Senior Nutrition Program
Prioritizing Participants

Why prioritize?
More than ever, it is the RIGHT time to prioritize.
• Reach. Expand program reach to seniors with unmet needs.
• Innovate. Plan for unexpected changes in food or funding.
• Grow. Respond to the growing number of older Americans.
• Help. Serve people with greatest need for nutrition services.
• Target. Give multi-level outcome data to stakeholders/decisionmakers.

Prioritization System
• Consider creating a workgroup to lead implementation and training.
• If possible, use an existing prioritization model and tool.
• Statewide or otherwise unified policies and tools are ideal.
• Ensure the prioritization system includes a monitoring plan.
• A user-friendly, fair, and reliable screening tool is essential to prioritizing.

Screening Tips
• Screening is different and simpler than assessment.
• Focus on eligibility and tailor screening criteria to serve the most at-risk seniors.
• Criteria are program-specific but may include factors such as:
  • ADLs/IADLs
  • Malnutrition
  • Food security
  • Chronic health conditions
  • Transportation access
  • Existing supports/services
• Mock screening exercises can help to identify potential problems.

Waitlist Considerations
• Assign a waitlist manager and select/develop a tracking tool.
• Decide on waitlist criteria for additions and removals.
• Develop a list of other resources for clients on the waitlist.
• Make a communication schedule for people who are waiting.
• Train staff on the waitlist processes.
• Consider how to use data beyond the waitlist’s primary purpose.
• Evaluate the waitlist process and make improvements.

Recommended Resources
• Detailed How-To: Senior Nutrition Program’s Guide to Prioritizing Clients
• Sample Food Security Screener: UMD Prioritization Tool
• Referral Chart: Federal Nutrition Programs and Emergency Food
• Further Resources: seniornutrition.acl.gov

Next Steps
☐ Develop a top-line prioritization plan description.
☐ Pitch the value and approach to decisionmakers.
☐ Get consensus and commit to prioritizing.
☐ Inform and involve stakeholders, including partners.
☐ Assign a Prioritization Manager and, if applicable, establish a workgroup.
☐ Develop/customize a detailed prioritization plan and tools.
☐ Verify the plan meets all relevant program requirements/regulations.
☐ Initiate implementation of the prioritization plan and conduct training.

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