



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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Area Agencies on Aging Role in Addressing Food Insecurity

More than 9.7 million seniors are threatened by hunger. Of these, 5.3 million are food insecure; they lack consistent access to enough food to live an active, healthy life. The fact that 1 in 4 seniors lives alone and feels lonely compounds the matter.

We spoke to Justine Young, Chief Executive Officer, and Jordan Miles, Director of Nutrition Services at the Piedmont Senior Resources (PSR) Area Agency on Aging, about the greatest needs of seniors and how his organization is helping to meet those needs. PSR is one of the largest affiliates for Meals on Wheels, serving eighty to one hundred thousand meals a year. This service provides social interaction and the ability to check to see if seniors have other needs. PSR also hosts Friendship cafes that serve group meals and is working to get a large refrigerator to supply more fresh produce to their clients.

Question and answer:

Q: What are some of the greatest needs of your older adult clients?

Jordan: A health needs assessment conducted in Central Virginia identified nutrition and food insecurity as a top need in the seven-county area. Many of the counties are considered food deserts where residents have limited access to food, especially to fruits and vegetables.

Justin: Some of our clients live so far out that there is not a store near them, certainly not a grocery store. Our clients receiving home delivered meals can't drive, and there is no public transportation in the rural counties.

Jordan: Accessible transportation is a big need for our clients. There is no on-demand transportation in the area, and medical transportation is unreliable, as well. PSR provides affordable medical transportation to help address this need.

Q: When it comes to diet and food, what are some of the major concerns of your clients?

Justin: Our clients want healthy meals that taste good. Oftentimes what tastes good is relative to their upbringing and what they're used to. This can be a barrier at times. PSR tries very hard to provide healthy, culturally and medically tailored meals that people enjoy.

Q: What are the biggest nutrition concerns of your clients?

Justin: A huge issue is that even if they get groceries, some of our clients cannot stand long enough to prepare a healthy meal. They depend on less nutritious food that doesn't require preparation. Some cannot afford nutritious foods.

Jordan: They are grateful for the healthy meals. They mention that the effect of healthy meals has shown in better health outcomes during healthcare visits.

Q: What help does your agency offer for food access needs?

Jordan: The agency offers SNAP benefit sign-up and monthly food boxes to 200 plus clients.

Q: Are there resources you can recommend for people experiencing food insecurity?

Justin: Area Agencies on Aging are a great resource. Local food pantries and food banks, churches, Meals on Wheels affiliates, and social services are also excellent resources. We work with these organizations to help local residents with food insecurity.

Possible responses to food insecurity

There are many potential actions to take to address personal food insecurity and to help with food insecurity in others. Here are just a few suggestions:

- Contact your local Area Agency on Aging if you are experiencing food insecurity.
- Support your local food bank or pantry through regular donations and/or volunteering.
- Contact your local Meals on Wheels program and see how you can help. Meals on Wheels is a national network of local programs determined to combat senior isolation and hunger. Volunteers deliver meals and companionship to seniors.
- Become a Master Food Volunteer. Contact your local Cooperative Extension Office to see how to enroll in a Master Food Volunteer training.

Slow Cooker Chicken & Dumplings

This is an easy, economical chicken and dumpling recipe that can be put in the slow cooker in the morning, and is ready for dinner with no fuss. Source: <https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/?s=slow+cook->

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds boneless/skinless chicken breasts
- 2 cups reduced-sodium cream of chicken soup
- 1 onion diced
- 2 carrots sliced
- 2 medium celery stalks chopped
- 10 ounces of refrigerated reduced-fat biscuit dough torn into pieces
- 1 cup of frozen peas

Instructions:

Makes 8 servings

1. Place chicken, cream of chicken soup, and onion in the slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 6 hours. Stir in carrots and celery after 5 hours of cooking
2. Place torn biscuit dough in the slow cooker 30 minutes before serving. Cook until dough is no longer raw in the center about 25 minutes. Add peas during the last 10 minutes of cooking. Serve warm.

Flexibility Exercises Wrist Flexes

Up: Hold your arm straight out with palm facing away from you and fingers pointing up. Hold onto the palm of hand and stretch wrist back. Important to not pull on fingers. Make sure the fingers and thumb are kept together. Hold 10 seconds. Repeat two or three times.

Down: Hold one arm straight out. With fingers of other hand, gently press down above the knuckles bending wrist down. Do not hold at fingers to push down. Hold 10 seconds. Repeat two or three times

Resources:

Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging -Find your Area Agency on Aging-vaaaa.org/25-area-agencies-on-aging/

Piedmont Senior Resources - www.psraaa.org

Hunger Resources: www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/hunger-action-month

Meals on Wheels: www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/

Federation of Virginia Foodbanks: Federation of Virginia Food Banks: vafoodbanks.org

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