

Service Name	Congregate Meals
Service Number	C-3
Service Category	Community
Service Definition	The provision of nutritious meals to older individuals in congregate settings.
Unit of Service	Each meal served to an eligible participant.

CONGREGATE MEALS

1. Each program shall have written eligibility criteria that places emphasis on serving older individuals in greatest need and includes the following, at a minimum:
 - a. Age 60 or older.
 - b. A spouse under the age of 60 who accompanies an eligible adult to the meal site.
 - c. Family members of an eligible adult who are living with a disability and permanently live with the eligible adult in a non-institutional setting.
 - d. An unpaid caregiver who is under the age of 60 and is registered in the National Aging Programs Information System (NAPIS) and accompanies person being cared for to meal site.
 - e. To be eligible for a donation-based meal, persons described in items b.-d. must, on most days, accompany the eligible adult to the meal site and eat the meal at the meal site.
 - f. A volunteer under the age of 60 who directly supports meal site and/or foodservice operations may be provided a meal:
 - i. After all eligible participants have been served and meals are available; and
 - ii. A fee is not required for volunteers under the age of 60, but contributions should be encouraged and accepted. These meals are to be included in the National Aging Programs Information System (NAPIS) meal counts.
 - g. Individuals with disabilities who are not older individuals but who reside in housing facilities occupied primarily by older individuals at which congregate nutrition services are provided may participate in the meal.

2. At the provider's discretion, persons not otherwise eligible may be served, if meals are available, and they pay the full cost of the meal. The full cost includes raw food, preparation costs, and any administrative and/or supporting services costs. Documentation that full payment has been made shall be maintained. Persons not eligible under item #1 who pay the full price for a meal, and are 18 and over, must wait until all eligible persons have been served, unless the meal has been reserved in advance. Children (under the age of 18) who accompany a meal participant who is over the age of 60, must pay full price, but may go through the line with the adult they are with.

3. Each congregate nutrition provider shall be able to provide information relative to eligibility for Home Delivered Meals (HDM) and be prepared to make referrals for persons unable to participate in the congregate program and who appear eligible for a HDM program.
4. Each congregate meal site shall be able to document the following.
 - a. That it is operated within an accessible facility. Accessibility is defined as a participant living with a disability being able to enter the facility, use the restroom, and receive service that is at least equal in quality to that received by a participant not living with a disability. Documentation from a local building official or licensed architect is preferred. A program may also conduct accessibility assessments of its meal sites when utilizing written guidelines approved by the respective Area Agency on Aging (AAA).
 - b. That it complies with local fire safety standards. Each meal site must be inspected by a local fire official no less frequently than every three years. For circumstances where a local fire official is unavailable after a formal (written) request, a program may conduct fire safety assessments of its meal sites when using written guidelines approved by the respective AAA.
 - c. Compliance with Michigan Food Code and local public health codes regulating food service establishments. Each meal site and kitchen operated by a congregate meal provider shall be licensed, as appropriate, by the local health department. The local health department is responsible for periodic inspections and for determining when a facility is to be closed for failure to meet Michigan Food Code standards. The local health department rulings supersede any state rules/mandates concerning licensing of food service establishments, including congregate meal sites and off-site meals. The program shall submit copies of inspection reports on all facilities to the respective AAA within ten days of receipt. It is the responsibility of the program to address noted violations promptly.
5. Each program, through a combination of its meal sites, must provide meals at least once a day, five or more days a week. Programs may serve up to three meals per day at each meal site.
6. Each site shall serve meals at least three days per week with a minimum annual average of **10 eligible participants** per serving day. If the service provider also operates a HDM program, HDMs sent from a site may be counted toward the 10 meals per day service level. Waivers to this requirement may be granted by the respective AAA only when the following can be demonstrated.
 - a. Two facilities must be utilized to effectively serve a defined geographic area for three days per week.
 - b. Due to a rural or isolated location, it is not possible to operate a meal site three days per week.
 - c. Seventy-five percent or more of participants at a meal site with less than 10 participants per day are in great economic or social need. Such meal sites must operate at least three days per week.

7. Congregate meal sites currently in operation by the program may continue to operate unless the respective AAA determines relocation is necessary to serve socially or economically disadvantaged older persons more effectively. New and/or relocated meal sites shall be located in an area which has a significant concentration of the 60 and over population living at or below the poverty level or with an older minority or ethnic population comprising a significant concentration of the total over-60 aged population. The ACLS Bureau must approve, through the Congregate Meal Site Database, the opening of any new and/or relocated meal site prior to the provision of any meals at that site.
8. When a meal site is to be permanently closed, the following procedures shall be followed.
 - a. The program shall notify the respective AAA in writing of the intent to close a meal site.
 - b. The program shall present a rationale for closing the meal site which is based on lack of attendance, inability to meet minimum standards and/or other requirements, loss of resources, or other justifiable reason.
 - c. The respective AAA shall review the rationale and determine that all the options for keeping the site open or being relocated have been exhausted. If there remains a need for service in the area that was served by the meal site, efforts should be made to develop a new meal site and/or assist participants to attend another existing meal site.
 - d. The program shall notify participants at a meal site to be closed of the intent to close the site at least 30 days prior to the last day of the meal service.
 - e. The respective AAA shall complete the steps for closure in the ACLS Bureau on-line database. The following information is needed to close a site and should be entered into the database.
 - i. Rationale for closing the site.
 - ii. How participants will be notified.
 - iii. Closest meal site to the closed site, and transportation options to get participants to the different site.
 - f. The ACLS Bureau will review the documents and the request to close the site. If approved the ACLS Bureau will notify the requestor, the respective AAA and field representative.
 - g. The site can be found at: <https://www.osapartner.net/congmeal/>.
9. Each program shall document that appropriate preparation has taken place at each meal site for procedures to be followed in case of an emergency, including:
 - a. An annual fire drill,
 - b. Staff and volunteers shall be trained on procedures to be followed in the event of a severe weather storm or natural disaster and the county emergency plan, and
 - c. Posting and training of staff and regular volunteers on procedures to be followed in the event of a medical emergency.

10. Each program shall have written agreements with the owners of all leased facilities used as meal sites. Written agreements are recommended for donated facilities, but not required. The agreements shall address at a minimum:
 - a. Responsibility for care and maintenance of facility, specifically including restrooms, equipment, kitchen, storage areas and areas of common use.
 - b. Responsibility for snow removal;
 - c. Agreement on utility costs;
 - d. Responsibility for safety inspections;
 - e. Responsibility for appropriate licensing by the local health department;
 - f. Responsibility for insurance coverage;
 - g. Responsibility for approval of outside programs, activities and speakers; and
 - h. Other issues as desired or required.
11. A program may enter into an agreement with an organization operating a congregate meal site in order for that organization to receive Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) funding for meals served to persons aged 60 and over, upon approval of the respective AAA. Any meal site receiving NSIP-only funding must operate in compliance with all federal requirements and state operating standards pertaining to the congregate meal program and assure the availability of adequate resources to finance the operation of the meal site without charge to program participants. The program shall have a written agreement with each organization operating NSIP-only meal sites, which shall include a statement indicating the provider allows anyone that meets the eligibility for a congregate meal indicated in these standards, is permitted to participate in the NSIP-only meal program.
12. Each program shall display, at a prominent location in each meal site, the ACLS Bureau Community Nutrition Services poster. The program may use its own poster as long as all the required information is included and clearly presented. The poster shall contain the following information for each program: the name of the nutrition project director, the nutrition project director's telephone number, the suggested donation for eligible participants, the guest fee to be charged non-eligible participants, and a statement of non-discrimination identical to the language on the ACLS Bureau poster (this is the USDA- required language). Additional information pertaining to the program shall not be displayed so as to avoid any misunderstanding or confusion with information presented on the poster.
13. Each program shall make available, upon request, food containers (assistive plates, bowls, cups) and utensils for participants who are living with disabilities.
14. Congregate meal programs receiving funds through the ACLS Bureau may not contribute towards, provide staff time, or otherwise support potluck dinner activities, or allow program food stuff to be combined with foods brought in by participants.

15. Each program shall have a project council comprised of program participants, to advise program administrators about services being provided. Program staff shall not be members of the project council. The project council shall meet at least once per year, in person, and notes from all meetings shall be shared with the respective AAA nutrition program, as well as saved for future reference.
16. Temporary Meal Site Closings. If a meal site must be closed or moved temporarily, the nutrition provider must notify the AAA, and the ACLS Bureau by using the on-line Temporary Meal Site Closure form. This form must be completed and submitted prior to the closing, or as soon as possible after the closing. A link to the form is located on the business partner site: <https://www.osapartner.net>
17. Prayer. Older adults may pray before a meal that is at a site that is funded through ACL or the State of Michigan. It is recommended that each nutrition program adopt a policy that ensures that each individual participant has a free choice whether to pray either silently or audibly, and that prayer is not officially sponsored, led, or organized by persons administering the Nutrition Program or the meal site.
18. Leftovers from the meal (items not eaten by the participant) may be taken out of the meal site if the following conditions are met.
 - a. The local health department has no restrictions against it;
 - b. A sign shall be posted near the congregate meal sign informing the meal participants that all food removed from the site becomes the responsibility of the individual that is removing the food;
 - c. All new congregate participants receive written material about food safety and preventing food-borne illness when they sign up;
 - d. All participants receive written material about food safety and preventing food-borne illness annually;
 - e. The individual is required to sign a waiver statement that states that they understand that they are responsible for food taken out of the site; and
 - f. Containers may not be provided through federal or state funds by the nutrition provider for the leftovers.
19. Off-site meals. Meals consumed off-site are considered congregate dining if:
 - a. Participants engage in a social activity organized by the meal site, nutrition provider, AAA or an aging network agency. Social activities may be conducted in-person or virtually and must be open to all eligible participants.
 - i. In-person social activities may include but are not limited to: parks, festivals, events, picnics and tailgates, and may occur indoors or outdoors.
 - ii. Virtual social activities may include one-to-one interaction with a program volunteer, or group interaction via a virtual web application such as GoogleMeet, Zoom or FaceTime. Participant attendance for any virtual interaction should be documented by the nutrition provider.
 - b. Only one meal is offered per person at an off-site social activity and the meal is consumed at the event.

- c. Meals meet ACLS Bureau nutrition standards. At a minimum, the preparation, and service of off-site meals must follow the food safety requirements as outlined in the Michigan Food Code. In addition, local Health Department rules and regulations may offer more stringent guidance and must be followed.
 - d. A process for reporting off-site meals should be determined by the AAA and the nutrition provider including, but not limited to, the frequency of reporting, sponsoring agency, date, type of event, and number of participants. This information shall be made available to ACLS Bureau upon request.
20. Participant Choice. Person-centered planning involves participant choice. Participants in this program are allowed to participate in both the HDM and congregate program at the same time. For example, an HDM participant may have a friend or family member that can take them to a congregate site one day per week, or on a random basis. Proper documentation must be kept as to the HDM schedule and the congregate meal schedule. An agreement between programs is encouraged. Participants using this option should be reminded to contact the HDM office to cancel their meal for the days they are at the congregate site.
21. Voucher Meals. Nutrition providers may develop a program using vouchers for meals to be eaten at a restaurant, café, or other food service establishment. The program must meet the following standards.
- a. The restaurant, café, or other food service establishment must be licensed, and follow the Michigan Food Code, and is inspected regularly by the local health department.
 - b. The restaurant, café, or other food service establishment agrees to provide at least one meal that meets the ACLS Bureau nutrition standards for meals.
 - c. The restaurant, café, or other food service establishment must be barrier-free and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.
 - d. The nutrition provider and restaurant, café or other food service establishment must have a written agreement that includes:
 - i. How food choices will be determined;
 - ii. How food choices will be advertised/offered to voucher holder;
 - iii. How billing will be handled (will a tip be included in the unit price, i.e., if the meal reimbursement is \$6.25, will \$.25 be used toward the tip?);
 - iv. How reporting takes place (frequency and what is reported);
 - v. Evaluation procedures;
 - vi. A statement that voucher holders may take leftovers home; and that they may purchase additional beverages and food with their own money.
 - e. A copy of the written agreement shall be given to the AAA nutrition program coordinator.
 - f. A written plan must be developed and kept on file that includes consideration of the following items.
 - i. Location of the restaurant, café, or other food service establishment in relation to congregate meal site locations;

- ii. Establishment of criteria for program participation- how restaurants, café, or other food service establishments are selected to participate and how new establishments can apply to participate;
 - iii. How older adults qualify for and obtain their vouchers, i.e., senior centers, nutrition provider office, nutrition program representative meets with older adults at the restaurant, café, or other food service establishment to issue vouchers and collect donations; and
 - iv. How frequently menu choices will be reviewed and revised by the AAA Dietitian or DTR.
- g. Nutrition providers must allow older adults to use congregate meal sites and voucher programs interchangeably. If a nutrition provider chooses to do so, the plan described in item f. above must detail how this will be done.
22. Adult Foster Care (AFC) and other Residential Care Participants. AFC or other residential providers that bring their residents to congregate meal sites shall be requested to pay the suggested donation amount for meals provided to residents and staff 60 years of age or older. For those AFC residents and staff under the age of 60, the guest charge must be paid as posted at each meal site. The congregate meal provider may request the AFC program to provide staff to assist the residents they bring with meals and other activities that they wish to attend. AFCs, adult day programs, or other residential providers may enter into a contractual agreement regarding donations and payment for meals if the practice occurs regularly or is long-term.
23. Complimentary Programs/Demonstration Projects. AAAs and nutrition providers are encouraged to work together to provide programming at the congregate meal sites that include activities and meals. Suggestions for demonstration projects include, but are not limited to:
- a. Mobile congregate sites that move to different locations to serve, also known as 'pop-up' sites; and
 - b. New meal options such as smoothies, vegetarian choices, and other non-traditional foods.

All demonstration projects must be approved by the AAA and the ACLS Bureau and must follow the nutrition standards.

MEAL COMPONENTS

24. Salad and Soup Bar Option. Congregate meal sites may include a salad bar as part, **or all** of their meal service. (See chart for information as to how to add it in.)

Soup/Salad bar as main meal	Must meet all nutrition standard requirements
Soup/Salad bar as a part of a meal, i.e., vegetable or carb (pasta choices)	Must meet nutrition requirement for the element it is used for
Soup/Salad bar is an addition to, or add on, to a regular meal.	Does not have to meet nutrition standards or criteria

25. Beverages: Milk and water must be offered with every meal. Coffee and/or tea, or other beverages, are optional.
- a. Milk may be skim, 1%, 2%, full-fat or chocolate. It should be available to participants but is not required.
 - b. Water can be available as self-serve, in a pitcher, or at a drinking fountain that has a special attachment for filling cups. You do not need to purchase water in bottles, or pre-fill cups with water.
 - c. If you choose to offer coffee and/or tea, this may also be self-serve. You may provide hot water for instant coffee and tea, or you may brew coffee. Individuals may also bring in their own tea bags and instant coffee if they choose to.
 - d. You may use your state and federal congregate meal funds to purchase these products, as well as to keep equipment such as coffee makers, in good repair.