



# TRI-COUNTY OFFICE ON AGING

A Consortium of  
Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties;  
and the Cities of Lansing and East Lansing since 1974

## Meals on Wheels

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION AND TRAINING MANUAL

Revised May 14, 2019

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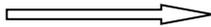
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Meals on Wheels**

**Tri-County Office on Aging  
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## **Welcome to the Meals on Wheels Program**

This manual is designed to make your volunteering experience enjoyable by giving you an overview of the program and some specific guidance regarding forms, program requirements, and emergency procedures.

Delivering meals to seniors can be a rich and rewarding experience. You will be providing a valuable service that will bring you in contact with a wide variety of unique individuals. On behalf of our organization and the individuals we serve, we thank you.

Sincerely,



Carl Buonodono, Nutrition Director

## **OUR MISSION:**

“To promote and preserve the independence and dignity of the aging population.”

The Meals on Wheels program provides nutritious meals to persons who are unable to obtain or prepare food. This benefits those we serve in the following ways:

- Older or handicapped persons may maintain their dignity while being able to stay in their own homes.
- Isolated persons receive friendly daily visits.
- Volunteers communicate needs expressed by clients to Meals on Wheels.
- Volunteers communicate circumstances that may require outside service to the Meals on Wheels office.

Meals on Wheels promote the independence and dignity of life for recipients. In these cases, the individual recipient, his or her family, and the community, as a whole, may realize considerable financial benefit.

Any one can refer a potential client to the program, but all individuals must meet program criteria to be offered services. An assessment is conducted on all referrals.

It must be recognized that some persons who may seem like good candidates for Meals on Wheels do not qualify for this service. The person conducting the assessment is responsible for determining eligibility.

## **TO QUALIFY**

A person must be:

- At least 60 yrs. of age, the spouse or partner of one who is 60 yrs. or older. A dependent child or unpaid caregiver of an eligible client may receive meals if the assessment staff finds it is in the best interest of the client.
- Unable to participate at a dining site on a regular basis
- Physically or emotionally unable to obtain or prepare meals
- Able to feed themselves or eat with assistance
- Home to receive the meals when delivered

## **WHAT KIND OF MEALS ARE AVAILABLE?**

- Hot meals are delivered on weekdays
  - Clients may request Optional meals, providing a choice of entrée
- Cold meals delivered on weekdays
- Frozen meals are available for clients who need food on weekends and holidays or who may be unable to receive a routine delivery due to circumstances beyond their control
- Mechanical/Texture modified: ground meat, chopped/soft foods
- Meals are healthy and well balanced
- Approved by a Registered Dietician

## YOUR ROLE?

It is the policy of Meals on Wheels that you must see the client or a representative when you deliver the meal.

- Providing human contact is as valuable as the provision of a healthy meal!
- Make yourself available to visit with the recipient for a few moments and ascertain that the recipient is able to open the meal container before leaving. You are a very important person to the clients.
- Report cases of an abundance of untouched meals in the home to the Meals on Wheels office staff.

The approach to the client is very important when dealing with them:

- Recognize that each person should be treated as an individual. (i.e., all older persons are not grandparents).
- Treat the person with respect; don't talk down to the person.
- Be patient, some clients need extra time to answer the door.
- Be aware that all people respond to your verbal and non-verbal behavior.
- Take physiological changes (i.e., hearing) into consideration.
- Take note if a person becomes upset, withdrawn or loses his/her appetite. **Contact your Meals on Wheels program if you have a concern.**
- **Do not share confidential information about clients/volunteers.** Refer all inquiries to your Meals on Wheels program.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY/HIPAA**

As of April 14, 2003 the federally mandated “Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act” known as HIPAA has been in effect. TCOA has the legal and ethical obligation to maintain privacy and security of client’s “Protected Health Information” or (PHI). TCOA is required to have privacy policies and procedures to train and inform staff and volunteers about what they need to do in order to protect client health information. While Meals on Wheels volunteers are only given access to information about dietary requirements of clients on their routes, volunteers do witness medical conditions from time to time, and clients may share personal information which should also be kept confidential. Please report all medical concerns or emergencies to the Meals on Wheels office. You may of course call (911) if the situation is urgent.

1. You must keep all information or knowledge you gain through contact with clients confidential. Never use a name, an address, or other identifying information when talking to others about your volunteer work with Meals on Wheels.
2. Be sure to turn route clipboards upside down and place in the bottom of the cooler if it will fit. If the cooler is too small then turn the route sheet over on the clipboard when you drop off the cooler and hot box.

## ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF A CLIENT

The majority of problems encountered by Meals on Wheels drivers are not medical emergencies. Decreased financial resources and physical capabilities may render some seniors unable to cope with a wide variety of situations. Volunteers who identify a client's needs and notify the Meals on Wheels Program enhance our ability to serve the older population.

The following is a sample list of problems that may be causing anxiety for the Meals on Wheels clients.

1. Structural damage to homes (including leaking roof) inoperative furnaces, and faulty plumbing
2. Inability to clean and maintain a home
3. Untouched meals or large amounts of uneaten food in the home
4. Abuse of medication or alcohol
5. Inability to pay for necessities (food, clothing, utilities, medicine)
6. Severe loneliness and depression
7. Inability to handle finances, understand insurance forms or fill out tax forms
8. Abuse by spouse or family member
9. Inability to wash clothes, shop for groceries or shovel snow
10. Need for assistance with bathing, washing hair or foot care
11. Incontinence

**All services are not provided in every location. However, if you identify client needs, contact your Meals on Wheels Program so we can review the services available in the local community and attempt to assist the client in finding a solution.**

## **EMERGENCIES**

As a volunteer, you may encounter an emergency situation. If you do, your greatest asset will be your ability to remain calm.

In general, if the client is not home, call your Meals on Wheels Program. If there seems to be an emergency, call 911 then Meals on Wheels.

You will eventually become aware of what is “normal” for each individual on your route. Change in facial coloration, speech patterns, ambulating habits, eating patterns and physical complaints may signal problems. Sometimes these changes occur very gradually. Meals-On-Wheels drivers have saved lives by being alert to these changes and notifying others of the need for medical attention.

## **RECORD KEEPING**

Records for Meals on Wheels programs are very important.

Records are needed to monitor the program’s status, to monitor supportive services to clients, and to justify the program’s existence in the community.

Use the clipboards to communicate with your Meals on Wheels Program unless there is something that needs to be reported the same day. **Please sign your Route Sheet to confirm all meals are delivered as specified.** This is documentation showing that the meals have been delivered as specified.

Also, fill in and sign the time sheet indicating the time that the last delivery was made.

## **CHECKING THE ADEQUACY OF THE DELIVERY SYSTEM**

Food handling during packaging and delivery affects both the acceptability of the food and the safety of the food. Improper techniques could result in food poisoning.

Control methods, as dictated by the Health Department, require us to keep track of the time it takes to deliver the meals.

As a control method Meals on Wheels keeps track of the amount of time it takes to deliver our meals. We are not required to keep track of the temperature of the food when it is delivered.

The health department allows that prepared food, which has been kept at a minimum of (135 degrees), is safe to eat if delivered within (4) four hours of the time it was taken out of a temperature controlled environment (an oven or refrigerator). For this reason it is important that we know when meals are delivered on a daily basis.

Your **Route Card** has a space where you will write the time of your last delivery; please sign the form. **Following the requirements of the Ingham County Health Department is very important. It assures the health of our clients and allows us to keep our license to serve meals. We appreciate your cooperation in following these procedures.**

# MEALS ON WHEELS FOOD HANDLING PROCEDURES

- 1) Pick up the meal containers at your designated site at the appropriate time.
- 2) Follow route sheet instructions:
  - A map is provided on the clipboard if needed.
  - Where to deliver. Example: front door, side door, through the garage to door.
  - How to deliver. Example: Knock or ring buzzer.
  - What to deliver. Regular or Mechanical and Liquid diet, optional, hot, cold or frozen.
  - In most cases, there will be a phone number to call the client directly if they do not answer the door.
- 3) Deliver Meal
  - Do not take meals out of the containers until arrival at client's residence. Opening and closing the containers is important to maintain food temperature at safe levels.
  - Note that typically a client will not receive more than one hot tray or brown bag.
  - If at any time during the delivery process you feel unsafe, DO NOT DELIVER! Contact the office and we will make other arrangements.
  - Clients receiving:
    - ✓ Regular Hot Meal: one hot tray and one brown bag (no labels).
    - ✓ Regular Cold Meal: one plain white bag (no labels).
    - ✓ Mechanical Hot Meal: one hot tray labeled "**Mechanical**" and a white bag labeled "**Mechanical Hot**"
    - ✓ Mechanical Cold Meal: one white bag labeled "**Mechanical Cold**".
    - ✓ Optional Meal: highlighted in purple on route sheet labeled "Opt" or "Alt" **AND** cold bag of the clients meal type.
    - ✓ Weekend Frozen Meal: highlighted in green on route sheet; comes in a pack of (2) two in the plastic bag.
    - ✓ Liquid: all cans of the liquid supplement will be in a plastic bag in the cooler.

- ✓ Please make your Meals on Wheels Program aware if you notice any stockpiling of food by clients.
  - ✓ Please do not accept cancellations or changes in meal orders. Ask the client to call the Meals on Wheels office.
  - ✓ Let your Meals on Wheels Program know if people other than the client tell you the client is not home and why. We can then verify.
- 4) Meals on Wheels strongly suggests using hand sanitizer during your deliveries. It is important to protect yourself and the client from potential infection.
- Squirt the hand sanitizer into the palm of your hand. This should be the size of a U.S. quarter.
  - Start rubbing your hands together gently between fingers, under rings and other jewelry.
  - Finish. Let your hands air dry; **do not** use a towel to dry hands.

## **UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

Universal precautions are a method of protection from infections. Each person is responsible for the protection of themselves from possible contact with blood or other body fluids of another person. Home care and hospice may care for patients who have infections caused by anti-microbial organisms that are antibiotic resistant.

Protocols based on **standard precautions** will be implemented and maintained to protect our volunteers and staff. Specific directions for Meals on Wheels delivery will be given daily.

As a volunteer, you must protect yourself and the client by being alert to potential areas of infection. If each of us is responsible for ourselves we can be free of worry about the spread of infections.

## **CLIENT DONATIONS**

Clients may ask you questions about the meal donation. You are the person they see on a daily basis. We would like to keep you as informed as possible with respect to our policies and procedures.

Some information that may be helpful regarding our donation policy:

1. We do need donations to keep our meal program growing. They are a vital part of the operating budget. These are not “free meals.”
2. The suggested **donation** is currently \$3.50 per meal for a hot meal and \$3.00 for the cold meal. This covers approximately ½ the cost of the meal. **No one is denied a meal because they are unable to contribute.**
3. We accept cash, personal checks or Bridge Card.
4. Many clients feel more comfortable receiving this service if they can contribute toward it.
5. If a client gives you a donation, please clip to the clipboard. There is an envelope on the clipboard if the client does not provide one.

## **A WORD ABOUT WEATHER**

When snow, drifting roads or icy conditions occur, delivery of Meals on Wheels may be canceled. We do not automatically close when schools close. There may be notification of closure on TV. Routes are typically closed on an individual basis depending on conditions in that area. In the event of cancellation, each client, as well as the driver for that day, will be notified.

Shelf stable food is provided for those we serve and are re-issued after a route has been closed for two or more days.

## **MONTHLY VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE**

A route coordinator or staff volunteer coordinator will call you to schedule when you deliver. Each month the Meals on Wheels office will mail or e-mail you a calendar with the delivery schedules for that month. This should reach your home before the end of the preceding month. Your route coordinator will check with you on a monthly basis.

If for any reason you cannot deliver on a scheduled date you should **call your route coordinator or staff volunteer coordinator**. If you have other open dates when you are available to volunteer, you can call another person on the calendar and trade with them.

**If you trade be sure to call your Meals on Wheels office and let us know of the change. There are times when we need to contact a volunteer on the day he or she is delivering, and it is important for us to know who is delivering the routes.**

If you find that you cannot deliver on the morning of, or evening before, your scheduled date call the Meals on Wheels office and let us know. You can call any time before 8:00am and leave a message on our voice mail.

By signing this I am acknowledging that I received a copy of the  
"Meals on Wheels Volunteer Information and Training Manual"

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Signature