



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH
SECRETARY

August 28, 2018

Ms. Mary Bethel, President
NC Coalition on Aging
PO Box 12762
Raleigh, NC 27605-2762

Dear Ms. Bethel:

Thank you for your recent letter and all the important work your organization does to advocate for older adults in North Carolina. The Department shares your concerns about food insecurity among older adults. Access to nutritious food, in sufficient quantities, is a major driver of health for older adults and is a major component of our efforts in the department to improve the health and well-being of all North Carolinians.

We have several initiatives underway with more to come to increase access to food among older adults in NC, but there is more we can do. In 2016, DHHS responded to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a technical grant with Benefits Data Trust (BDT) through the Walmart Foundation to assist adults aged 60 to 64 receiving Medicaid but not receiving Food and Nutrition Services. The Division of Social Services was selected to partner with BDT to provide targeted outreach and application assistance to help those receiving Medicaid but not receiving SNAP/FNS in accessing food benefits. The Walmart Foundation plans to continue to fund this initiative and we are finalizing the logistics for this work. Through this effort coupled with state and federal funding, Benefits Data Trust and DSS have helped more than 6,500 older North Carolinians apply for Food and Nutrition Services.

In addition to the BDT project, we are evaluating how DHHS can implement the Elderly Simplification Application Process (ESAP) for Food and Nutrition Services. This modified application process will simplify the eligibility determination process for FNS and lengthen the certification period to thirty-six months for qualified individuals. Our team is already working to evaluate the changes to our technology and policies to implement this program.

DHHS is working with partners across the state to build the North Carolina Resource Platform, a new tool to make it easier to connect people with the resources they need to be healthy. It will be a robust, integrated resource database, website, call center, and care coordination platform for clinicians, social

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workers, care coordinators, families and others to connect people to the community resources they need. Additionally, the platform will connect community-based organizations to each other across the state, so they can collaborate, while allowing for the tracking of system-wide outcomes and supporting system improvement. The rollout of this statewide platform will begin this fall and we look forward to partnering with your organizations to ensure that the platform meets the needs of the folks you serve and advocate for every day.

The Divisions of Aging and Adult Services and the Division of Social Services will continue to work with the Coalition and others in the aging network to tackle food insecurity with concrete strategies and with measurable outcomes. We look forward to a continuing dialogue with the Coalition on this issue and hearing more from you on ways we can partner to reduce food insecurity among older adults in NC.

Thank you to you and the Coalition for all you do to serve older North Carolinians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Cohen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mandy Cohen, MD, MPH
Secretary

cc: Susan Perry-Manning, Principal Deputy Secretary, DHHS
Michael Becketts, Assistant Secretary for Human Services, DHHS
Joyce Massey-Smith, Director, Division of Aging and Adult Services
David Locklear, Deputy Director, Division of Social Services, Economic and Family Services