

defeat **malnutrition** today

PANDEMIC BRINGS OLDER ADULT MALNUTRITION INTO SHARPER FOCUS

NATIONAL BLUEPRINT UPDATED TO ADVANCE SOLUTIONS ACROSS ALL POINTS OF CARE

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 18, 2020 – With the COVID-19 pandemic potentially worsening America's existing malnutrition crisis for older adults, a broad group of advocates has just released an updated *National Blueprint* with specific recommendations to address malnutrition among seniors, a group particularly susceptible to the problem.

The issue has reached a critical point: malnutrition threatens one out of every two older Americans and can cause serious health impacts, which cost the nation \$53 billion annually.

Released by the national advocacy group Defeat Malnutrition Today, along with Avalere Health and other multidisciplinary stakeholders, the *National Blueprint: Achieving Quality Malnutrition Care for Older Adults, 2020 Update* calls for a range of strategies to be implemented across the healthcare institution and community spectrum including through telehealth services.

Bob Blancato, National Coordinator for Defeat Malnutrition Today, said the *National Blueprint* focuses on four primary goals: improving quality care practices, improving access, generating research, and advancing public health.

“With so many older adults homebound and socially isolated by COVID-19, the incidence of malnutrition may be on the rise and continue to increase for some time to come,” Blancato said. “With this backdrop, and with May being recognized as Older Americans Month, the *National Blueprint* offers implementation-ready recommendations to help organizations, government bodies, and communities come together to prevent and address malnutrition in older adults.”

One key recommendation of the *National Blueprint* calls for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to integrate malnutrition care in quality programs and care models across care settings.

Many risk factors contribute to malnutrition in older adults, particularly those related to chronic and acute disease, functional health, social and mental health, and food insecurity. However, it is also preventable. With effective screening, assessment, diagnosis, and intervention, malnutrition can be identified and addressed to reduce mortality rates, readmission rates, lengths of stay, and costs of care.

“Achieving quality malnutrition care requires collaboration among many organizations, government bodies, and communities,” said Kristi Mitchell, Practice Director, Avalere Health. “The *National Blueprint* focuses on the important ways these stakeholders can partner to synergistically address the problem across all points of care—from hospital, to post-hospital, to home and community settings.”

Momentum has continued to build since the first *National Blueprint* broke new ground upon its release three years ago. In fact, some recommendations included in the original *National Blueprint* have already come to fruition. These include the U.S. Government Accountability Office issuing a 2019 report on federal nutrition assistance programs and the 2020 Older Americans Act reauthorization recognizing malnutrition prevention as part of the Act's purpose.

However, Blancato said that despite those successes, much more remains to be done. With the World Health Organization declaring 2020-2030 as the Decade of Healthy Aging, the *National Blueprint* has been revised to help lead us forward into this new decade.

“Malnutrition remains a legitimate and growing public health threat that has been intensified by the disparities and social isolation resulting from COVID-19,” Blancato said. “As our country moves forward with plans for economic and health system recovery, we see an important opportunity for the *National Blueprint* to help guide establishing national goals for improved access to high quality malnutrition care and nutrition services.”

The *National Blueprint: Achieving Quality Malnutrition Care for Older Adults, 2020 Update* was developed by [the Defeat Malnutrition Today coalition](#), [Avalere Health](#), and a group of multidisciplinary stakeholders with support provided by Abbott.

The full report can be found [here](#) and an infographic is available [here](#).