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Health Dept, Nutrition & Dietary  
Management Division

~~MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICE IN~~  
IN IOWA



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MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICE IN IOWA<sup>1</sup>

A home delivered meals program is a mobile dietary service to persons in their homes. The program is usually undertaken by public and non-profit agencies such as visiting nurse associations, auxiliaries of hospitals or medical societies, womens clubs, churches, O.E.O., or other groups.

The purpose of the service is to provide nutritious meals, normal and therapeutic, to persons unable to prepare or obtain them.

Need for Program in Iowa

The need for home delivered meals was recognized by a public health nurse who was giving care to an 88 year old senile woman who lived alone. This lady could not always remember if she had eaten or not and some days she didn't eat. She was taken to a physician who diagnosed her condition as malnutrition. The public health nurse made arrangements with a local restaurant to prepare one meal per day for the lady. The meal was delivered by a young man, but this procedure soon fell through and, the patient was placed in a nursing home. The need for a community-wide plan to deliver meals to the home of elderly persons who live alone was realized after this incident. A Health Needs Advisory Committee was organized in the community and the first meals on wheels program was started in Iowa in 1961.

During the fall of 1970, a survey of Iowa communities providing a Meals on Wheels service was made by Carol Hanson, a student at Marycrest College in Dubuque. The following information was compiled by her.

Age Range of People Who Take Meals

15 - Under 50 years old	118 - 71-75 years old
16 - 51-60 years old	147 - 76-80 years old
28 - 61-65 years old	174 - 81-over

There were about 77 to 86 people taking meals whose ages were not listed.

The Number of Males and Females Taking Meals

196 - Males	594 TOTAL with 36-45 more people taking the meals whose sex was not indicated. This brings the total to 630-
398 - Females	639 people getting meals daily. (there are nearly twice as many women as men)

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1 Material prepared by Anna Katherine Jernigan, Director of Nutrition and Dietary Management Division, Iowa State Department of Health, and Katherine Munsen, Nutrition Specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, February, 1971.



The Marital Status of Persons Taking Meals

78 - Married            35 - Single            250 - Widow            83 - Widower

There are 53 men and 95 women for whom I had no information concerning marital status. Also, there are an additional 36-45 people whose sex was not specified.

Objectives for Establishing a Meals on Wheels Service Are:

1. to supply nourishing food at a price the sick or elderly individual or his family can afford
2. to assure the recipients of a friendly interest in them as individuals
3. to offer the elderly or sick individual or couple the opportunity to live independently at home rather than in a hospital or institution.

Guidelines developed from survey of existing Meals on Wheels programs

Mrs. Nelia Stevens\* sent questionnaires to directors of existing Meals on Wheels programs in Iowa in September, 1970, in order to obtain information to use as a guideline for starting a new program. The following guidelines have been compiled from information gleaned from Mrs. Stevens' survey.

Implementing the Service

An extension home economist, a dietitian or a public health nurse can act as a catalyst to alert the people in a community to the benefits derived from establishing a home-meal-delivery service. They can offer guidance in developing community action and information on methods of implementing the service. The Board of Directors of a Meals on Wheels program should consist chiefly of lay persons who are representative of the community with several members from the health and welfare professions. The success of this type of program depends mainly upon the cooperation and zeal of public-spirited people and organizations.

Community organizations which may be represented in developing the program are:

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Women's Clubs           | Visiting Nurse Association             |
| Church Groups           | Social Welfare Agencies                |
| Public Health Service   | Senior Citizens Organizations          |
| Doctors                 | Homemaker Service                      |
| Dietitians              | Service Organizations (Kiwanis, Lions, |
| Hospital Administrators | etc.)                                  |

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\* Dietary Consultant for several hospitals and nursing homes in Southwest Iowa.



### Eligibility

Each community group which sponsors Meals on Wheels must decide those qualifications necessary for a recipient to receive the service. Most communities state in their by-laws that anyone who is unable to prepare their own meals, regardless of age, are qualified to receive this service. Other factors which some communities use to help determine eligibility are:

- . meal payments assured by the recipients, their families or social welfare
- . limitation of the program to the elderly
- . residence of the recipient within the city limits

A signed statement from the doctor of the recipient is usually necessary to establish eligibility particularly if a modified diet is a part of medical treatment. Other people who make recommendations for participation in the program are public health nurses and social welfare workers. The final decision for eligibility is made on the basis of the by-laws developed by the sponsoring agencies.

### Administration of the Program

Although the cooperation of many people in the community is essential for the success of Meals on Wheels, the administrative duties are usually delegated to a board of directors or a small advisory committee. This group may appoint one person to be directly responsible for administering the program. Directors of existing health agencies have often been asked to assume these duties. Examples of agencies who are cooperating in Iowa are the Homemaker Health Aide Service, Public Health Nursing Service and O.E.O. Administrators of local hospitals also assume managerial duties in some communities. In a few communities the director or coordinator of the program has been a volunteer worker.

Some secretarial staffs of health agencies or hospitals perform the additional bookkeeping duties required for the program.

Volunteer leaders have established a non-profit group specifically to sponsor and administer the home-delivery service in some communities. Such volunteer groups should become incorporated through the office of the Secretary of State in order to avoid liability by any one individual. In addition a volunteer group should probably carry liability insurance. Hospitals, nursing homes or other institutions do carry such insurance. One insurance company that will write liability insurance for volunteer groups is St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company.

If food is prepared in a private facility rather than a licensed hospital, nursing home or restaurant, a food operators license should be obtained from the Department of Agriculture.



Meal payments are collected, when possible, by the person who delivers the meals. This may vary from daily payments to those made on a monthly basis. When the recipient cannot pay the driver, he sends a check to the sponsoring agency. The latter method is convenient when some person, other than the recipient, is paying for the meals.

When recipients cannot pay the costs of the meals, social welfare may be a source of help.

Groups serving meals for the Meals on Wheels Program may be eligible for commodities. The use of USDA commodities is outlined below by Burdette Nodland, Assistant Supervisor, Food Programs, Department of Social Services.

Any person, regardless of race, creed, color or national origin who is unable to pay the full charge for the meal, or for whom the meal is not paid in full by another legally responsible person, is considered as an eligible in the Meals on Wheels Program.

The number of eligibles is based on the formula that ninety (90) meals served per month to recipients who are eligible for welfare, constitutes one (1) eligible person.

An institution preparing meals for this program must be eligible in its own right to receive USDA commodities. Such an institution must be non-profit and exempt from income tax.

The items which were available on January 1, 1971 are as follows:

Flour - 5/10# Bags	Vegetable Shortening 18/30 oz. pkgs
Rolled Wheat 12/3# pkgs	Butter 32/1# prints
Rolled Oats 12/3# pkgs	Beans 50# bags
Rice 50# bags	Non-Fat Dry Milk - 12/4½# pkgs
Corn Meal 10/5# bags	

Allotment is one pound of each item per eligible, per month, with the exception of flour which can be up to twelve pounds.

However, the items and amounts are subject to change.

Deliveries will be made within a twenty-five mile radius of the institution on approximately three month intervals for those who serve more than seventeen eligibles. Less than seventeen would receive deliveries on a six month cycle. A minimum charge for transportation, storage and handling will be made.

Application may be made with the Food Programs Office, Iowa Department of Social Services, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa.



### Site of Preparation of Meals

In over 90% of the communities providing a Meals on Wheels Service, meals are prepared and packed for delivery in a hospital. As meals may be sent to both the elderly who are not able to prepare meals and those who have been recently released from a hospital, it is advantageous for hospitals to prepare the food in order that special diets may be provided when necessary. One community reported that one-third of those receiving meals were on special diets.

Communities without hospitals find other sources for meals, such as nursing homes and restaurants. In a large city, both hospitals and nursing homes may help to provide meals. A new program is being established in a small town in eastern Iowa where dinners will be purchased from a local restaurant.

Community centers and churches have also been used to prepare meals.

Those groups who decide to have volunteers assume the responsibility of the food preparation for a Meals on Wheels service need:

- . a food supervisor who has had experience in food purchasing, meal planning and food preparation
- . adequate kitchen facilities
- . insurance coverage on volunteer workers and liability insurance
- . food license

In Iowa, volunteer groups serve meals in two communities, using the kitchen facilities in a Senior Citizen's Center in one city, a church in another. Both groups have found it practical to hire a cook-manager to supervise volunteer workers and be responsible for food purchasing and meal preparation. Community funds or O.E.O. funds have been used to pay the cooks.

When Mrs. Stevens' survey was made, the number of noon meals delivered daily in a community varied from 8 to 82. Most of the communities were delivering 20 or fewer meals per day.

### Cost of Meals to Patients

The cost of the meals to the patients ranges from fifty cents to \$1.75 plus 25 cents extra for a sandwich to use for a supper meal. Many of the programs charge between 60¢ and \$1.00 for a meal. The charge to the patients is determined by the following factors:

- amount paid to hospital or other facility for food
- cost of containers for food
- cost of driver, if any
- cost of insurance and articles of incorporation
- cost of licenses if food is prepared in an unlicensed facility
- cost of coordinating program, if any
- assistance from such agencies as O.E.O., C.A.P., or contributions from service clubs or individuals, use of commodity foods, etc.



The amount paid a hospital or other institution for meals varies from 44¢ to 80¢. In some instances the hospitals are actually subsidizing the program. A meat, vegetable, and potato or starch is provided in every program reported. Some programs include salad or dessert and one program includes both salad and dessert. The amount sent out for each person participating would effect the cost to the facility.

#### Types of Delivery Containers

There are several types of containers which can be used satisfactorily for the Meals on Wheels Service. Three main types are used in Iowa.

##### Stainless Steel, Electrically Heated Container

The Mealpack container is constructed of all stainless steel with a stainless steel cover and removable electrical cord. The units are plugged into an electrical outlet at least an hour before the meal is to be delivered. At delivery time, the food is placed in a three compartment dish which fits inside each container. This container is disconnected from electrical outlet. The base part of the unit and cover are sealed together with a synthetic extruded gasket which forms an airlock when the clamp is closed. Food will stay hot for several hours.

When the meal is delivered, the plate is left with the client, but the container is returned to the base of operation to be used daily. Twice as many plates must be purchased as containers.

The Mealpack unit is 10½" in diameter and 4½" high. It requires 110 volts a.c., weighs 4½ lbs. and costs \$35.75 per unit, or \$34.32 each when a dozen containers are purchased.

Several types of dishes are available for use with Mealpack.

1. The Mealpack TUF (pyrex) dish is a crystal clear three compartment dish. Cost: \$20.68 per dozen or \$1.73 each.
2. Three compartment china dishes cost \$28.16 per dozen for the plain white dish or \$32.45 for a dish with a colored border.
3. A disposable three compartment aluminum dish can be purchased for \$37.35 per case of 500. These are available from Dietary Products, 2014 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Illinois, 60201.

The original cost per unit would be approximately \$40.00 (including 2 pyrex containers) plus the cost of wiring an area for heating these units. However, a unit should last for at least five years, and probably much longer.



Comments that have been made regarding this system are as follows:

1. The food is kept very hot for several hours in the sealed container.
2. The units are heavy. They require washing after each use. The electrical part of the unit is sealed so that water is excluded during the washing operation.
3. The pyrex dish has to be picked up the next day. Sometimes these units are lost and have to be replaced.
4. When there is a large volume of service, such as 70 meals in an area, it is difficult to find sufficient space to connect this many units.

#### Plastic Thermo-type Container

The Poly-Glass Heat-Keeper made by Cambro includes a poly-glass base with a cover. This poly-glass container holds a standard 9" dinner plate or three section pyrex dish. The unit keeps food hot for at least one hour. For best results the hot food is dished onto a heated plate, placed in the container and covered immediately. Units can be stacked for transporting. The unit weighs about 2 pounds and costs about \$12. This cost does not include the china plate or pyrex dish in which the food is placed.

As with Mealpack, the plate is left with the client and twice as many plates must be purchased as containers.

#### Disposables

Styrofoam three compartment containers with lids that are hinged on one side and clamped on the other side are available at a cost of from .06¢ to 12¢ each or an approximate cost of 50¢ a week, \$2.00 per month, \$24.00 per year or \$120.00 for five years. The cups for deserts or salads cost less than two cents each if more than six cases (1000 cups per case) are purchased at a time.

A styrofoam or other type insulated carrying case is needed.

These units are said to keep food quite warm up to an hour's time. The distance a meal has to be carried would be a factor to consider when deciding the kind of delivery unit for this service.

Disposables can be purchased from many sources. Some of them are as follows:

J. P. Gosway Co., Cedar Rapids  
Pegler and Co., Lincoln, Nebraska  
Coleman Carriers, Des Moines



One service uses a preheated hot box which is put into the delivery cars. Styrofoam ice chests are used to keep the salads and desserts cool.

Another service uses the hot box method but has available in the delivery truck a Micro Wave oven. The meals are heated in this oven after the truck reaches the clients door.

#### Comments regarding delivery containers

1. The volunteer has an easier job delivering meals in a sealed container and does not run the risk of spilling the food.
2. The recipient enjoys eating his meal from a plate rather than from a styrofoam dish.
3. Cost - a factor to be considered
4. Service groups are frequently willing to purchase a meal pack unit or a Poly-Glas Heat Keeper whereas they might not continuously purchase disposables.

#### Delivery of Meals

Both volunteers and paid drivers are used in Iowa for home delivery service. When paid drivers are used, arrangements for determining the cost and methods of payment vary.

1. Driver may be paid \$1.50 to \$1.60 per hour plus mileage
2. A flat sum of \$2.50 to \$5.00 per day is paid the drivers in some communities. The amount is determined by the size of the route and number of meals delivered. This method eliminates some record keeping.

In most communities the recipients of the meals do not pay the full cost of the delivery service. Some drivers are paid from O.E.O. funds; some by donations from community groups; and in one town the hospital provides an employee to make the deliveries and pays the employee 15¢ per meal delivered to cover his car expenses.

Volunteer drivers are usually recruited from church groups, women's clubs, or service organizations. These people deliver the meals, as well as provide their own transportation. One-half of the communities surveyed by Mrs. Stevens used volunteers to deliver meals.

In one city where from 70 to 80 meals are delivered daily, using volunteer drivers, coordinators are paid to check each meal, thus insuring that special diets will reach the right individuals.

One director indicated that the ideal number of meals that a volunteer driver could deliver would be six. Perhaps this person takes time for conversation with the client. Another director indicated that a driver could make from 15 to 18 stops when delivering meals.



Providing Additional Volunteer Services

Probably the most exciting use of volunteers which has been reported is in DeWitt, Iowa. This community has been enthusiastic in providing additional services to the homebound client receiving meals. The delivered meal from the hospital consists of a meat, potato or substitute and a vegetable. The volunteer driver (or another volunteer who cannot drive) provides a "treat" each day. This treat may be a salad, a dessert, fresh fruit, home-baked bread or rolls -- anything which the volunteer thinks may delight the recipient. Care is taken to see that the additional food is permitted on the special diets.

When the volunteer notices other small services needed by the homebound individual, he relays this information and an attempt is made to provide the service. Although meals are not delivered on holidays, each recipient receives a cake on his birthday.

The volunteer gives his time, and part of himself, the greatest gift anyone can bestow. This type of service cannot be purchased, and the clients feel the love and concern of those who minister to them. Perhaps the ones who benefit most of all are those who receive the satisfaction of providing this service which is so greatly needed and appreciated.



Home-Delivered Meals Programs in Iowa  
(By City)

Monroe County Meals on Wheels Program  
Courthouse  
Albia, Iowa 52531

Meals on Wheels of Ames  
Mary Greeley Memorial Hospital  
Ames, Iowa 50010

Mobile Meals  
% Castle Drive Inn  
Anamosa, Iowa 52205

Davis County Meals on Wheels  
203 S. Madison  
Bloomfield, Iowa 52537

Boone County HM/HA Service and  
Meals on Wheels, Inc.  
Court House  
Boone, Iowa 50036

Meals on Wheels Program  
Memorial Hospital  
Burlington, Iowa 52601

Meals on Wheels  
3514 McClain Drive  
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Mobile Meals Program  
Family Service Agency  
430 Higley Bldg.,  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401

Appanoose County Homemaker's Health  
Service  
P. O. Box 64  
Centerville, Iowa 52544

Mobile Meals  
Lucas County Home Health Agency  
City Hall  
Chariton, Iowa 50049

Mobile Meals United  
223 Wilson Bldg.,  
P. O. Box 3022  
Clinton, Iowa 52732

Mobile Meals  
Wayne County Home Health Agency  
Box 102  
Corydon, Iowa 50060

Meals on Wheels  
108 South 6th Street  
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501

Meals Service  
Lend-A-Hand Bldg.,  
Davenport, Iowa 52801

Mobile Meals  
Argonne Armory Bldg.,  
East 1st & Des Moines St.  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Mobile Meals Program  
DeWitt Community Hospital  
DeWitt, Iowa 52742

Project Concern  
Loras College  
Dubuque, Iowa 52001

Meals on Wheels Program  
Public Health Nursing Service  
Palo Alto County Hospital  
Emmetsburg, Iowa 50536

Meals on Wheels  
Dietary Department  
Sacred Heart Hospital  
Ft. Madison, Iowa 52627

Meals on Wheels, Inc.  
Mrs. Dale Nicoson, Coordinator  
Forest City Municipal Hospital  
Forest City, Iowa 50436

Meals on Wheels  
Grape Community Hospital  
Hamburg, Iowa 51640

Meals on Wheels, Inc.  
P. O. Box 224  
Hampton, Iowa 50441

Meals on Wheels Project (Independence  
Neighborhood Center & Jesup)  
Independence, Iowa 50644

Meals on Wheels  
Mercy Hospital  
Iowa City, Iowa 52240



Meals on Wheels (Iowa Falls-Alden)  
First Christian Church  
Washington & Fischer St.  
Iowa Falls, Iowa 50126

Meals on Wheels of Keokuk, Inc.  
1028 Fulton St.  
Keokuk, Iowa 52632

Leon Meals on Wheels  
Decatur County Home Health Agency  
Veterans Hall  
Leon, Iowa 50144

Maquoketa Meals on Wheels, Inc.  
Jackson County Public Hospital  
Maquoketa, Iowa 52060

Meals on Wheels Association of  
Marshalltown  
709 South Center St.  
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

Meals on Wheels Service  
P. O. Box 886  
Mason City, Iowa 50401

Nevada Meals on Wheels  
Courthouse  
Nevada, Iowa 50201

Meals on Wheels  
630 State Street  
Osage, Iowa 50461

Meals on Wheels  
Clarke Co. Homemaker Health Aide Serv.  
136 W. Jefferson  
Osceola, Iowa 50213

Mobile Meals  
Mahaska County Hospital  
Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577

Ottumwa Hospital Meals on Wheels Program  
1001 East Pennsylvania Av.  
Ottumwa, Iowa 52501

Sibley Meals on Wheels, Inc.  
Cooperative Extension Office  
Sibley, Iowa 51249

Dickinson County Meals on Wheels, Inc.  
P. O. Box AB  
Spirit Lake, Iowa 51360

Story City Meals on Wheels  
812 Elm St.  
Story City, Iowa 50248

Red Oak Meals on Wheels  
Murphy Memorial Hospital  
Red Oak, Iowa 51566

Meals on Wheels  
Virginia Gay Hospital  
Vinton, Iowa 52349

Meals on Wheels  
121 E. Main Street  
Washington, Iowa 52353

Meals on Wheels (Waterloo & Evansdale)  
N. E. Iowa Council on Aging  
Park Tower Apts.  
Sycamore & Park  
Waterloo, Iowa 50703

Meals on Wheels Program  
Veterans' Memorial Hospital  
Waukon, Iowa 52172

Senior Citizens Group of Waverly  
506 E. Bremer  
Waverly, Iowa 50677



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