Introduction to the Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Program Quality Review Toolkit

Every level of the aging network plays a role in establishing and implementing high-quality services and programs. Local service providers (LSPs) need a method to demonstrate they provide high-quality, person-centered, effective, and efficient nutrition services.

This toolkit provides LSPs with a set of quality-focused tools to assess their Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-C1 congregate programs and services, confirm compliance with OAA basic requirements, and identify higher-level operations to promote and enhance programs.

The Quality Review Self-Assessment (self-assessment) identifies strengths in services offered and opportunities to enhance service quality and program sustainability. Use your self-assessment results to develop a quality improvement roadmap for your congregate nutrition program (CNP).

This self-assessment is voluntary and is not intended to be a monitoring tool. Results do not impact grant funding.

Scope and Organization

This toolkit includes the following:

- Introduction
- [Self-Assessment](#)
- [Resource Guide](#)
- [Action Plan Worksheet](#)

Self-Assessment

The self-assessment section includes three modules:

Module 1: Basic — Focuses on the minimum OAA CNP requirements.

- Includes criteria on minimum program requirements and service flexibilities in a "yes" or "no" format.
- Each standard in the basic self-assessment includes an OAA citation, and where possible, links to helpful webpages are included.
- A score of 30 should be reached before moving to Module 2.

Module 2: Intermediate — Explores best practices and emerging trends.

- Includes examples of congregate meal operations that go beyond basic requirements in areas such as variety, frequency, and coordination of services. These are best practices or emerging trends in OAA CNP service delivery.
- Links to helpful webpages are included for many examples. You are encouraged to add intermediate program activities not listed in this section.
- The response options for this section are "already doing," "planning to do," or "not planning to do." A total score is not calculated for this module. If your program includes at least one intermediate example, advance to Module 3.

Module 3: Innovative — Highlights complex, sustainable program operations.

- Includes examples of OAA CNP operations where complex business structures and proactive partnerships are used to create sustainable programs that support OAA-funded activities.
- Links to helpful webpages are included for many examples. You are encouraged to add activities specific to your program operations in this section.
- The response options for this section are "already doing," "planning to do," or "not planning to do." A total score is not calculated for this module.

Ensure all basic OAA CNP requirements are met before starting the intermediate or innovative modules. Working through all three modules can provide ideas to enhance marketing and promote your program's services within available resources.

Tips for Completing the Quality Review Self-Assessment

This checklist is designed to help you use the Quality Review Toolkit effectively. It outlines key steps, from initial preparation to action planning based on your results. Use this checklist to ensure you're making the most of the toolkit and to track the process.

Plan and Organize

- Review the toolkit's purpose and structure.
- Familiarize yourself with the three self-assessment modules.
- Plan who will complete the self-assessment. All modules do not need to be completed at one time. Start with module one. Consider splitting the basic module among team members.
- Set a schedule for each module and follow-up activities based on your familiarization and plan of who will complete the work. Set a pace that works for you.
- Gather relevant program information (policies, surveys, records, etc.).

Assess

- Complete the basic module first. Read each statement carefully. If uncertain how to respond, review linked web pages before answering. You may find some answers come to you quickly while other questions may take more thought to answer.
- Consider the extent to which your program meets each self-assessment item. For example, when considering volunteer opportunities, does your program have activities for different ages and abilities?
- Advance to the next module after the module 1 minimum score is reached.

Determine and Prioritize Needs

- Review and reflect. Carefully examine your scores and responses in each module. Identify your program's strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- Prioritize. Select 2-3 key areas to focus on initially, giving priority to OAA requirements. Consider the topic's importance, the scope of change needed, and the feasibility of making changes.

- Use resources. Refer to the Resource Guide in this toolkit for guidance and tools related to your priority areas. Use the weblinks to increase understanding of OAA CNP requirements and flexibilities and help plan program revisions or implement new services. The Resource Guide numbers match the self-assessment item numbers.

Take Action

- Develop an action plan. Use the Action Plan Worksheet in this toolkit to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. Outline specific, measurable goals and the steps needed to achieve them. Set realistic timelines for each action item.
- Engage stakeholders. Share your results and action plan with your team, volunteers, participants, partners, and community. Their input and support will be crucial to implement improvements.
- Implement changes. Begin putting your action plan into practice. Start with small, achievable steps to build momentum.
- Monitor progress. Regularly review your progress against your action plan. Be prepared to adjust your approach as needed.
- Reassess. Plan to retake the self-assessment in 7-12 months to measure your progress and identify new areas for improvement.

The Quality Review Toolkit is a process for continuous improvement. Every step you take enhances the quality of your CNP and positively impacts older adults in your community. Additional benefits include the identification of program strengths that can be used in business proposals, grant applications, and marketing materials for the community, program partners, and participants.

If you need additional support or have questions about implementing changes, contact your local area agency on aging (AAA) or state unit on aging (SUA) for guidance.

Methodology

The standards and examples in the self-assessment are based on the OAA of 1965, as amended March 25, 2020, and OAA regulations. They include OAA program requirements, inherent flexibilities, best practices, and innovations in CNP services. SUA, AAA, and other federal, state, and local regulations are not reflected in the self-assessment. ACL developed the toolkit with input from two diverse groups made up of SUAs, AAAs, and LSPs. A preliminary review panel was interviewed to test concepts, terms, and definitions that shape the self-assessment. A second, larger workgroup was convened to review and provide input on the self-assessment initial draft. Recommendations were incorporated, and the tool was revised into three simplified modules. ACL will soon have a separate set of self-assessments for the Title III-C2 Home-Delivered Meal Program.

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- Atlanta Regional Commission AAA & Independence Services (Georgia)
- Kentucky River AAA and Independent Living (Kentucky)
- Idaho Commission on Aging
- Maryland Department of Aging
- Pennsylvania Department of Aging

References

- [Quality Nutrition Services for Senior Nutrition Programs](#) — Summary brief addressing components of quality nutrition services.
  - [Quality Nutrition Services Extended Brief](#)