



Let's Go Out to Eat!

Addressing Health Equity through
Restaurant Partnerships

July 10, 2024

USAgging Conference and Tradeshow





The current congregate model

- Serves adults 60+ (and some caregivers, spouses and people with disabilities)
- Provides meals in senior centers, housing, other community gathering centers
- Offers health meals, social engagement, and access to additional community resources
- Participants experience fewer ER visits leading to admissions
- Fewer overall hospital admissions
- Healthier diet
- Improved food security
- Provide little choice for older adults
- Limited flexibility (when, where)
- Many communities lack ability to provide cultural meals





Four Main Goals



IMPROVE FOOD
INSECURITY



IMPROVE SOCIAL
CONNECTION



ADDRESS HEALTH
INEQUITIES



COMBAT AGEISM IN
OUR COMMUNITIES



Why is it important: Food Insecurity



- Food insecurity is the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.
- In Massachusetts, 1 in 7 people are food insecure.
- Food insecure older adults are at increased risk for obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other chronic health conditions.
- In today's economy, the cost of groceries, meals, and transportation increase the risk of food insecurity



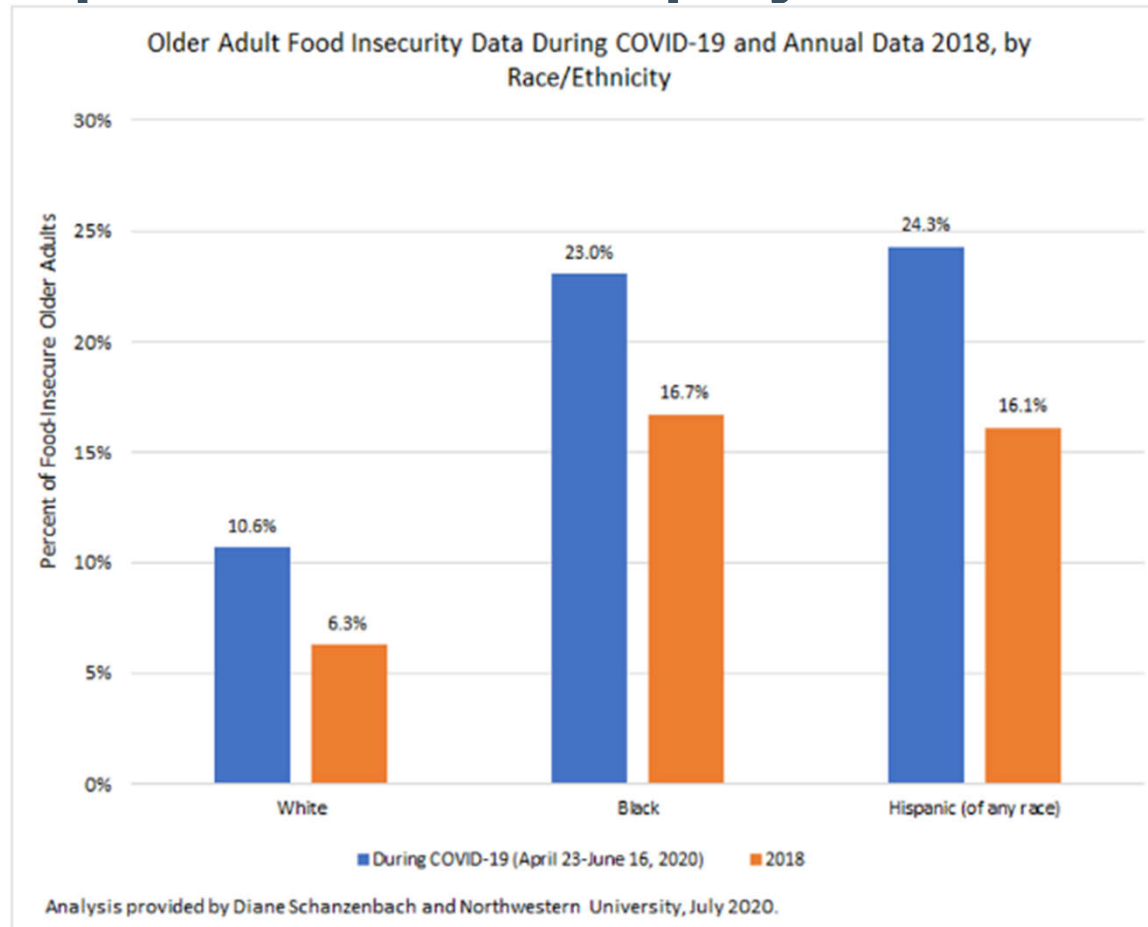
Why is it important: Social Isolation and Loneliness

- More than one-third of adults aged 65+ feel lonely. Loneliness is the feeling of being alone, not matter how much social contact you have.
- Nearly one-fourth are considered to be socially isolated due to living alone, loss of family or friends, chronic illness, and hearing loss. Social isolation is the lack of social connections
- Social isolation is associated with about a 50% increased risk of dementia
- Poor social relationships are associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease.
- Loneliness is associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety and suicide.





Why is it important: Health Equity





Why is it important: Ageism

- Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.
- According to the World Health Organization research, 50% of all people hold ageist attitudes or beliefs.
- Among older adults, ageism is associated with poorer physical and mental health, increased social isolation and loneliness, greater financial insecurity, decreased quality of life and premature death.





What is it?

Reunir (“to gather”): Reconnecting Elders Underserved through Nutrition Interventions with Restaurants

Administration of Community Living Grant

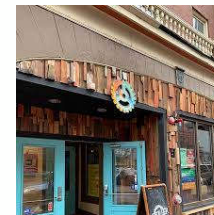
3 years (August 2022 – July 2025)

Latinx and Southeast Asian older adults (60+) will receive restaurant vouchers



What is it?

- 600+ older adults will receive up to 2 vouchers per month to a local, minority owned, cultural restaurant
- Each restaurant will provide a menu of nutritious options for the consumer to choose from
- Restaurants will submit vouchers to AgeSpan for payment
- Year 1 focus:
 - Lawrence – Latino population
 - Lowell – Southeast Asian population
- Year 2 and 3: expansion to additional communities
- Restaurant workers will receive stipends for attending Reframing Aging training
- Data collection component: satisfaction, efficacy, quality, sustainability





Eligibility

To be eligible, consumers must be:

60 years old or older

Of Southeast Asian or
Hispanic/Latinx descent

Live in the greater Lowell
or greater Lawrence area

Screen positive for food
insecurity or social
isolation



The program has screened and served more than 600
older adults



Screening Process



94% of participants speak a language other than English.



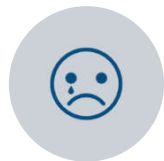
25% face housing insecurity.



29% experience a lack of necessary transportation.



78% struggle to afford basic necessities such as food, housing, medical care, and heating.



54% report recent feelings of depression and hopelessness.



Outputs and Outcomes

614 individuals screened

82% participating in Reunir (521 individuals)

More than 2,500 restaurant trips and meals

94% speak a language other than English

70% show improvement in social isolation scores

- I feel left out.
- I feel completely alone.
- No one really knows me well.
- People are around me but not with me.



Outputs and Outcomes



- 100% of consumers answered yes to “has the program encouraged you to go out and eat a nutritious meal with family and friends?”
- “With whom do you usually participate in the program with?” 64% answered “with friends.”
- “Do you feel since joining the program that you have been able to see your family and friends more often?” 46% agree or strongly agree.
- “Do you feel since joining the program that you have been able to get out of your house more often?” 93% agree or strongly agree.
- Do you feel since joining the program that you are eating more nutritious food? 89% agree or strongly agree.



Listen Now



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