



POLICY STATEMENT
MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING
(MA4)

Missouri Senior Meals Program

February 2011

The Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging (MA4) calls upon the Missouri General Assembly to restore funding for the home-delivered meals for seniors program. The program, administered statewide by the ten regional Area Agencies on Aging, saw cuts totaling \$1.4 million dollars in last year's appropriations legislation.

THE PROGRAM

The home delivered meals program is designed to deliver a nutritionally balanced meal that represents one-third of a typical adult's Recommended Daily Allowance of nutrients to homebound individuals. Participants in the program must be 60 years of age or older and physically or mentally unable to leave their homes. Priority is given to people who have no immediate family members available to assist in meal preparation or delivery; individuals who require only intermittent support, (such as individuals recuperating from surgery or hospitalization); and people who are in the protective services program of the Missouri Division of Senior and Disability Services. A limited number of meals are also available for people under 60 years of age who are disabled.

THE NEED

"One of the most important services that Missouri's Area Agencies on Aging provides to seniors is our nutrition and food program," said Mary Schaefer, president of MA4. "While many people are able to visit local senior centers throughout the state and enjoy nutritious meals, there are many more who are homebound who require this service desperately. Last year's decision to cut this vital program by \$1.4 million caused serious funding shortages that can be corrected in this year's budget. Our home delivery of meals programs are already running on a shoestring, with most of our delivery services performed by volunteers. It is imperative that funding be restored to insure that seniors have access to nutritious meals on a regular basis," added Schaefer.

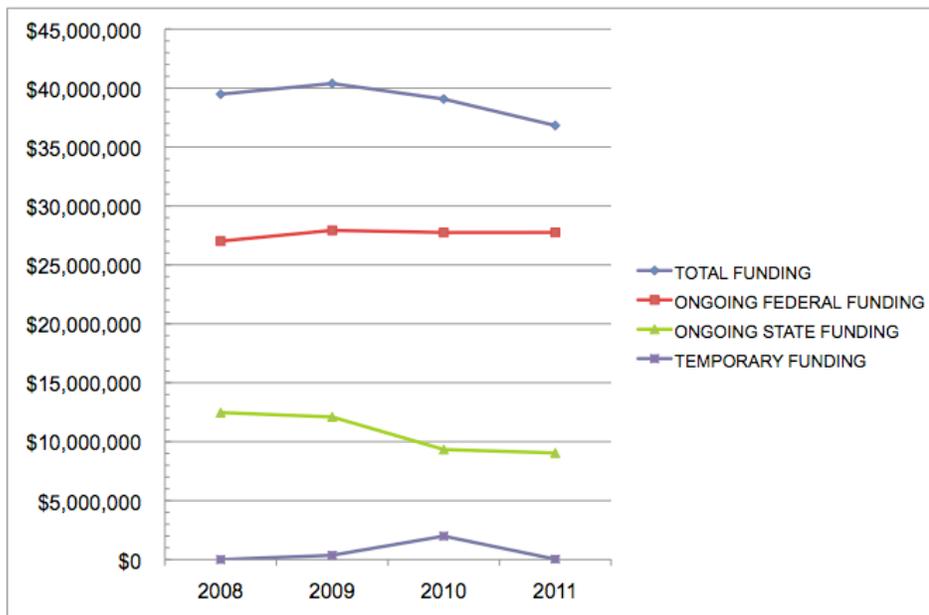
In 2010, the regional Area Agencies on Aging delivered more than 5.2 million meals to Missouri seniors in their homes. Last year's cuts, which totaled as much as \$317,000 for the largest of the ten regional Area Agencies on Aging, represented a significant percentage of the overall budget for the home-delivered meals program. Using the Medicaid rate of \$5.45 as an average cost per

home delivered meal, last year's \$1.4 million budget cut represented the loss of approximately 250,000 individual meals.

FUNDING

OVERVIEW

MISSOURI FUNDING TREND CHART 2008 - 2011



Funding for the AAA's has been trending downwards for the past three years. Federal funding is fairly flat, with the exception of the infusion of ARRA funds in 2010 on a temporary basis. State funding has been steadily decreasing through budget cuts in the General Assembly and through Governor withholdings.

In FY 2010 the Missouri General Assembly cut the home delivered meals program by \$1,421,354. Policymakers stated at the time that although it was a core cut, it was their intention to restore the cut in the next fiscal year. (A core cut is a permanent cut to the budget versus a one-time cut). When this cut occurred, ARRA funds were used to "back-fill" this GR loss for FY10, but still resulted in a net loss of approximately \$200,000.

Last year, the General Assembly did *not* restore the funding for FY11. Therefore, the lower appropriation level was used to determine the DHSS "core budget" for FY11. For FY11, there are **no** ARRA funds resulting in a GR decrease of approximately \$1.4 million for the home-delivered meal program with no amelioration. For FY 2012, preliminary budget proposals

suggest funding at the FY11 level (\$8,056,918), reflecting the \$1.4 million cut, in essence, making the earlier *temporary* cut a *permanent* cut.

IMPACT BY AREA

In FY 2010 federal stimulus dollars filled the gap. Moreover, the area agencies took several measures to protect the meals for seniors programs -- they cut staff, cut other services such as transportation or legal services, increased local fundraising -- all to protect this core program.

Still, the cuts were felt and had a significant impact on Missouri's seniors and communities.

In Northwest Missouri, \$90,000 was cut from the home delivered meals program alone, which translated into 16,500 meals.

In Southwest Missouri – the Springfield area – one center (Crane) was forced to close completely, removing that resource to about 50 seniors; the number of meals per week available to some clients had to be cut back in order to avoid a complete loss of service and 150 employees region-wide were forced to take a 3 day furlough just to preserve meal dollars. The area agency cut supportive service programs (transportation, legal referrals, etc.) by 5% to have additional meal dollars. Despite these additional cost-saving measures, the southwest area served 26,036 fewer meals in FY 10 than in 09.

In Region X (the Joplin area) the area agency lost \$41,000 in March 2010 due to the Governor's withholdings and an additional \$50,540 due to the \$1.4 million cut, resulting in the closing of the senior center in downtown Joplin and the loss of 4 employees.

The Mid- East AAA was forced to close a center in Gerald, Missouri -- and another in St. Ann. That area agency has seen a decrease in numbers of meals both congregate and home delivered of 14,563 in FY 2009 and 52,587 in FY 2010.

St. Louis City was forced to cut 6 meal delivery days out of the calendar for all clients, developed a six month backlog of people needing home delivered meal services; reduced services in all other programs to save food dollars – and projects that it will have to do the same this coming year unless new funding sources are identified.

Northeast Missouri capped salaries for all paid employees. Because of reduced funding the number of meals available decreased (some contractors went from serving meals 6 days a week to 5 and one contractor is delivering meals 3 days a week instead of 5). Also in FY 10 funding cuts contributed to the closing of a satellite site in Jonesburg and in 2011 Northeast may lose one or two more satellites. For FY 2011, Northeast Missouri had to cut meals funding (provided through contractors) by \$117,386.

In Southeast Missouri, the area agency has been forced to deny requests from town leaders of Bloomfield, Altenburg, Wappapello, Advance, and Piedmont for funding to start/operate Senior Centers. There already exist a number of underserved areas in our most rural communities in the Ozark foothills. Additionally, the agency is unable to allow 2 meals/day to be served to an individual, even if an individual's health/situation dictates that vital need.

In mid Missouri, Columbia and the state capitol, total meals served were down by 100,000 during 2010.

INCREASED COST OF MEALS

Over the past five years, the area agencies have experienced a steady increase in the cost of meals on average. The impact of meals funding cuts will be magnified as the cost of meals continues to increase.

Some examples:

In the Southeast, the average raw food cost went up 10 cents per meal, which can be attributed to the change in federal dietary guidelines demanding increases in whole grains and fruits in the menu.

In the Springfield area the average cost of a meal from FY09 to FY10 increased by 18 cents per meal on 1,215,908 meals and raw food costs increased by 26 cents per meal (13%). Even though the senior centers in the Springfield area picked up a larger share of the utilities the budget still increased by 4%. Personnel costs held the line only because the Southwest Missouri AAA imposed a 3 day furlough and several employees donated a day a month. In addition, the agency has left unfilled positions open as long as possible and cut hours where possible.

In the Joplin area meal costs have increased 79 cents per meal from 2009 to 2011.

From 2009 to 2010 the Warrensburg area has experienced a 42 cent increase in the cost of home-delivered meals.

From FY09 to FY11 the Mid-East Area Agency on Agency experienced a 51 cent per home-delivered meal increase.

CONCLUSION

What does a senior do when his or her center closes, or meals are delivered only three days per week instead of five?

Seniors are forced to shift their resources. In many cases, they turn off utilities and use the money for food, or they don't buy their medicine because they use the money for food. It is very common for seniors to put off buying new eyeglasses or delay needed home repairs in order to stretch their personal budget and in too many cases seniors take the three days worth of meals they do receive and try to stretch them into six days worth of food.

All of this falls hard on seniors and aggravates their existing health conditions, in some cases, resulting in premature nursing home placement -- at a much higher cost to the state than the cost of the senior meal program.

If only 90 seniors (less than one person per county) enter a nursing home because of the loss of the home-delivered meal service, the state will spend **MORE** in MoHealthNet general revenue match for their nursing home care than the state would have spent if it provided the full \$1.4 million in general revenue for the home-delivered meals.*

The people we serve are Missouri's seniors -- people who in so many instances have worked hard all their lives, raised families and now, as they age, find their dollars don't stretch as far as they need to. In many cases our seniors are simply poor, on fixed incomes or infirm -- or just need help while they are recuperating from surgery or hospitalization.

When the Older Americans Act established the nutrition (meals) program, it was because America's seniors were living in poverty and going hungry. Over the past five decades the program has helped turn that situation around -- but we must remain watchful and not slip back. Despite our advances, 9% of Missouri's seniors continue to live in poverty with a median income of about \$7,000. The meals programs help people live independently for as long as they can by keeping them strong -- and that goal becomes more difficult every time we ratchet back on our ability to serve them.

The Missouri Area Agencies on Aging represent the frontline in delivering vital services to our ever-growing senior population. We strongly support legislation that will protect and enhance the senior meals programs in the state of Missouri and specifically support the restoration of funds cut from the senior meals programs in previous years.

*Average MoHealthNet cost for a nursing home bed is \$132.00 per day. Medicaid participation rates are variable -- MA4 assumed a 40% state match rate for this calculation.