



Massachusetts Councils On Aging

Board Meeting

January 15 & 16, 2019

Devens Commons

Nutrition Report

Update on All Things Nutrition:

Healthy Eating Community of Practice Mass. Department of Public Health (DPH):

Mission: The Healthy Eating Community of Practice (CoP) focuses on increasing access to healthy foods for children and adults in the Commonwealth. Access to healthy, safe, and affordable foods includes locally grown fruits and vegetables through local markets and corner stores. These efforts align with the Mass in Motion Healthy Markets Initiative and the work of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council and the Massachusetts Public Health Association.

Timeline: On-going initiative

Accomplishments: The Healthy Eating CoP produced a Healthy Eating CoP tool kit lists programs that focus on access to locally grown produce. The tool kit identifies model programs that can be replicated in communities, and identifies programs which have resources and technical assistance.

Role of MCOA/COAs: MCOA is a member organization and actively participates in the community of practice meetings.

Mass. Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA):

Mission: The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) assists and empowers low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their *quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency*. DTA serves one in eight residents of the Commonwealth with direct economic assistance (cash benefits) and food assistance (SNAP benefits), as well as workforce training opportunities.

Timeline: On-going initiative

Accomplishments: DTA's SNAP Outreach Team to develop opportunities for COAs to become application and recertification contractors for DTA. There are 20 COAs enrolled as SNAP community partners. COA staff, older adults and caregivers have benefitted by the dedicated Holyoke Senior Assistance Office with trained staff and operators available to help all navigate SNAP benefits.

Role of MCOA/COAs: MCOA is a community partner organization with DTA regarding SNAP expansion of COAs as community partners, and collaborate on advocacy initiatives to eliminate the SNAP Gap in the commonwealth.

Massachusetts Food Trust Program- Mass Public Health Association (MPHA):

Mission: The Massachusetts Food Trust Program (MFTP) provides loans, grants, and business assistance for increasing access to healthy, affordable food in low-income, underserved areas otherwise known as 'food deserts.'

Timeline: On-going initiative secured \$1,080,000 in seed funding from the Baker-Polito Administration in 2018 and in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). The MFTP is committed to improving food security and access throughout the Commonwealth. The use of state funding will leverage capital investors enter into the Commonwealth's food sector in underserved areas. This financing structure will support projects that increase access to healthy food, support local farmers and agriculture, and reach underserved areas throughout the Commonwealth.

Accomplishments: MPHA data describes the lack of grocery access as food deserts. In Massachusetts, these communities are hardest hit by the lack of grocery access- Chelsea, Springfield, Taunton, Everett, Revere, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Brockton, and Chicopee. The lack of grocery stores affects 2.8 million people in Massachusetts, including more than 700,000 children and about 523,000 senior citizens, according to the association.

- The MFTP is modeled after The Food Trust, a national nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. The Food Trust, headquartered in Philadelphia, provides leadership and technical assistance for partners across the country. As the Food Access Organization (FAO) for the MFTP, they will help to ensure that applicants meet program eligibility requirements.

Role of MCOA/COAs: MCOA supports the Food Trust Program and attends ongoing meetings.

Healthy Food Financing Mass. Public Health Association (MPHA):

Mission: MPHA's mission states the organization is the champion for public health in the Commonwealth. Also, MPHA is a catalyst for change, eliminating health inequities and creating healthy communities for all.

Timeline: On-going initiative

Accomplishments: MCOA works with the organization on a range of issues having to do with food policy such as the Food Trust for healthy and affordable food, closing the SNAP Gap, and leading the way for continued state funding for the Mass in Motion Program – which addresses food, transportation and other local built environment issues. Mass Health and SNAP, as well as many other

safety-net programs, have separate application processes that ask for the same basic information, duplicating efforts and creating more work for both the state and clients.

Role of MCOA/COAs: MCOA is a supporting organization in all facets of food insecurity issues that impact the Commonwealth.

Supportive Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Coalition Mass Law Reform Institute (MLRI):

Mission: MLRI leads the coalition and is engaged in advocacy to mitigate hunger and food insecurity for vulnerable populations, i.e., low-income children, older adults, people with disabilities meals access.

Timeline: MLRI coordinates the Food SNAP Coalition and has been in this leading role since the group's inception in 2000.

Accomplishments: Members share updates on state and federal SNAP policy, child nutrition, WIC and other anti-hunger programs that affect the food insecurity of Massachusetts households. The SNAP Coalition regularly discuss and track systemic issues to bring to the attention of state and federal agencies. MLRI is currently involved in organizing advocacy legislation called the SNAP GAP-Common APP to improve public health through a common application for core food health and safety net programs. The Common App would assist the 700,000 people who receive MassHealth assistance but do not receive SNAP benefits.

Role of MCOA/COAs: MCOA is a member of the Coalition.

Commission on Malnutrition Prevention Among Older Adults (MPC) and Mass. Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA):

Mission: In 2016, the Senate Bill 2499, "An Act Establishing a Commission on Malnutrition Prevention among Older Adults," (MPC) was signed into law by Gov. Charlie Baker. The commission studied the effects of malnutrition on older adults and the most effective strategies for reducing it. The lead agency on the commission (EOEA) was told to monitor the effects that malnutrition has on health care costs and outcomes, quality indicators and quality of life measures on older adults.

MCOA board member and director of the North Attleboro Council on Aging Pam Hunt serves as the MCOA representative for the Malnutrition Commission.

Timeline: The MPC submitted a final report to Governor Baker in January 2019.

Accomplishments: The MPC offered constructive recommendations in these work groups areas- Data Collection and Management; Public Awareness; Dissemination, and Best Practices. MPC requests that all member agencies (involved with the Commission) promoting malnutrition awareness by providing education, training, and participate in “Older Adult Malnutrition Awareness Week in May 2019.

Role of MCOA/COAs: MCOA's board is represented on the Commission on Malnutrition Prevention, The Malnutrition report includes language that addressed five key nutrition and consumer education issues which MCOA is committed to improving. These include the following:

MCOA will make malnutrition one of their “key issues” in 2019 in order to reach a large number of seniors in the community.

MCOA will attend “Malnutrition Awareness Week” and participate in corresponding events.

MCOA will publish evidence-based malnutrition prevention research on their internal website.

MCOA will provide educational opportunities for Council on Aging and Senior Center staff to enhance their ability to provide malnutrition prevention information and effective programs to Massachusetts older adults.

MCOA will include Malnutrition Prevention in their yearly conference that provides training on topics relevant to Councils on Aging, Senior Centers and other providers working with older adults.

Healthy Incentive Program (HIP) Mass. Department of Transitional Assistance:

Mission: The Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) is operated by the Mass. Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). DTA's goal is to encourage eating fruits and vegetables as it is important for healthy living. HIP helps you buy more fruits and vegetables for your household.

Timeline: Launched in April 2017

Accomplishments: Since April 2017, SNAP families purchased \$6.7 million in fresh, healthy, local food from 200 local farmers. The HIP option helps SNAP enrollees buy more fruits and vegetables per household. The HIP program will end Feb 28, 2019 and reopen in the Spring of 2019. DTA automatically enroll SNAP households in the Health Incentives Program (HIP). Participants will receive \$1 for each dollar spent on eligible fruits and vegetables, up to a monthly limit. DTA's HIP retailers include approved Farmers' markets, Farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (Farm Stands), and Mobile markets.

Role of MCOA/COAs: Continue to engage in outreach activities to enroll low-income older people, and encourage the use of HIP benefits.

Harvard Pilgrim Foundation (HPF) Healthy Food Fund Contributions and Mobile Food Markets Part 1:

Mission: HPF's goal is to create a movement of "neighbors feeding neighbors" and expand the number of citizens advocating for fresh, local, healthy food equity. HPF's Healthy Food Fund contributes to 25 organizations across New England. The amount of healthy, local produce distributed free to low-income families in the region increased 116 percent to nearly 1.8 million pounds of fresh produce; the amount of produce **sold** increased 189 percent in the same time period. The total dollar value of healthy food reaching households in communities across the region since 2016 is \$4.9 million.

Timeline: Since 2015, the baseline year

Accomplishments: The HPF's initiative offers "mini-marts" on wheels for families that cannot get to Farmers Markets. Food deserts exist throughout urban and rural New England, but five local food organizations and hospitals have stepped up to get fresh food to homes and workplaces at an affordable price. HPF is looking to expand its fleet to 8 mobile markets in its service region of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.

Role of MCOA/COAs: On-going supporters

Mobile Food Pantries (MFP)- Greater Boston Food Bank, Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Food Bank of Berkshire County, Food Bank of Western Mass.:

Mission: These pantries serve a variety of populations including veterans, older adults, community health center patients, community colleges students, and WIC program participants. A participant using the GBFB pantries must pre-register.

Timeline: On-going programs

Accomplishments: MFP delivers healthy, fresh perishable food directly to a network of partner sites.

Role of MCOA/COA: On-going supporters

Brown Bag Programs- Greater Boston Food Bank, Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Food Bank of Western Mass., Worcester County Food Bank:

Mission: These Food Banks distribute free bags of food for eligible elders every month. They receive one bag of shelf-stable food and it holds about 12 items, and on occasion, frozen perishable items will be added. Brown Bag programs fall under the category of 'community initiatives' that includes programs such as mobile markets, SNAP outreach and enrollment, school programs, and commodity foods. The food items are selected to meet seniors' dietary requirements and help them stay healthy and active.

Timeline: On-going programs

Accomplishments: Food Banks across Massachusetts are advocates for bringing issues of hunger to the forefront, and are fierce advocates for those struggling with food insecurity.

Role of MCOA/COAs: On-going supporters and partners, and often assist with distributing food items.

Farmers' Market Coupons, Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources:

Mission: A coupon program for seniors to buy fresh fruits and veggies at Farmer's markets. Eligible low-income seniors exchange coupons for eligible foods (fruits, vegetables, honey, and fresh-cut herbs) at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs.

Timeline: Seasonal program

Accomplishments: Collaboration with 27 Mass. Nutrition Programs and ASAPs

Role of MCOA/COA: On-going supporters

Farm Share Program/Community Supported Agriculture- Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources:

Mission: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a way for consumers to buy local, seasonal produce directly from a farmer in their community. It is basically a farm share. A farmer offers a certain number of "shares" to the public. CSAs help the local farmers in several ways. Since CSA subscriptions are generally marketed in January/February, the farmers get to spend their time in the fields during the growing season, instead of trying to generate business or sitting at a farmers market. The payment early in the season also helps them fund the crops that year.

Timeline: Seasonal, on-going initiative

Accomplishments: Supports local farmers, encourages healthy food choices

Role of MCOA/COA: On-going supporters

Federal Title III-C Nutrition Mass. Executive Office of Elder Affairs:

Mission: The Executive Office of Elder Affairs oversees the Massachusetts Elderly Nutrition Program which consists of 27 programs and serve more than 9.1 million meals to seniors each year. More than 400 congregate meal sites serve meals, and a majority of meals are delivered to elders in their homes. The Nutrition program offers healthy meals, screenings, education, and counseling.

Timeline: Older Americans Act in 1969 for meals on wheels, and 1973 for congregate lunches

Accomplishments: EOE staff provided the numbers of meals served for Federal FY 2018:

Congregate Meals: 1,466,456

Home Delivered Meals: 7,677,616

Total Meals: 9,144,072

Federal Older Americans Act Funds FFY 2017

Title III-C1 Congregate Meals \$9.7 M

Title III-C2 Home Delivered Meals \$4.7 M

Role of MCOA/COAs: On-going supporters

UMASS Database Survey of COA Nutrition Services

- 305 Sites offer meals or service to meals
- 169 Sites offer meals on wheels
- 61 Sites offer their own food pantry
- 228 Sites have access to food pantries not run by COAs
- 165 Sites have access to Farmers Markets
- 54 Sites have Bag lunch programs
- 65 Sites have a commodities food program
- 30 Sites have access to Senior farm share
- 85 Sites have other options
- 288 Sites offer food/congregate meals at centers
- 70 Sites offer breakfast (39 sites charge fees) (118 prepare meals on site)
- 270 Sites offer lunches (160 sites charge fees) (16 prepare meals on site)
- 34 Sites offer dinners (16 sites charge fees) (62 prepare onsite)
- 48 Sites prepare meals on wheels on site
- 150 Sites do not prepare anything on site

Sources:

Mass. Executive Office of Elder Affairs website

Mass. Department of Transitional Assistance website

Mass Department of Agriculture Resources website

Great Boston Food Bank website

Mass. Public Health Association website

Harvard Pilgrim Foundation's website

Mass. Law Reform Institute's website

2018 Commission on Malnutrition Prevention Annual Report

Massachusetts Food System Collaborative website

UMASS Database Project for MCOA

Greater Boston Food Bank, Food Bank of Western MA, Worcester County Foodbank,
Merrimack Valley Food Bank websites