MEALS on WHEELS AMERICA
TOGETHER, WE CAN DELIVER.

FACT SHEET SOURCES & METHODS

Ready for America's Action: The Crisis of Waitlists for Meals on Wheels

A. **"1 in 3 providers has a waitlist"** is from the Meals on Wheels America 2026 Member Benchmarking Survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America

B. **"Nearly 48,000 seniors are waiting"** and **"the average waitlist is 157 seniors, some exceed 3,600" data points** are from the Meals on Wheels America 2026 Member Benchmarking Survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America.

C. **"The average wait is more than 4 months; some wait more than 2 years"** is from the Meals on Wheels America 2026 Member Benchmarking Survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America. Responses are from 251 providers who reported having a waitlist and responded to the question "What is the approximate average number of days people spend on the waitlist?".

D. **"Nearly 2/3 of providers with waitlists serve rural areas"**

- **"Providers with waitlists"** is from Meals on Wheels America interviews with 134 Meals on Wheels providers, 2025.
- **"Serve rural areas"** is from member service area ZIP codes reported by members on the 2025 Member Benchmarking Survey matched to USDA Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) Codes. A ZIP code was considered rural using categorization a described on the WWAMI Rural Health Research Center website at https://depts.washington.edu/uwruca/ruca-uses.php.

E. **"Waitlists are largest in Texas, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, South Carolina and California"** is from The 2026 Meals on Wheels America Member Benchmarking Survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America

F. **"Most of these states also experience heightened rates of senior food insecurity"** is from the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement. Calculated by Meals on Wheels America by computing numbers and percents of adults age 60 and over for the two years (2023 and 2024) for each food security level and for each state, of persons with food security data. Data obtained from U.S. Census Bureau custom data tables, at https://data.census.gov/mdat/#/ Dataset: "CPS Food Security Supplement"; Vintage: "DEC 2023" and "DEC 2024" weight: "PWSUPWGT"; geographies: all states; Demographics - (PRTAGE): 60 to 90; variable: Food Sec M2 (MD) - Detailed food security status, 12-month (HRFS12MD). These states had rates of marginal food insecurity a percentage point or more above that for the U.S. Data available on Meals on Wheels America By the Numbers: Aging Population by State Fact Sheets.

G. **"Some providers have stopped adding seniors to their waitlists …"** and **"Some seniors pass away or move into nursing homes before ever receiving services" data points** are from

Meals on Wheels America interviews with 134 Meals on Wheels providers, 2025.

WHAT IS CAUSING THE WAITLIST CRISIS?

H. **"#1 reason: funding shortfalls"** is from Meals on Wheels America interviews with 134 Meals on Wheels providers, 2025.
   - **"Federal funding has not kept pace…", "Private dollars are shrinking" and "Food, fuel, labor and utility costs are rising"** are from Meals on Wheels America interviews with 134 Meals on Wheels providers, 2025.

I. **"Providers also face…"** is from the Meals on Wheels America 2026 Member Benchmarking Survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America

J. **"The number of providers with waitlists may soon increase by nearly a third…"** is from the 2026 Meals on Wheels America Benchmarking survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America.

WHAT IT TAKES TO END THE WAIT

K. **"Providers need…" data points** are from the 2026 Meals on Wheels America Benchmarking survey, conducted by Meals on Wheels America.

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If you have questions about the data, please email research@mealsonwheelsamerica.org.