



# 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](http://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.
- Conduct training to ensure parties involved in implementation understand the plan.
- Initiate implementation of the prioritization plan.