



State of South Carolina
Department on Aging

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PROGRAM INSTRUCTION FOR: EMERGENCY MEALS POLICY

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM FOR: Area Agencies on Aging

SUBJECT: PROGRAM INSTRUCTION (PI) for EMERGENCY MEALS POLICY

DATE: August 10, 2026

AAA COMPLIANCE DATE: July 1, 2027

EMERGENCY MEALS POLICY	POLICY NUMBER
REFERENCE(S): 45 CFR 1321.9(xiv)	
RELEASE DATE: July 1, 2026	AAA COMPLIANCE DATE: July 1, 2027

Purpose:

To ensure the ongoing provision of senior nutrition services, it is essential for the Aging Network to incorporate emergency meal strategies into its operational plans. Emergencies, such as severe weather events, power outages, or other unforeseen circumstances, can disrupt meal delivery for several days, potentially compromising the well-being of older adults who rely on these services.

Policy Statement:

In preparation for emergencies that may disrupt regular meal service, nutrition programs may provide emergency meals to program participants for later use.

Emergency Meal Planning Considerations:

- Meal Pre-Staging: Develop plans to pre-stage emergency meals at designated locations or directly within participants' homes. Considerations should include storage capacity, expiration dates, rotation of stock, and the specific needs of each participant.
- Up to five shelf-stable meals per delivery may be provided to senior nutrition program clients for emergency purposes.
- Meal Replenishment: When participants consume their emergency meals during an emergency, nutrition programs should arrange for the delivery of additional meals to replenish their supplies.

Best Practices for Emergency Meal Management:

- Shelf-Stable Meals: These meals do not require refrigeration and are non-perishable, making them ideal for emergency situations. They should be labeled with clear storage instructions and expiration dates/"use by", or "best by" dates.
- Frozen Meals: Frozen meals should remain in a solid frozen state until delivery. Providers must ensure proper storage and handling to maintain food safety. This meal type would not be appropriate for areas affected by power-outages or for individuals who are unable to prepare such meals.
- Food Safety Standards: Adhere to food safety guidelines to prevent contamination and ensure the health of participants. This includes proper labeling, storage, and handling of meals.

Reporting:

- Because it is impossible to know when emergency meals are consumed, meals are reported at the time of distribution or delivery.
- Meals funded with Title III-C funds must meet federal and state nutrition requirements – **link to internal policy reference**, which means that they provide a minimum of one-third of the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI) per meal and comply with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).
- To count a meal as NSIP-eligible, emergency meals must meet NSIP- link to internal policy reference requirements, including nutrition requirements.
- Emergency meals that are distributed prior to or during emergencies to be consumed at home are generally reported as III-C2 meals. Also refer to Congregate Grab-and-Go Meals with HCBS Funds- link to internal policy reference for additional reporting information as approved by the SCDOA.
- State HCBS Emergency Funds: During a Governor-declared state of emergency, State HCBS Emergency funds may be utilized to procure non-

federally and state-compliant meals when access to nutritionally compliant meals is disrupted, potentially leading to a service gap.

- This flexibility ensures that individuals continue to receive nutrition support during emergencies, even if the meals do not meet standard compliance requirements. Every effort should be made to procure emergency meals as close to the nutrition requirements as possible. The use of these funds for non-compliant meals is intended to maintain service continuity and support the health and well-being of vulnerable populations during times of crisis.
- AAAs should ensure that any procurement of nutritionally non-compliant meals is documented and justified.
- Refer to State Emergency Funds – ***link to internal policy reference.***

Instructions for Clients:

- Nutrition providers must include instructions when providing emergency meals to clients:
 - Consume meals during emergencies when the nutrition provider cannot deliver meals, such as during loss of power, storms, wildfires, or other emergencies.
 - Meals should be consumed before the expiration, “use by”, or “best by” dates listed on packaging.
 - Menus for food components to be combined in multi-meal boxes.

SUA Responsibility

During monitoring, the SUA will review emergency meal data, menus, and corresponding nutrient analysis to ensure the correct funding source was utilized.

AAA Responsibility

- AAA emergency plans for emergency meals to include:
 - Guidance for providers on the issuance of shelf-stable emergency meals based on weather patterns and unforeseen circumstances.
 - The number of emergency meals provided per senior, as well as contract information for the procurement of such meals.
 - Plans for pre-staging, delivery, and replenishment of emergency meals.
 - Alternate or back-up contractors in the event of suspension of operations.

See also: Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Policy



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