#)
- [NSIP](#)
- [OAA Basics](#)
- [Funding Options](#)
- [SNP Nutrition Guidelines](#)
- [Nutrition Service Reporting](#)

Find more resources at the [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#).

ⁱ In many areas, the OAA gives SUAs the authority to add other requirements beyond those that are included in the OAA. So certain practices, which might be allowable under the OAA and perhaps included in this document, might be handled differently in some states or local areas. These documents only reflect information about the OAA nutrition program from a federal perspective; state and local variances are NOT covered.