



The Crisis of Malnutrition Among Older Floridians: The Time to Act is Now

We, the Florida Malnutrition Advocacy & Education Network, are a group of diverse stakeholders from Florida's public, private and non-profit sectors who have committed to working together to address the crisis of malnutrition among older Floridians.

Our Network is currently activated around the critical need identified in a 2019 study released by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services:

“Senior Malnutrition ... is something Florida needs to dedicate more time and money towards in order to develop and improve interventions and resources that are available to seniors.”

- [State of the State: Malnutrition Among Florida's Senior Population](#)



What is Malnutrition?

Malnutrition simply means poor nutrition. It can be related to:

- An excessive or imbalanced diet
- Clinical conditions that impair the body's absorption or use of food
- A diet that lacks essential nutrients
- Individuals can be overweight or obese and still malnourished



What is the Impact of Malnutrition?

 Malnutrition disproportionately impacts and has reached crisis level among older Americans. Florida, with the highest proportion of residents aged 60 and older in the nation, faces a grim reality in fighting the impact of malnutrition on its older residents. This is especially true in the wake of COVID-19, which has further exacerbated the malnutrition crisis.

Malnutrition is perhaps one of the most overlooked cause of poor health despite it being a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among older adults.

 A 2016 study found that, in Florida alone, malnutrition costs tallied over \$1 billion. These costs are due to increased length of hospital stays, readmissions, disease complications and cost of care.



What can be done with the support of your leadership?

 The crisis of malnutrition among older Floridians is multifaceted. It is imperative that our state leaders, using the 2019 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services study as a roadmap, convene meaningful conversations around and provide leadership on malnutrition topics such as:

- How we can prevent, identify, and intervene on malnutrition? Malnutrition is both prevalent and costly; it is also preventable. Investing in prevention pays off.
- Community outreach to older Floridians. Clinical health care alone will not prevent malnutrition. We must be proactive.

Establish and strengthen malnutrition education, screening, and intervention

- Advocate for Malnutrition and food insecurity screening to be given to all patients upon admission to hospitals, outpatient visits, nursing homes, anywhere across the continuum of care.
- In hospitals: Implement malnutrition quality measures, including the new Global Malnutrition Composite Score measure that was recently favorably voted on by national Measures Application Partnership and National Quality Forum Committees (source: <https://www.eatrightpro.org/news-center/in-practice/quality-and-coverage/mqii-milestone-global-malnutrition-composite-score-measure-update>).
- In the community: The 2020 Older Americans Act reauthorization included malnutrition reduction in the Act's official purpose and also added malnutrition to program participant screening. Note: The Malnutrition Quality Improvement Initiative (MQii) has models for hospital screening/intervention and Massachusetts has good examples of community-based screening/intervention programs (<https://www.mass.gov/lists/older-adult-malnutrition-awareness-and-prevention-toolkit>).

Note: CARES funding could be used to fund the development/implementation of malnutrition education, screening, and intervention through hospital quality programs and Older Americans Act community-based programs.

Support increased funding for Older Americans Act community-based nutrition programs (particularly home-delivered meals for older adults).

- In mid-April, research conducted among the Meals on Wheels America network illuminated the harsh reality of America's food security emergency: 79% of all programs reported that the demand for their services had at least doubled — and some saw increases of over 900%. (Source: https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/docs/default-source/covid-19/covid-19-impact-report.pdf?sfvrsn=52b6b53b_6)

Establish and strengthen programs to promote older adult enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- Historically, approximately 1/3 of eligible older adults have participated in SNAP (Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/evaluation-alternatives-improve-elderly-access-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>) With the increased SNAP funding that has been included in federal COVID-19 bills, there are real opportunities for older adults to receive more support. The National Council on Aging benefits check-up website can help older adults enroll in SNAP (Source: <https://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/benefits/food-assistance>).

Florida is a leader and innovator in aging services.

The State's prioritization of funds and resources allows Floridians to age with dignity, independence, and purpose. Addressing the crisis of malnutrition is a need for the overall future of Florida's aging population. Making this investment will create a great benefit for older Floridians, allowing them to live longer lives that are rich and full of dignity.

The Florida Malnutrition Advocacy & Education Network is available to provide you with more information on the crisis of malnutrition among older Floridians and what we can do together to address it, including awareness activities such as our plans for the upcoming National Malnutrition Awareness Week in October.

Please contact the Chair:

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