

Spotlight on the Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living's One Meal at a Time Program

Q&A with Amanda Stoess, MS, RD, LD, Nutrition Program for the Elderly

Note: This document presents an interview conducted by the Nutrition and Aging Resource Center to spotlight the work of ACL grant recipients and share practices with the aging network. Responses are presented verbatim.

Program Introduction

We have the opportunity to train home delivery meal drivers in the Question, Persuade, and Refer program, also known as QPR. And that program helps offer mental health awareness training for them, so if they enter a home, they are able to recognize an individual in a crisis and provide an intervention. But we also take it a step further to train our senior center directors, case managers, and community partners in the Living Works Assist Program, which is a more in-depth suicide intervention training.

Interview Insights

Tell us about the “why” and motivation behind your project.

The aging network in Kentucky brought awareness and concerns that they had in the communities with suicide. We didn't realize there was a problem. We looked for funding opportunities that provided training for these staff and volunteers. And there's just so much stigma around mental health and concerns, especially in older adults. It's easy to turn a blind eye, to think it doesn't happen, but honestly, most older adults experience the mental health risks.

How did you go about finding appropriate partners and partner organizations?

We have three excellent partners in our project. One is our aging network. They're our boots on the ground, so we have to have them to find these individuals who are in need. Second, we looked inside our cabinet, Kentucky's Department for Behavioral Health. We partnered with them to see what they're currently offering as far as suicide intervention and said, "Hey, we have a problem." And they actually told us that older adults were an area that they weren't able to reach. They didn't know how to get in the doors, so they were really excited to hear that we understood that there was a concern, and we could help their initiatives decrease the older adult suicide rates in Kentucky. Our third partner is the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger. We brought a concern to them, and they offered a platform where they develop videos and

publish them for our senior center staff and volunteers to utilize. That way, mental health is a constant reminder of, "Hey, you've had this training. Don't forget about it because you never know when you're going to need it."

Tell us about the process of starting a project similar to this.

You definitely want to have your aging network behind you. If there's a concern, make sure they understand that there's a concern. They're the boots on the ground. They're the ones seeing these individuals on a daily basis, so they're the ones going to be the first ones to recognize an issue. And then find any community partners that may be already offering the training. Those could be state or local agencies. They can be a local university, especially if they have a psychology department. And then local schools, the family resource officers, especially with those grandparents raising grandchildren. Also, don't forget about those opportunities to train individuals as trainers. That way, you can keep the momentum going and continuing those trainings as staff turns over, and you can keep offering those opportunities.

What aspects of your project do you enjoy the most?

I like being able to provide these trainings, get the information out there, and make it a common topic in everyday conversation. Suicide is very hard for people to talk about, but it is providing the skills and the confidence in individuals, so if they do need to help an older adult, they're able to, and they can help those individuals.



Learn more from the [Nutrition and Aging Resource Center](#), funded by the [Administration for Community Living](#) to build the capacity of senior nutrition programs funded by the Older Americans Act.