



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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DAAS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. 20-08

TO: Area Agency on Aging Directors

FROM: Hank Bowers, Assistant Director

DATE: May 7, 2020

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Pandemic Response, Part II:
Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)
New ARMS Codes to Capture Disaster Efforts for Senior Nutrition and
Transportation Programs
Clarification of \$2,500 Respite Extension Date, DAAS—20-06

I. Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)

Per federal disaster declarations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Administration on Community Living (ACL) has awarded funding from the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) for home-delivered meals and congregate nutrition program services under Title III of the Older Americans Act. Funds must be expended on allowable Older Americans Act activities as defined within the Act, as well as in accordance with state and local policies. Funds must be accounted for, tracked, and reported separate from recurring Older Americans Act funding.

Project Period

The project period for FFCRA funds is 3/20/2020 through 9/30/2021. There is no prior approval required to charge expenditures for COVID related activities to the FFCRA for pre-award costs incurred from 1/20/2020 forward to the effective date of the project period. Disaster relief funding, including FFCRA, does not correspond to state fiscal years. Unspent fund balances for each region will be used as the new state fiscal year allocation award throughout the duration of the project.

All FFCRA funds must be obligated by 9/30/2021, with final liquidation due by 12/30/2021. Further reporting details remain under development and will be addressed in later guidance.

Distribution of Funds and Local Planning

FFCRA funding is being provided to each of North Carolina's 16 Area Agencies on Aging via the intrastate funding formula (10A NCAC 05C. 0404) for the purpose of responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The funds will be made available in two separate grants—one for Home Delivered Meals, and one for Congregate Nutrition. Per federal law, transfers are allowed across the two grants. For further detail on transfer authorities, please reference the chart on Attachment 1—COVID-19 Pandemic Guidance for the NC Senior Nutrition Program. During the period covered by the Major Disaster Declaration, no Transfer Request is necessary.

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To expedite these allocations getting to local providers in a timely and efficient manner, disaster grant funds—including FFCRA funds—are not required to go through the county planning process. DAAS strongly encourages communication about disaster grant funds occur between AAAs, local providers, and their county planning committees.

Please note that while FFCRA deviates from the typical budgeting and planning process—it is expected that normal processes will occur for recurring OAA funding (i.e.—SFY/FFY2021). However, given the current public health disaster and to maintain compliance with social distancing guidelines, virtual and electronic communications are acceptable.

Match Requirements

Service match for direct service (meals) is not required for the FFCRA funding. There are no allocations for administrative costs with FFCRA funding.

Contracting and Procurement

The new Families First grant being awarded to AAAs will offer flexibility for meal delivery and menu requirements as detailed in the Attachment to this letter. FFCRA contracts awarded by Area Agencies on Aging to providers should incorporate the requirements of this administrative letter.

AAA contracts will be awarded to providers in the same timeframe as counties are determining HCCBG services, providers, and allocations for FY 21. Local service providers will need to follow county procurement procedures for their FY21 meal preparation subcontracts. It is a AAA/local decision whether to use separate or combined RFPs to procure FY 21 HCCBG meals and FFCRA meals.

AAAs and providers are advised that the bid specifications for each procurement process should detail the projected number of meals and the different menu specifications and meal types (e.g., frozen, shelf-stable, or hot) appropriate to each funding source and project period.

Expenditures under each grant will have to be tracked and reported separately per the additional ARMS codes for FFCRA nutrition services detailed below.

One advantage of separate RFPs for each grant is that it will serve to isolate expenditures for meals purchased during the disaster declaration from meals purchased after the declaration is rescinded. The Division is awaiting further guidance on what effect the revocation of the disaster declaration will have on the purchase of FFCRA meals after the declaration ends but before the end of the project period on 9/30/2021. It is recommended that these contracts include an option to extend the purchase of disaster meals until the declaration ends.

Further guidance from DAAS on how to address procurement and contracting as it relates to major disaster declaration end dates will be forthcoming.

Consumer Contributions

For FFCRA, the requirements of the Older Americans Act (OAA) for the solicitation and receipt of voluntary contributions from older adults for nutrition services are not waived (Additional FAQ OAA Nutrition Program Implementation During the COVID-19 Pandemic; Issued 4/17/2020). AAAs and local providers may determine the best localized strategies for satisfying this requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to existing practices for soliciting contributions (i.e.—posters, flyers, provision of envelopes for returning a contribution), the Administration for Community Living has suggested that providers consider using locked boxes at meal pick-up locations.

Emergency Menu—Dietary Guidelines

Under the Major Disaster Declaration (Stafford Act), the Older Americans Act Senior Nutrition Program may temporarily provide meals that do not meet one-third of the recommended daily allowance/dietary reference intake (RDA-DRI) requirements. When possible, nutrition providers are encouraged to continue providing meals that meet the dietary guidelines, as well as DAAS' nutrition program standards, but any meals that are generally nutritious and safe may be provided during the COVID-10 public health emergency. **At a minimum, meals must include a serving of meat/meat**

alternative, two servings of grain, and one serving of a vegetable or fruit to be eligible for reimbursement using Title IIIB funding or FFCRA funding. Title IIIC cannot directly reimburse these meals but, Title IIIC funds may be transferred to Title IIIB.

Further details about nutrition program guidelines can be found on Attachment 1—COVID-19 Pandemic Guidance for the NC Senior Nutrition Program.

II. New ARMS Codes to Capture Disaster Efforts for the Senior Nutrition and Transportation Programs

To maintain compliance with federal guidelines, it is necessary to continue designating coding to ARMS for service delivery specific to COVID-19 disaster efforts.

New ARMS Code to Capture Senior Transportation Program Activities

On March 25, 2020 North Carolina received official designation by President Donald Trump as a state of Major Disaster. This declaration allowed the utilization of existing Older Americans Act (OAA) funding to be utilized for disaster efforts to meet the needs of older adults from January 20, 2020 forward. The following code has been developed to address circumstances unique to Senior Transportation:

Code 251: Transportation—COVID

This code represents delivery of meals and other necessary supplies to congregate clients. A one-way delivery of a meal or supplies is the equivalent of one unit in ARMS.

New ARMS Codes to Capture Nutrition Program Activities Related to FFCRA

Code 026—FF: Home-Delivered Meals

This code represents meals to home-delivered meal clients that may or may not meet one-third of the recommended daily allowance / dietary reference intake (RDA-DRI) requirements using FFCRA funding. One meal is the equivalent of one unit in ARMS.

Code 187—FF: Congregate Meals

This code represents meals to congregate nutrition program clients that may or may not meet one-third of the recommend daily allow/dietary reference intake (RDA-DRI) requirements using FFCRA funding. One meal is the equivalent of one unit in ARMS.

Code 900- FF: Non-unit Emergency Response Cost COVID

This code represents emergency response costs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is intended to capture service provider's necessities such as personal protective equipment (PPE), food service equipment and other unique items that allow providers to continue service. One item is the equivalent of one expense.

III. Clarification of \$2,500 Respite Extension Date (DAAS—Administrative Letter 20-06)

The Family Caregiver Support Program respite cap extension, previously referenced in DAAS—Administrative Letter 20-06 is effective through the end of the current state fiscal year—June 30, 2020.

There will continue to be further guidance as additional funding streams are made available to the programs administered by the Division through the aging network. Please contact the associated Program Consultant, if you have further questions about the content of this Administrative Letter.

HB/LJW/pg