

## Transition Plan for Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee Senior Dining Sites

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The Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging (MCAAA) funds senior dining sites at three (3) of nine (9) Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) Public Housing locations which have a residential preference for older adults and adults with a disability:

- Arlington Court, 1633 N. Arlington Place, Milwaukee 53202
- Convent Hill, 455 E. Ogden Avenue, Milwaukee 53202
- Lapham Park, 1901 N. 6<sup>th</sup> St., Milwaukee 53212

and one (1) site for single individuals in poverty (no preference for older adults):

- College Court, 3334 W. Highland Boulevard, Milwaukee 53208

The MCAAA contracts with the Milwaukee Christian Center to provide senior meal site coordination at all of these locations.

### Programmatic Concerns:

The Senior Dining program provides healthy meals served in group settings to adults 60+. The program's purpose is to keep older adults healthy and independent, offer opportunities for social engagement, and facilitate their connection with other supports and services.

**Participation:** Post-COVID participation levels at these locations never rebounded. Federal rules allow an option to offer meals to individuals with disabilities younger than 60 if they reside in a housing facility occupied primarily by older individuals. MCAAA had exercised this discretion at these sites. Post-COVID most diners at these sites were younger and senior residents expressed a reluctance to dine. MCAAA revoked non-senior dining at the sites to encourage senior participation, but participation did not rebound. The vast majority (@ 90%) of older HACM residents do not participate in the senior dining program. Each HACM site hosts approximately 20 senior diners per day. This is the threshold amount for sustaining a dining site. At this level or below, sites have closed or consolidated in the past.

**Socialization:** The Senior Dining Program has two equally important goals – Providing healthy, nutritious meals to older adults and encouraging socialization. Unlike other senior dining sites, there were no general public participants that came to the site to share a meal. Only residents of the individual sites ate at the sites. Thus, there was no opportunity for socialization with non-residents or to make new friends. Moreover, even the residents who did participate generally came downstairs, ate their meal and returned to their room. Again, unlike most senior dining sites, no other opportunities for socialization, education, or recreation were provided at these sites – only the meal service.

### Fiscal Concerns:

In the past few years the Senior Dining program has expanded through the very popular, yet slightly more expensive “Dine-Out” restaurant options. This expansion was made possible with Older Americans Act ARPA funding. Remaining OAA ARPA funding must be spent down by September 30, 2025. In June 2025 the US Administration for Community Living (ACL) provided states with a final allocation of OAA funding. However, ACL withheld 5% of administrative funds from these allocations, rather than 1% which had been budgeted. This resulted in a recission of \$22,364 in budgeted Senior Dining program funds and \$22,013 in Nutrition Services Incentive Program funds to Milwaukee County. At the same time, the Milwaukee Christian Center, which manages the multi-site Senior Dining program, was notified that it may be losing up to \$40,000 in philanthropic revenue to support senior services. MCAAA provides \$25,000 for each meal site to support a local coordinator. HACM does not contribute any revenue to host this program at their sites.

### Proposal and Implementation Plan

In order to address both the programmatic and fiscal concerns presented above, the MCAAA has proposed phasing out the four remaining HACM dining sites, redirecting participants to alternative senior dining sites and fresh food access by October 1, 2025. This proposal has been approved by the Milwaukee County Nutrition Advisory Council, will be presented to the Commission on Aging in August and considered by the County Board in its September, pursuant to County Ordinance 53.09(10). This change will result in a cost savings of \$100,000 for meal site supervision, and additional savings due to the reduction of supervisory staff and in meal delivery due to increased efficiencies.

Once approval has been granted by the Commission on Aging, Senior Dining Program Coordinator and MCC staff will inform participants of the planned site closure. A Nutrition Education session focused on the preparation of nutrition meals will be presented at each HACM site by the Nutrition Coordinator, along with the distribution of information on all available food resources:

- A list of all remaining senior dining sites, as well as a map to the nearest senior dining site and Dine-Out options;
- An opportunity to sign up for OATS transportation, including group grocery transportation and transportation to other meal sites;
- Encouragement and support to form volunteer carpools to alternative dining sites;
- Hunger TaskForce Senior Stockbox distribution sites and times;
- Food/Farmers market guide, and identification of the nearest farmers market;
- Criteria for qualification for the Meals on Wheels program;

Additional funding will be allocated from remaining OAA IIIB Social Support funds to the Milwaukee Christian Center to ensure staffing during the transition period.