

2026 NATIONAL SNAPSHOT

# Supporting Senior Health and Independence while Saving Money

For more than 50 years, Meals on Wheels has set the gold standard as an evidence-based public-private partnership that effectively addresses the issues of senior hunger and isolation while providing a proven significant return on investment in the form of health care savings. But with growing demand and rising costs, many seniors

are left waiting for nutritious meals and moments of connection. And while they wait, they're more likely to end up in the hospital or a long-term care facility. The need has never been greater, but together, we can End the Wait.

## Hunger and isolation put seniors at risk for costly health issues.

Almost **95%** of older adults have at least one **chronic condition**, and nearly **80%** have two or more.

**Food insecure** older adults experience worse health outcomes than food-secure seniors, with greater risk for:

- **High Blood Pressure**
- **Heart Attack**
- **Diabetes**
- **Depression**



Older adults have the highest rates of **social isolation**, putting seniors at risk for:

- **High Blood Pressure**
- **Anxiety and Depression**
- **Cognitive Decline**
- **Dementia**

Federal funding shortfalls for Meals on Wheels end up costing the government and taxpayers more due to costly health care and long-term care expenses that could have been prevented.

When adjusted for inflation:



**Senior malnutrition** costs an estimated \$76 billion a year in health care costs.



**Older adult falls** cost the U.S. health care system \$100 billion a year, with most of the cost paid by Medicare.



**Social isolation** costs Medicare an estimated \$9 billion annually.

The estimated economic value of family caregivers' unpaid contributions is approximately **\$600 billion**

# Meals on Wheels is the solution...

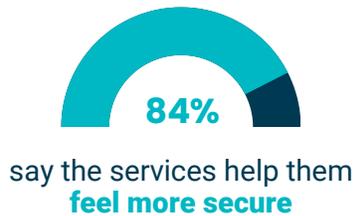
## Meals on Wheels is proven to:

-  Reduce use of costly health care services
-  Reduce nursing home admissions and increase ability to age in place
-  Reduce health care costs
-  Increase food security
-  Improve diet quality
-  Improve or reduce decline in nutritional status
-  Reduce social isolation and loneliness
-  Reduce falls and increase home safety

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**1 year**      **1 day**      **12 days**

**We can serve a senior for an entire year** for roughly the same cost as a day in the hospital or 12 in a long-term care facility

## Of home-delivered meal participants:



## but seniors are waiting.



**1 in 3 Meals on Wheels providers has a waitlist** with seniors waiting on average 4 months for meals.

### Meals on Wheels operational costs are on the rise



**Gas prices increased 53%** from 2015-2025



**Grocery prices increased 30%** from 2014-2024



older Americans are threatened by or experience hunger

**56%** of seniors feel lonely



**HELP US END THE WAIT. FUND AND SUPPORT MEALS ON WHEELS.**