

Dear Master Plan on Aging Committee,

I have drafted this [document](#) for the COVID-19 CBO Food Delivery Operations Work Group. I understand that the MPA is considering lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis, so I am sending it along to you. It provides a statewide back-of-the-envelope estimate of demand for and supply of delivered or no-contact pick up of food assistance for older adults in California during the first months of the COVID-19 crisis.

The gap analysis highlights the fact that **many low income older adults continue to have unmet need for food assistance during the crisis despite increased service levels:**

- Despite tremendous increases in service levels among meals and grocery programs during the crisis, demand for home delivered or no-contact food assistance continues to far outstrip supply.
- All nutrition programs described in this memo are supplemental in nature. Therefore, receipt of service from a single program does not imply that nutritional needs are being met.

In addition, I'd like to summarize a number of other issues that the COVID-19 crisis lays bare. The COVID-19 CBO Food Delivery Operations Work Group has grappled with these **issues that existed before the pandemic and will persist beyond it** unless program design, funding levels, and coordination mechanisms change:

- At pre-virus funding levels, programs across all sources provided service to, at most, maybe half of the older adults estimated to need them. When emergency funding sources are exhausted, the state will return to this condition (or worse, as the economic fall-out will increase levels of need). A more comprehensive analysis of "missing meals" for older adults across service sectors would be one way to paint a more comprehensive picture of this issue.
- The COVID-19 crisis has brought many older adults in need "out of the woodwork." It seems likely that many people newly receiving services may have needed them before the crisis - it is unclear how food assistance programs may handle the increased caseloads into the future.
- Food assistance programs for older adults are each by design supplemental, but their siloed nature makes it difficult for participants to piece them together as needed to meet nutritional needs. Home-delivered meals and congregate programs often provide no more than one meal per day, CalFresh provides a single adult with only \$6.40/day at the maximum benefit level, and food pantry programs are similarly supplemental in nature. Referral systems, however, direct people to one or the other.
- As food assistance programs have received increasing referrals for food assistance, the complex additional needs (health, isolation, etc) of those households come along with them. It is reasonable to expect sustained increased demand for other supplemental services for older adults as well.

- Referral systems (211s, Aging I&A lines, food bank hotlines) are themselves siloed, and their level of coordination varies greatly from place to place. Coordination is necessary to ensure successful program access for older adults. That coordination is sometimes difficult, especially during a crisis when it may be needed most.

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