CONGREGATE NUTRITION
February 10, 2017

INTRODUCTION
The positive role that nutrition plays in good health, self-sufficiency, and quality of life for older adults is widely recognized. Congregate nutrition sites offer seniors an environment that promotes improved nutritional health and social contacts. Congregate meal sites are located in facilities that are easily accessible, foster a feeling of camaraderie, reduce isolation and often serve as key access points for linking older adults to other services.

An alternate to the traditional congregate meal service model is a meal voucher program. The meal voucher program model promotes expanded choice options (time of eating, meal alternatives, etc.) for participants.

PURPOSE
AAA4 has allocated Title III-C1 funding for Congregate Meals for the purposes of:
1) Providing meals, socialization and nutrition education to select individuals as specified below; and,
2) On behalf of all individuals residing in the area to be served, working to reduce barriers that may exist relative to item 1), such as a general lack of awareness of existing needs/concerns, a lack of knowledge of alternative resources and/or a lack of understanding of applicable benefits.

SERVICE PARAMETERS
Required Activities
(1) Congregate Meals: One meal provided to a qualified individual in a congregate group setting that meets all of the requirements of the Older Americans Act and State/Local laws and assures a minimum of one-third of the current Dietary Reference Intake. Meals must be eaten at a congregate site to be counted as a congregate meal.
Unit: One meal served

(2) Nutrition Education: A program to promote better health by providing accurate and culturally sensitive nutrition, physical fitness, or health (as it relates to nutrition) information and instruction to participants or caregivers in a group or individual setting overseen by a dietitian or individual of comparable expertise. Methods of education may include demonstrations, audio-visual presentations, or small group discussions.
Unit: Number of participants attending each session

Other Allowable Activities
Meal Vouchers: A voucher meal is a hot or other appropriate meal that is provided at an AAA4-approved, non-traditional venue (e.g., a restaurant) and which complies with all applicable guidelines and regulations for regular congregate meals. Meals must be eaten at the approved venue to be counted.
Unit: One voucher redeemed
Client Counts
Nutrition Education often is provided to some of the same individuals over the course of the contract period. Funded Partners are not required to track the number of unduplicated clients for Nutrition Education.

The Geographic Service Area
Applicants may propose providing services in one or more counties, or may propose serving a portion of a county. Both the proposed congregate site locations and the number of meals expected to be served at each site must be clearly defined in the narrative.

AAA4 is the current Congregate Meal provider in the Yuba-Sutter area. Any applicant proposing to serve Yuba and/or Sutter County would be competing against AAA4. See Section 4 for more details.

Service Coordination
Focal Points: Providers are encouraged to locate meal sites at Focal Points.

Facilities: Funded Partners shall have a written agreement in place (or be able to negotiate an agreement within 15 days of the awarding of funds) with each organization where a congregate site will be located. Minimally, each agreement should address the following:
   a. Responsibilities and obligations of each party, including cleaning, storing of supplies, servicing of fire extinguishers, health permits, maintenance of refrigerator and stove, maintenance of restrooms, availability of locked storage cabinets and the hours the designated dining space(s) will be open.
   b. Staffing interrelationships;
   c. Costs or payments, cash or in-kind, to be paid or incurred by either party; and Provision of services in the agency or organization’s facility.

Subcontracts: Any subcontract with a third party for the production or provision of congregate meals must include procedures by which the Funded Partner shall regularly monitor compliance with all applicable terms and conditions. Quarterly safety and sanitation compliance monitoring of subcontractors by the Funded Partner’s Dietitian must be documented, on file and submitted to AAA4. AAA4 staff shall also be permitted to make unannounced drop-in evaluations and visits to congregate sites and to kitchens from which congregate meals are produced and provided.

Client Eligibility
At the time services are provided, clients in this category must:
   (a) Be 60 years of age or older; or
   (b) Be the spouse (of any age) of a client 60 years of age or older; or
   (c) Be a person of any age with a disability (as defined in Section 2) who lives in a senior housing complex where the congregate nutrition site is located; or
(d) Be a person of any age with a disability (as defined in Section 2) who resides with a client 60 years of age or older AND accompanies that client to the congregate site.

Client Prioritization
Clients at traditional sites shall complete a Congregate Meal Intake Form at the time they first begin receiving services and every twelve months thereafter. Clients at non-traditional sites shall complete a Congregate Meal Intake Form at the time they first begin receiving services and at least every six months thereafter.

Funded Partners are not required to have a written prioritization plan for traditional meal sites; they are required to have a plan for non-traditional sites.

Client Wait Lists and Related Factors
If a Funded Partner chooses to open a Wait List, then AAA4 approval of a written, Wait List procedure is required.

Referrals
Any client or prospective client who indicates they “do not always have enough money for food” on the Nutrition Risk Checklist shall be referred to emergency food resources in their local community.

THE SERVICE PLAN
Service Delivery
Funded Partners shall provide hot or other approved appropriate meals five days a week, unless an exemption has been requested and approved. Meal service shall be provided a minimum of two-hundred and fifty (250) days a year, assuming a twelve (12) month contract period. At least one congregate site shall serve meals five (5) days a week.
Food may be delivered to the site in bulk or packaged individually.

Data Reporting
Congregate Meals is a registered service.

Evaluation
Funded Partners shall establish written procedures for participant input regarding meals, food preparation, and quality as well as written procedures for staff follow-up.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING
Applicants should refer to the California Code of Regulations (Title 22, Division 1.8, Chapter 4, Article 6) for a complete listing of state requirements.

Staff Qualifications
Funded Partners must employ an adequate number of qualified personnel to assure satisfactory operation of the program, and the staffing pattern must include:
**Nutrition Program Director:** A Nutrition Director shall be empowered by their governing body with the necessary authority to conduct day-to-day management and administrative functions of the program. A Nutrition Director may be hired less than full-time with approval of AAA4 and must have met (or be in the process of meeting) CDA training requirements and AAA4’s minimum qualifications which include: experience with food production and service for the number of proposed meals to be served.

**Registered Dietitian:** The Registered Dietitian (RD) shall provide dietary or food service consultation to each congregate nutrition program. In this context, a Registered Dietitian is a person who shall be both:

a. Qualified as specified in Sections 2585 and 2586, Business and Professional Code, and
b. Registered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration.

If the Nutrition Director is not a Registered Dietitian, then an RD must be hired as either a consultant or an employee.

**Other Personnel:** The method used to provide congregate meal services and nutrition education will determine the number and type of employees, consultants, or volunteer personnel required to manage each congregate nutrition site and to provide food service, fiscal, social service, administrative and clerical support.

**Volunteers:** Programs using volunteers will ensure they work under mutually beneficial working conditions. They shall be screened and selected through a formal written and oral interview process, shall be provided with written job descriptions, and shall receive the same orientation and training opportunities as paid personnel. Volunteers shall not replace paid personnel.

**Ongoing Training**
In-service staff/volunteer training must be provided at least once every quarter. The annual lesson plan must be submitted to the AAA4 Dietitian for approval at the beginning of the contract period. Refer to the California Department of Aging, Title 22 California Code of regulations, Division 1.8, Section 7636.5 Staff/Volunteer Training Requirements for more detailed information.

**PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

**Congregate Nutrition Sites**
All congregate nutrition sites should be located in geographic areas that contain high proportions of target group older persons. It is preferred that sites be located within reasonable distance of where most members of the target group reside. In communities where there are significant numbers of ethnic minorities, congregate nutrition sites must make special efforts to serve these individuals.

Emergency procedures must be in place at every congregate site that include, at a minimum, identify the location of fire extinguishers and include an evacuation plan.
The Funded Partner’s RD must inspect every congregate site and every kitchen from which a congregate meals is produced or provided at least once every quarter.

New congregate sites must be approved by the AAA4 Regional Services Specialist and AAA4 Dietitian in advance.

**Menu Planning**
Menus must be approved by the Funded Partner’s RD and meet the nutritional requirements of the Title 22, CCR, Division 1.8, Section 7638.5, prior to submission to the AAA4 Dietitian. The AAA4 Dietitian must receive menus at least sixty (60) days prior to meal service so that there is sufficient time for final corrections.

Any food substitutions must be of similar nutritional value and may not reduce or significantly alter the nutritional content of the proposed meal. Substitutions must be infrequent, pre-approved by the Funded Partner’s RD, and submitted to the AAA4 Dietitian.

**Nutrition Education**
Funded Partners shall maintain a written nutrition education plan signed by their Registered Dietitian indicating scheduled dates and content for each presentation. Documentation of nutrition education should include dates, materials, number of participants and participant evaluations. The annual Nutrition Education plan is to be submitted to A4AA by the first week of each contract period.

Nutrition Education services shall be provided no less than quarterly (4) times per fiscal year (prorated for the year) at each congregate site. If nutrition education is not provided by the Funded Partner’s RD, the lesson plan must be pre-approved by their RD in advance. All activities should be documented, maintained, dated and submitted to the AAA4 Dietitian.

Funded Partners are encouraged to provide nutrition education for dietary vitamins hard to include in menus such as vitamin D, E, and B12.

At least annually, participants should be surveyed to identify nutritional topics of special interest to them, and those topics should be incorporated into the quarterly presentations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
Funded Partners are encouraged to limit costs for site rental fees and/or establish in-kind agreements for the use of space at meal sites.

Funded Partners are encouraged to collaborate with local SNAP contractors to help extend benefits the eligible Older Adults.

Volunteers should be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses, and it is highly recommended that volunteers be evaluated and recognized at least annually.