



Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

Quick Tips: OAA Nutrition Guidelines

Quick Tips are informal documents about the Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-C Senior Nutrition Program (SNP). These sheets highlight flexibilities of the federal OAA statute and address common misunderstandings about the OAA. Below each point are links to reference materials and inspiration from successful program projects.ⁱ

| See [Nutrition Requirements of the Older Americans Act](#) for basic requirements.



The OAA does not specify milk or a type of milk that must be served. Milk served by senior nutrition programs may be fresh, powdered, or shelf stable. State and local nutrition program policies may have requirements for milk and the type of milk served.

[Dairy Requirements](#) – Frequently asked questions and tips.



Title III-C meals must provide enough calcium. This does not mean milk has to be on the menu. If participants are not drinking milk, other sources of calcium may be offered, such as cheese, yogurt, tofu, almonds, and calcium-fortified or calcium-rich foods.

[Calcium and Potassium](#) – Menu tips and resources to increase nutrients.



Salt, pepper, and other seasonings for use by participants are allowed in Title III-C meals. Meals served must meet OAA nutrition requirements, but participants have the right to season their meals after being served.

[Sodium Reduction Toolkit](#): Examples of state unit on aging (SUA) policies and materials to help the network develop policies and guidance related to sodium.



Title III-C meals are required to meet the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) and Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs). This makes it easy to tailor menus to meet dietary requirements for chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and kidney disease.

[Limiting Sodium, Saturated Fat, Empty Calories, and Refined Grains Tip Sheet](#) – Menu tips and examples.

[Innovative Models 2018 Improving Heart Health Through Diet, Education, and Self-efficacy in New York.](#)



The OAA encourages the use of locally grown food in meal programs. Identifying potential partnerships and contracts with producers and providers of locally grown food is encouraged.

[What is Local Food?](#)— Resource from The Labels Unwrapped Project.

[Partnerships with Food Banks and Other USDA Programs](#) – FAQs about how OAA programs can partner with SNAP, TEFAP, food banks, SFMNP, and others.



USDA MyPlate is a consumer resource and example of the DGAs. Each SUA must set nutritional standards that best meet the needs of older adults in their state or territory. Your SUA may allow the DGAs as a model to develop menus. Other menu planning models that may be allowed include the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) or the Mediterranean Diet.

[Menu Creation Toolkit](#) – Menu examples using Meal Patterns and MyPlate.

[ACL Program and Policy Areas Nutrition Services](#) – See Nutrition Quality Standards.

[Why the DASH Eating Plan Works](#) – Nutrient levels and the science behind the diet.



Meal providers must provide meals that meet nutrition standards and appeal to older adults. Meal participants have the right to decide what they want to accept from the meal selections. Tracking popular (or unpopular) menu items and surveying participants for preferences can help with planning appealing meals.

[Innovation in Nutrition Programs and Services Choice Counts and Voice Technology](#)

[Creating Delicious, Healthy, Appealing Meals for Seniors](#)



The DGA and the DRI requirements cannot be waived. The Administration for Community Living (ACL) has no legal authority to waive these requirements, nor do SUAs. ACL provides many tips through the [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#) to create flavorful meals that meet nutrient requirements.

[Policy and Practice Implications for Senior Nutrition Programs](#) – Guide and examples for incorporating the DGAs.

Access the [Reference Links](#) here.

[Older Adults DGA Tips](#) – Specific recommendations and tools.

Additional Quick Tip Sheets

- [Congregate Meals](#)
- [Home-delivered Meals](#)
- [NSIP](#)
- [OAA Basics](#)
- [Funding Options](#)
- [Nutrition Service Reporting](#)

Find more resources at the [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#).

ⁱ In many areas the OAA gives SUAs the authority to add other requirements beyond those that are included in the OAA. So certain practices, which might be allowable under the OAA and perhaps included in this document, might be handled differently in some states or local areas. These documents only reflect information about the OAA nutrition program from a federal perspective; state and local variances are NOT covered.