

Action Needed on New Federal Guidance to Include Malnutrition in State OAA Plans

The federal Older Americans Act (OAA) supports a wide range of home and community-based services including home-delivered meals and congregate nutrition programs, in-home services, transportation, legal services, elder abuse prevention, and caregiver support.

The latest Older Americans Act reauthorization signed into law in 2020 recognized malnutrition prevention as part of the purpose of OAA nutrition programs and added malnutrition screening to the OAA for the first time.

New Federal Guidance

The US Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Community Living (ACL) has oversight of OAA programs and requires that states/territories adopt multi-year OAA plans.

ACL [guidance](#) released in August 2021 explicitly directs states/territories to address malnutrition in their nutrition programming, instructing them for plans taking effect on/after 10/1/22 to:

- “Describe plans and include objectives and the measures (data elements and sources) that you will use to demonstrate your progress towards: Ensuring incorporation of the new purpose of nutrition programming to include addressing malnutrition (Sec. 330)”

Why This Is Important

This new direction to include malnutrition is critical because:

- Up to [1 out of 2](#) older adults is either at risk of becoming or is malnourished
- Malnutrition--particularly the lack of adequate protein, calories, and other nutrients--has been shown to be [associated with](#) poor health outcomes, frailty and disability, and increased healthcare costs
- Malnutrition is a problem for both underweight and overweight/obese older adults

Yet, a recently conducted [study](#) found malnutrition was mentioned infrequently, if at all, in current state/territory aging plans

- Specifically, mentions of malnutrition were found in only one third of all plans

**Take
Action
Now!**

Americans are living longer but not necessarily healthier lives.

Malnutrition contributes to disability and poor health outcomes, particularly later in life.

- ▶ **Including malnutrition--as now required--in state multi-year OAA plans** and addressing it through OAA programs and services will help ensure a healthier future for older Americans