

**California Association of Nutrition Directors for the Elderly**  
*Providing Quality Nutrition Services to California Seniors for over 25 Years*

**Adequate Funding for Senior Nutrition Programs**

Every day nearly 180,000 seniors receive nutritious meals from a caring, committed (service) providers. Across California, community-based groups are providing over 18 million meals to elderly, often frail people either through home delivery or at congregated meal locations. These non-profit organizations operate in every county in the state; working in densely populated urban settings as well as sparsely populated rural areas.

Meal recipients are older than most, averaging over 75 years old. The majority are older women. Often these seniors live alone and these meal visits are many times the only socialization opportunities these seniors have all day. In many cases, the meals provided are the only nutritionally balanced meal of the day. But the service assists seniors in other ways than just a good meal. Because good nutrition is essential for good health for frail seniors, the meals' help people stay healthy and reduces the need for more intense chronic and acute healthcare services. They are able to live independently in their communities rather than be placed in a high cost institutional/medical setting prematurely. Because many recipients live on very limited incomes, these meals allow them to stretch scarce resources helping them make ends meet. And the program gives homebound seniors regular contact with caring volunteers and committed staff which can often be the gateway to other important social and health services and a lifeline for elders in an emergency.

With California facing a rapidly growing senior population, most providers have been forced to cut costs and stretch funding to meet the growing need. From 4.7 million in 2000, the number of seniors will grow to 6.4 million in just three years and will be double that number – 12.5 million – in just three more decades. But even in the face of this growing demand, nutrition programs have been financially starved and are cutting services, adding to long waiting lists, and are forcing them to ask very low-income seniors to voluntarily contribute more for their meals. Government funding has not kept pace with inflation nor has it taken into account the rising food and other operational costs. Federal Funding has been flat since the early 1980's. Recently, fuel costs have skyrocketed increasing the cost of food vendor deliveries and delivery fleet expenses for these service providing organizations as well as making it harder to retain volunteer drivers who must absorb the higher costs of gasoline. In many areas of the state utility costs have risen over recent years. And now the non-profit meal providers are faced with mandated minimum wage increases. Many are at the edge and could be forced to take drastic steps to operate at current levels.

In 2006-2007, senior nutrition programs receive \$71,462,111 in state and federal pass through funds (which equates to approximately \$3.86 per meal served in the state). Participant donations, corporate gifts and monies raised through local fund raising are used to leverage these funds. But funding through the state budget is the cornerstone of their operations.

For 2007-2008, nutrition programs and senior advocates are urging the state to supplement public spending by an average of \$0.35 per meal, or approximately \$ 6,466,737 dollars. This would increase public funding for programs to \$77,928,848. We would further support budget trailer bill language to allocate funds to recognize different costs for delivered versus congregated meals, slightly higher transportation costs of rural providers, and a commitment that additional funding for nutrition programs would not supplant local funds or be used for other programs at the local level.