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Senior Center Response to COVID-19: Nutrition

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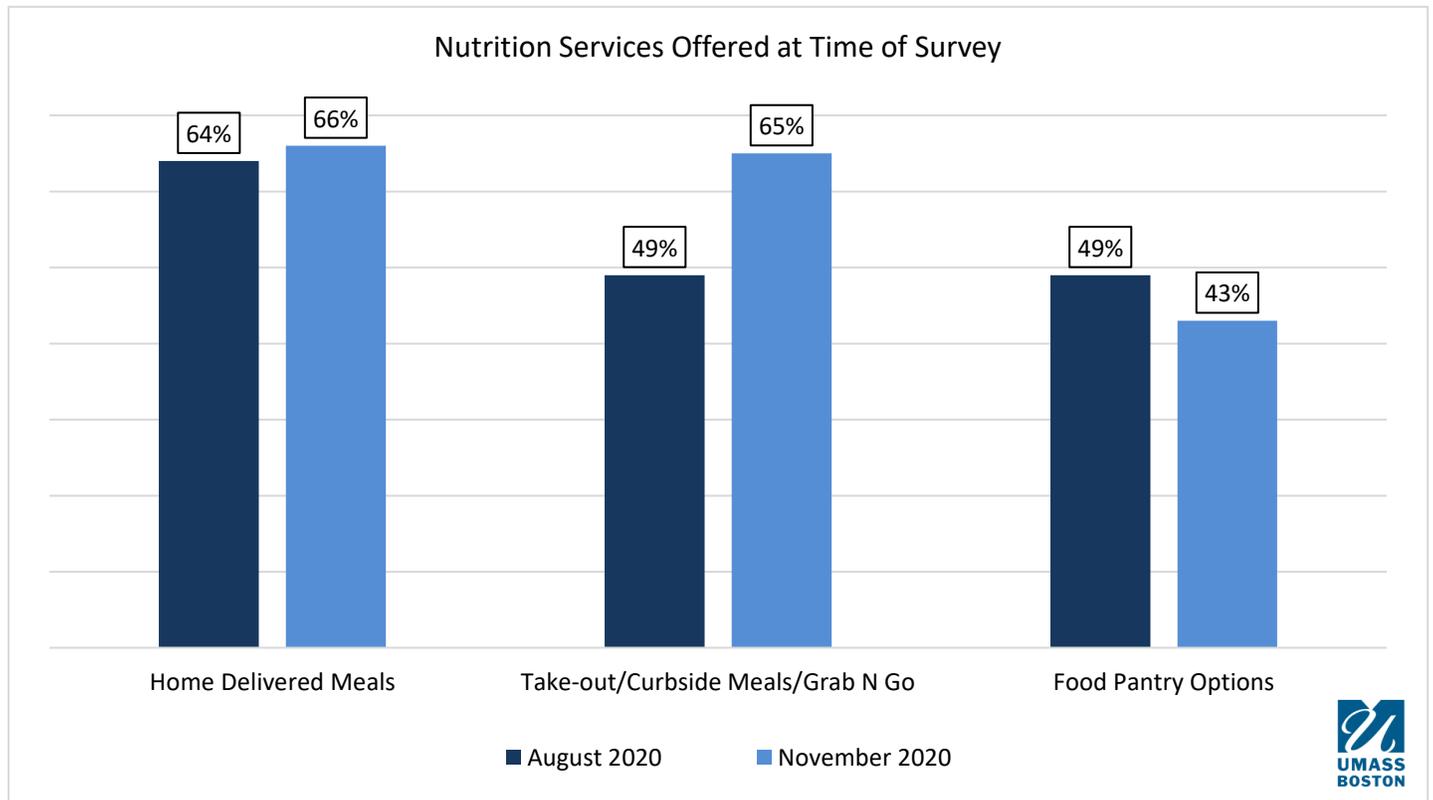
Senior Center Response to COVID-19: Nutrition

Background

Older adults across the U.S. are at risk of malnutrition, which can have lasting effects on health. Councils on Aging (COAs) are at the forefront of meeting the nutritional needs of older adults in their communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has not only limited older adults' access to food, but it has also affected COAs' abilities to get nutritious food out to seniors. Despite the hurdles presented by the global pandemic, Massachusetts COAs have continued their efforts to meet the nutritional needs of older adults.

Highlights

- The majority of COAs provided nutritional assistance throughout the pandemic.
- About 65% continued to provide home-delivered meals between August and November 2020.
- Half of COAs provided Grab N Go Meals in August 2020, and 65% in November 2020. This is an adaptive delivery model for providing what is traditionally considered the congregate meal program during the pandemic.
- By November 2020, 5% of COAs reported a return to providing some in-person meals.
- COAs used nutrition programs as opportunities to check on the health and wellbeing of older adults.



In August 2020, 26% of COAs reported addressing the nutritional needs of older adults as a major challenge. This portion increased to 39% by November 2020.

"Promoting Grab 'N Go lunches where seniors can dine together outside with social distancing."

"Many calls and meals have been provided to help the seniors feel less alone."

**Nutrition programs
have also served as
opportunities for
social engagement
and connection**

"We arrange social distance lunches with ice breaker topics, presentations, etc"

"We have developed a "Better Together" program for delivering hot meals at dinner time. It is a collaborative ...and helps local residents during this pandemic"

"We did a Drive In Dinner and now do weekly Drive By Cookouts - people can pick up and go or stay to enjoy music. Participants are asked to bring their own chairs."

As a part of the MCOA Database project, three surveys were conducted with all Councils on Aging (COAs) in Massachusetts to collect data about the organization, operations, and programs and services provided locally through COAs. Surveys were distributed in May 2020, August 2020, and November 2020. Each survey included a section of questions addressing current response to COVID-19.

This fact sheet includes data highlights from 280 COAs that responded to both the second and third surveys (82% of all COAs). About 6 months into the pandemic, COAs were still operating and adapting to different methods of program and service provision to meet the social and mental health needs of their constituents.

To learn more about the MCOA Database and its contents, please contact us at CSDRA@umb.edu



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