

January 2021

## Ensuring Older Adults Don't Go Hungry During the Pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic had already begun a year ago, but it wasn't until March that almost everything in the U.S. shut down and people were advised to isolate in their homes. Almost overnight, we all had to rethink our work and family lives while fearing a deadly disease. Imagine if at that time you were an older adult and knew that 88 percent of mortalities were older adults. How would you get your basic necessities, like food?

From one day to the next, congregate dining sites had to close. Home-delivered meal drivers, many of them older adults themselves, had to take the precaution of discontinuing their deliveries. Hundreds of people suddenly had no way of getting food or preparing meals. Even those who until now had done their own grocery shopping were advised not to go to stores any longer.

AgeOptions and our partner agencies quickly pivoted to meet the needs of older adults in suburban Cook County and provide food and other services. We immediately assessed the needs and worked with our partners to find innovative ways get food to older adults in the most

effective way possible, while trying to minimize the times older adults were exposed to others. We also quickly added hundreds more to the numbers of individuals who usually receive meal services.

With our resilient and dedicated network, we provided almost 2 million meals in Fiscal Year 2020, an increase of 42 percent over the previous year.

**How we provided food to older adults in 2020 – and how we're continuing to do so:**

- Many congregate sites switched to take-out meals since in-person dining was not allowed.
- We continued weekday home-delivered meals and added second and weekend meals.
- We delivered almost 300,000 shelf-stable meals.
- We delivered 126,155 special diet meals.
- Cook County Sheriff's deputies helped deliver meals.
- We worked with Top box to deliver boxes with fresh and frozen ingredients for preparing approximately 175,000 meals.

These numbers are growing as AgeOptions and our partners continue to provide food for older adults. We are grateful for funding from the CARES Act, the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act, American House, Empower Illinois and The Chicago Community Trust. We also want to give special thanks for the contributions from appreciative recipients of meals and their caregivers.

**If you or someone you know needs food delivery services in suburban Cook County, please go to our referral page at [services.ageoptions.org](https://services.ageoptions.org) and select "Home Delivered Meals."**

**AgeOptions.**

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