



WA Cares Conversations

Aging and Nutrition

March 12, 2025



Webinar slides and recording will be available at wacaresfund.wa.gov/webinars

What we'll cover

Host

Sam Klewicki, Communications and Marketing Manager, WA Cares Fund

WA Cares Presenter

Sebastian Cahe, Outreach and Language Access Lead, WA Cares Fund

Agenda

- Introductions & opening poll
- Panelist remarks
- WA Cares Fund overview
- Audience Q&A

Panel

Dr. AnDré Blanks, DCN, Director of Nutrition Services Department, Western State Hospital, BHA

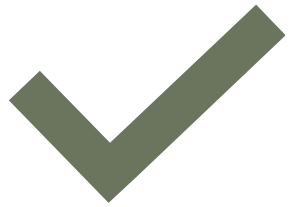
Emily Carlson, Clinical Nutrition Manager, Western State Hospital, BHA

Aja Bridge, Nutrition Services Division Director, Rural Resources Community Action

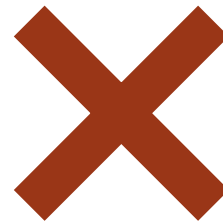
Matthew Santelli, Community Outreach & Education Specialist, Pierce County Aging and Disability Resources

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Defining long-term care and caregiving



help with activities
of daily living
like bathing, eating & dressing



not medical care

like doctor visits & treatment for
medical conditions



paid care from a
professional



help from a
family member
or friend, often unpaid



services & supports provided
in your own home



care provided
in a residential setting
like a nursing home or assisted living

Why Nutrition is Important as We Age

- **Aging Increases Our Need for Proper Nutrition:**
 - Age related nutritional changes → Evolving nutritional needs
- **Balanced Healthy Diet**
 - Enhances quality of life & energy, Strengthens the body,
 - Helps prevent chronic disease, Supports independence
 - Supports our physical health, mental & emotional well-being
- **Our Body Needs**
 - **Protein:** Muscle repair and immune function
 - **Calories:** Energy for daily activities
 - **Healthy Fats:** (omega 3, olive oil) Brain, Heart, & Vascular health
 - **Vitamins & Minerals:** Immune health, Bone strength, Everyday bodily functions
 - (Vitamin D, B12, Vitamin C, Calcium)
- **Good Nutrition & Physical Activity**
 - Helps optimize health as we age
 - Increases energy, strength, and resilience
 - Supports independence, Mobility, Enhances daily activities & quality of life





Age Related Nutrition Changes

- **Metabolism**
 - Slows down with age
 - Reduced Muscle mass & Physical activity
 - Changes Calorie Needs
 - Too many calories = weight gain (obesity, diabetes, heart disease, joint issues)
 - Too few calories = underweight & nutrition deficiencies
 - **Focus:** Nutrient-dense, balanced diet, adequate calories
- **Muscle Mass & Strength**
 - Decreases with age
 - Mobility issues, Fall risk increases
 - **Focus:** High quality protein (lean meats, eggs, beans) maintain muscle mass
 - Resistance exercises to help maintain muscle strength
- **Bone Health**
 - Bone density decreases with age
 - Fragile bones, Increased risk of fractures, Osteoporosis risk
 - **Focus:** Calcium & vitamin D (dairy, sunlight) essential for strong bones
 - Weight-bearing exercises help maintain bone strength





Age Related Nutrition Changes

- **Hydration**

- Thirst sensation decreases with age
- Increased risk of dehydration → confusion, constipation, infections
- **Focus:** Stay hydrated with plenty of water & fluids

- **Digestion**

- Digestion efficiency decreases with age
- Risk of constipation, Reduced nutrient absorption
- **Focus:** Fiber-rich foods, staying hydrated, nutrient rich diet
(vitamin B12, calcium, iron, probiotics)

- **Hormonal**

- Estrogen (women, post-menopause), low testosterone (men) affect body composition
- Fat increases, Increased risk of osteoporosis, heart disease, & obesity
- **Focus:** Nutrient rich diets, heart health (calcium, vitamin D, healthy fats, antioxidants)

- **Immune System**

- Weakens with age, increased susceptibility Infections, Poor wound healing, Poor recovery
- **Focus:** Nutrient-rich foods with vitamins & minerals (C, D, zinc, protein)





Age Related Nutrition Changes

- **Chronic Health Conditions**
 - Aging increases the risk of chronic conditions (heart disease, diabetes, hypertension)
 - **Focus:** Heart-healthy diet (omega-3 fatty acids, potassium, fiber, antioxidants) heart disease prevention
 - Regular Physical Activity
- **Cognitive Function**
 - Can decrease with age (cognitive decline, dementia, Alzheimer's disease)
 - **Focus:** Diets rich in antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids, heart healthy diet support vascular brain health
- **Appetite**
 - Can decrease with age (affecting nutrient intake, malnutrition risk)
 - **Focus:** Use nutrient-dense (eggs, nuts, yogurt), easy-to-eat foods, more frequent meals
 - Staying hydrated
- **Sensory**
 - Taste and smell can decrease with age, making food less appealing
 - **Focus:** Stronger flavors, Varied textures, visually appealing to stimulate appetite
- **Motor Function**
 - Swallowing ability can decrease with age (due to weakened muscles)
 - Chewing ability can decrease with age (due to poor dentition)
 - **Focus:** Adjust food consistency (softer foods) for easier swallowing and digestion



Eating Right for Aging Well

- Nutrient dense foods
- Eat the rainbow
- Stay hydrated





Nutrient Density

Protein & healthy fats

- Nuts, seeds, nut butters
- Beans
- Eggs
- Greek yogurt
- Fish

Fiber, vitamins & minerals

- Fruits & vegetables
- Whole grains
- Fortified foods

Vitamins & Minerals



Calcium

Milk, yogurt, cheese, dark green veggies, sardines, fortified foods (non-dairy milk, cereals)

Vitamin D

Sunlight: consider weather, age, skin pigmentation, risk of skin cancer

Food sources: trout, salmon, mushrooms, fortified foods, supplements

Vitamin B12

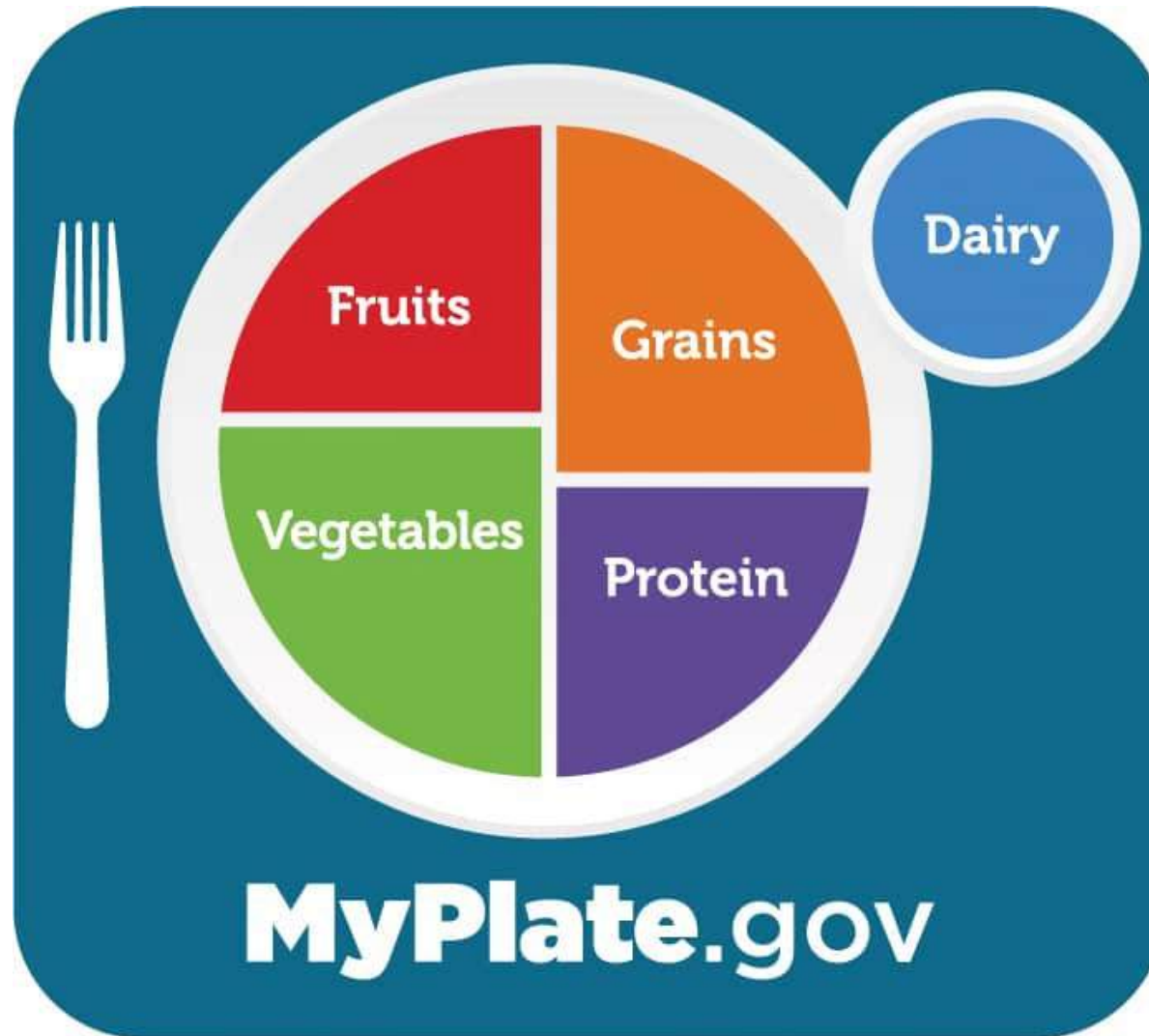
Meat, eggs, dairy, clams, oysters, fortified foods (cereals, nutritional yeast), supplements

Put it all together!

- $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits and vegetables
- $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grains
- $\frac{1}{4}$ protein
- Calcium option

Tips

- Small frequent meals
- Minimum 6 cups water / day



FOOD INSECURITY IN SENIORS

1.



Aja Bridge
Director, Nutrition Services
Rural Resources Community Action

FOOD INSECURE SENIORS

Reasons why seniors are at a higher risk for hunger:

- Health conditions
- Transportation problems
- Fixed Income
- Social Isolation

3.

FOOD INSECURE SENIORS

From the Hunger in Older Adults Report, food insecure seniors are:

- 50% more likely to have diabetes
- 3 times^{1.} more likely to suffer from depression
- 60% more likely to have congestive heart failure or a heart attack
- 30% more likely to have at least one ADL impairment

3.

WAFOOD 5 SURVEY

- More than half of respondents very concerned about future price increases
- Fresh produce and animal proteins identified as the groceries hardest to afford¹
- To cope with price increases, food insecure households restricted food quantity and quality
- More than half of food insecure respondents were depressed or anxious,³ and almost all reported high stress

- USDA program available in WA through Dept of Agriculture
- Eligibility: 60+ years old, income less than 150% FPL
- Cheese and shelf-stable items, focusing on low-sodium and low-sugar



COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM

FOOD IS MEDICINE



- We Feed Washington
- Produce Rx
- Medically Tailored Meals

Senior Nutrition: Education/Resources

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Webinar for WA Cares



Pierce County

Human Services

How Great Is The Need?

Poverty among Washington seniors has increased sharply since 2020.

Poverty rate among Washington seniors now the highest rate in the past decade, with nearly 1 in 10 seniors in poverty.

The USDA's recently released food insecurity data for 2023 shows 9.3% of households with a person over age 65 were food insecure.

Seniors are the most likely to qualify for only the minimum SNAP benefit: just \$23 per month to buy groceries.



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Human Services

What Programs Can Meet The Need?

Senior Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- Simple to apply through www.washingtonconnection.org

Local food banks (eligibility and frequency of visits can vary among locations)

- Call 211 or visit www.hungerfreewa.org/foodbanks

Senior Farmer's Market Voucher Program (SFMVP) (no cost for 60+ income-eligible)

- Find your local Area Agency On Aging at www.dshs.wa.gov/AL TSA/resources



Pierce County
Human Services

What Programs Can Meet The Need?

Senior Meal Sites (no cost for 60+ but donations taken)

- Find your local Area Agency On Aging at www.dshs.wa.gov/ALTSA/resources

Senior Meal Sites for ethnic groups (no cost for 60+ but donations taken)

- Find your local Area Agency On Aging at www.dshs.wa.gov/ALTSA/resources

Meals delivered to homes (no cost for 60+ if recipient is not driving and has no paid caregiver in their home)

- Locate home-delivered meals at www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/find-meals



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Human Services

Education About These Nutrition Programs

- Meal programs promote health for seniors and people with disabilities. Healthy, regular meals prevent hospitalization, delay residential care, and protect against frailty and damaging falls.
- Group meal programs combat loneliness, an epidemic among our seniors. Loneliness and isolation have far-reaching impacts, with health consequences as bad as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Too many clients say their hot meal is the only time they socialize during the week.



Pierce County
Human Services

Education About These Nutrition Programs

- Meal programs help seniors prevent food insecurity and manage related illnesses: seniors who are food insecure are 65% more likely to be diabetic, and more likely to suffer from conditions such as congestive heart failure, high blood pressure, asthma, and obesity.
- Meal programs sustain and connect seniors with community safety nets. Senior centers serve as hubs, with volunteers delivering meals as well as other services, like haircuts or foot care. AAA nutrition funding enhances clients' independence and dignity. If seniors are in trouble, meal providers connect them to essential social services to avert a crisis.



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Human Services

Education About These Nutrition Programs

- Ethnic meal sites provide fellowship, community spirit, and education about programs and services available to underserved populations.
- Both paid and volunteer work opportunities are often available for seniors who want to participate as food bank workers, senior center staff, and delivery drivers.
- Senior Farmer's Market Vouchers promote healthier food choices, provide socialization in outdoor settings, support local food producers, and teach seniors concepts about “farm to table” and “local sourcing” for their meal preparation.



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Human Services

Where Can Seniors Learn More?

In 2025, Pierce County Aging and Disability Resources (PC ADR) partnered with Pierce County TV to produce a 30-minute video featuring many of the Nutrition Programs available to seniors in Pierce County.

This video is freely available for any person or group to view and/or show to a wider audience. Visit the Pierce County TV Aging Wisely Channel on YouTube at this link to watch this video and others like it:

[Aging Wisely | Pierce County Television, WA - Official Website](#)



Pierce County
Human Services

Promoting Senior Nutrition Programs

- Public presentations to seniors targeting healthy eating for Diabetes Prevention, Memory Wellness, Cancer Prevention, Cardiac Care
- Teaching seniors to read and understand nutrition labels on food packaging, to maximize their view of “food as medicine”
- Encouraging seniors to “stack” nutrition programs to take the broader view of “how many programs can benefit me?”
- Reminding seniors that healthy eating along with physical activity and medication management contributes to successful “aging in place”.



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Human Services

Resources For Senior Nutrition

Finding Local Resources:

- [Washington State Community Living Connections](#)
- [22-297 HOW TO APPLY FOR AND USE BASIC FOOD BENEFITS](#)

Nutrition and Aging Resource Center (Senior Nutrition Program through Older Americans Act):

- [Finding Food for Older Adults](#)
- [Basics of Congregate | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)
- [Basics of Home-Delivered Meals | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)

Dietary Guidelines for Americans resources:

- [Healthy Eating for Older Adults](#), Spanish: [Alimentación Saludable para Adultos Mayores](#)
- [Build a Healthy Eating Routine as You Get Older](#), Spanish: [Desarrolla una rutina de alimentación saludable a medida que envejeces](#)
- [USDA MyPlate Nutrition Information for Older Adults](#)
- [Kitchen Time-Savers](#)



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How the WA Cares Fund works

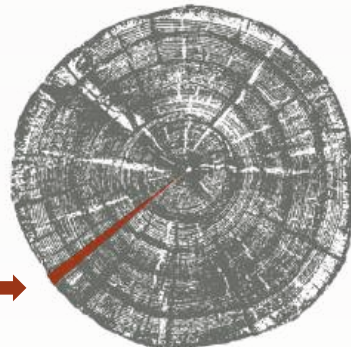
- Earned benefit
- Self-funded by worker contributions
- Works like an insurance program
- Only contribute while you're working
- Everyone covered at same rate regardless of pre-existing conditions
- No copays, no deductibles, and you never have to file a claim

Typical Income:

\$50,091

Typical Contribution:

\$291/year



0.58%

Contributions

0.58%

Amount workers
contribute from wages



Contributions began

Benefits

\$36,500

Lifetime maximum benefit
(adjusted annually up to
inflation)



Benefits available

Affordable contributions across your career

\$35,000 annual salary	
Each year	\$203
Over 10 years	\$2,030
Over 20 years	\$4,060
Over 30 years	\$6,090

\$50,000 annual salary	
Each year	\$290
Over 10 years	\$2,900
Over 20 years	\$5,800
Over 30 years	\$8,700

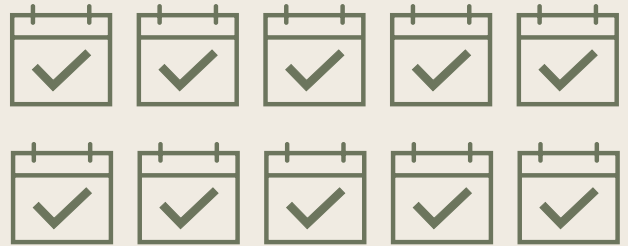
\$75,000 annual salary	
Each year	\$435
Over 10 years	\$4,350
Over 20 years	\$8,700
Over 30 years	\$13,050

\$36,500 benefit amount will be adjusted annually up to inflation.

Qualifying for benefits

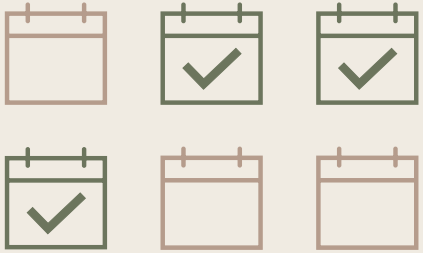
Lifetime access to full benefit

Contributed for a **total of 10 years** without a break of 5+ consecutive years



Early access to full benefit

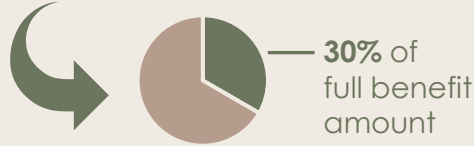
Contributed at least **3 of the last 6 years** at the time you apply for benefits



FOR NEAR-RETIRES

Lifetime access to partial benefit

People born before 1968 earn **10% of benefit amount** for each year worked



To earn benefits, must work at least 500 hours per year (about 10 hours per week)

The benefit is flexible

Up to **\$36,500** for any combination of services and supports, including:



Professional care at home or in a facility



Adaptive equipment & technology like hearing or medication reminder devices



Training & paying family member or friend to be your caregiver



Home-delivered meals



Home safety evaluations & environmental modifications like wheelchair ramps



Support & respite for family caregivers



Transportation

Must need help with **3 activities of daily living** like bathing, dressing, eating, medication management

How far will the benefit go?



Family caregiver

Paying a family caregiver	\$31,300
10 hours/week for 2 years	
Care supplies	\$2,200
2 years of incontinence supplies	

Total **\$33,500**



Home accessibility

Home safety renovations	\$15,000
Electric wheelchair or scooter	\$2,600
Weekly meal delivery	\$9,200
7 meals/week for 3 years	

Total **\$26,800**



Temporary support & services

Part-time caregiver	\$31,300
20 hours/week for 1 year	
Transportation to appointments	\$3,200
for 1 year	
Crutches	\$50

Total **\$34,600**

Note: These are estimates and do not guarantee the cost of any services, which may vary based on your area and other factors.

Taking WA Cares benefits out of state

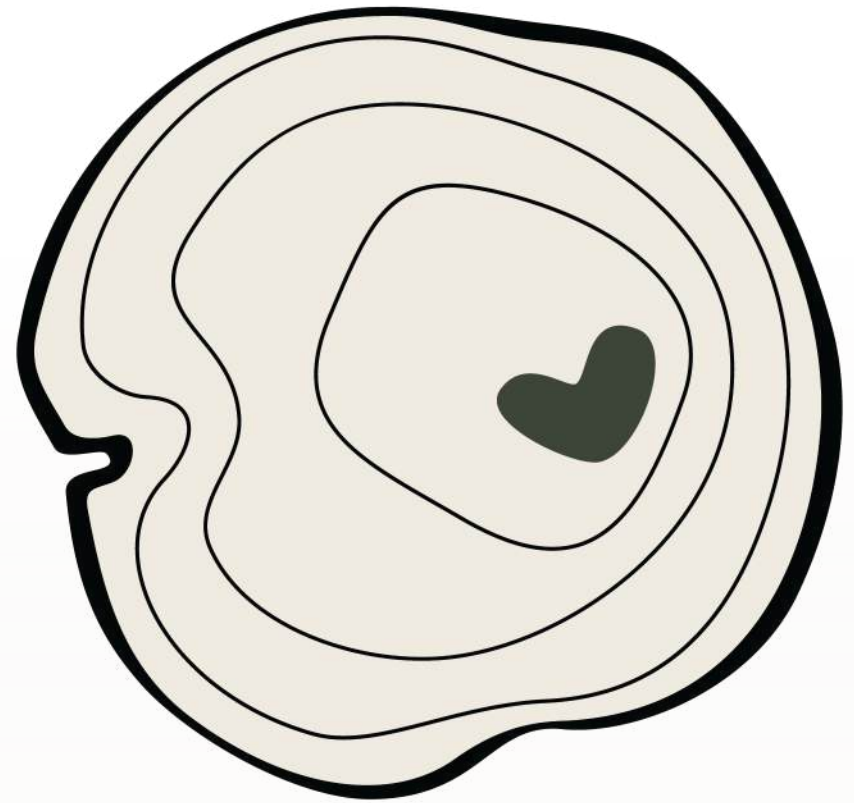
- New law passed this year to allow workers to use their benefit outside Washington
- Starting in July 2026, **workers can choose to continue participating in WA Cares** if they move out of state
- Must have contributed to WA Cares for **at least 3 years** (working 500+ hours per year) and must opt in **within a year of leaving WA**
- Like other workers, out-of-state participants keep contributing during working years
- Benefits available **starting July 2030**



“ If my family had WA Cares, I would've had a different reality. WA Cares and your ability to take it to another state is huge.

– Kendall, family caregiver (Seattle, WA)

Audience Q&A





Thank you

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Contact us by email

[wacaresfund.wa.gov/
contact-us](https://wacaresfund.wa.gov/contact-us)

Contact us by phone (employers & exemptions)

833-717- 2273

Contact us by phone (other questions)

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