



NEW SURVEY DATA: MEALS ON WHEELS NATIONAL NETWORK CONTINUES TO FACE UNPRECEDENTED DEMAND AND RISING COSTS DUE TO COVID-19

Arlington, VA, August 12, 2020 – The latest pulse survey conducted by Meals on Wheels America finds that nearly all local Meals on Wheels programs are experiencing financial strain and uncertainty while maintaining critical service to an estimated hundreds of thousands more seniors than before the pandemic hit in March.

“While cities and states grapple with the challenges of reopening as cases in some areas continue to surge, much of our country’s high-risk older adult population continues to self-isolate, prolonging challenges of daily life and requiring support from organizations like Meals on Wheels,” said Ellie Hollander, President and CEO, Meals on Wheels America. “This survey data offers critical insights into the level of resources necessary to sustain this extraordinary increase in demand.”

Beginning with a benchmarking survey in April, this latest research conducted three months later reveals that programs are now serving an average of 77% more meals and 47% more seniors than they were March 1, indicating a sustained increase in need for meals, and a continuing upward trajectory of senior client growth nationwide.

While 59% of programs surveyed say they are still seeing an increased demand for meals, costs have risen for nearly all (97%), especially due to the need to acquire safety supplies and personal protective equipment, and to serve more meals to each senior client amid uncertainty. And although 75% of programs have received federal response funding of some kind, nearly as many are concerned about their ability to sustain operations without continued emergency support.

Since establishing its COVID-19 Response Fund in March, Meals on Wheels America has distributed more than \$28 million to more than 600 local providers on the front lines of the crisis nationwide. The leadership organization is also advocating for a minimum of \$1.1 billion in funding for programs like Meals on Wheels in the next coronavirus emergency relief package.

“It’s becoming more and more clear that the pandemic isn’t going away anytime soon, and we all need to remain steadfast in our support of the organizations on the frontlines, ensuring seniors can stay safe, nourished and healthy at home,” said Hollander.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

The survey was conducted by Trailblazer Research between July 9-16, 2020 amongst Meals on Wheels America’s Membership, which is representative of the national senior nutrition provider network of more 5,000+ individual community-based programs.