
2007 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Staffing for Non-Resident Meal Days

Issue/Background:

Staffing levels for food handlers in Homes for the Aged is guided by Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) mandatory standards. Previously, the mandatory requirement for all meals was established at 0.42 hours per resident meal day (i.e. 3 meals). For 2007, the MOHLTC modified the requirement for meals prepared from the same menu by long-term care homes and served to persons other than residents (i.e. non-resident meal days), setting the mandated staffing level for these non-resident meals at 0.22 hours for every 3 meals (i.e. the same measure of a resident meal day). This MOHLTC decision was made for a variety of reasons, including: (i) the MOHLTC does not have jurisdiction over non-resident meals days in its long-term care homes compliance program; (ii) the same level of staffing is not required when there is no waitress service to residents; and (iii) for-profit long-term care homes successfully argued that this unnecessary staffing negatively affected their profit margin.

In order comply with the directive for a 0% net increase in the 2007 operating budget submission, Homes for the Aged reviewed all operating accounts and made all of the reductions possible, without incurring an unacceptable level of risk; this still did not achieve the 0% target. As a result, Homes for the Aged made the difficult decision to reduce the level of food handler staffing hours related to non-resident meal days (i.e. day programs and meals-on-wheels), utilizing the new standard of 0.22 hours for every 3 meals in order to achieve the 0% target. This resulted in a reduction of 5.1 FTE in the 2007 operating budget submission.

During their deliberations regarding the Homes for the Aged 2007 operating budget, the Budget Committee made the following motion:

- The General Manager of Homes for the Aged to submit a Briefing Note to the final wrap-up of the Budget Committee on April 12, 2007, on the impact of the proposed reduction of 5.1 full time positions on the meals-on-wheels, adult day program food services, including the impact on volunteers and community-based organizations who deliver these services.

Key Points:

- Meals for adult day programs are provided in 4 homes, namely Kipling Acres, Cummer Lodge, Bendale Acres and Seven Oaks; on average, each home prepares and serves 12-17 lunches daily. Food service staff deliver the meal to the day centre and the day centre staff assist with serving the meal.

- Meals-on-wheels programs are provided by 5 homes, namely Kipling Acres, True Davidson Acres, Cummer Lodge, Bendale Acres and Seven Oaks; the number of meals-on-wheels varies by the day of the week and the home, ranging from 20-90 meals per day per home. Food service staff prepare/pack the meals for pick-up and deliver by community volunteers.
- Meals for children's day programs are provided in 3 homes, namely Lakeshore Lodge, Kipling Acres and Seven Oaks; the number of children's meals varies per home, ranging from approximately 25-60 lunches. Food service staff deliver the meal to the day centre and the children's day centre staff serve the meal.
- A standard of 0.22 hours per 3 meals allows 4.4 minutes to deliver or pack each meal.
- The preparation of the meals for day programs and meals-on-wheels can be done efficiently, as these meals are prepared in bulk, in conjunction with the meals for residents of the homes.
- For day program meals, the staffing standard will translate as follows: for an average of 15 attendees per day, 66 minutes would be provided to prepare/deliver/serve the meals.
- For meals-on-wheels meals, the staffing standard will translate as follows: for an average of 70 meals, 308 minutes will be provided to prepare/pack the meals.
- For children's day centre meals, the staffing standard will translate as follows: for an average of 45 meals, 198 minutes will be provided to prepare/deliver the meals.

Questions & Answers:

Q: Why are the Homes for the Aged involved in preparing and providing meals-on-wheels to community agencies?

A: Many community agencies involved in meals-on-wheels programming do not have the expertise or capacity to prepare their own meals and thus contract with homes for the aged who are already involved in bulk meal preparation. Toronto's Homes for the Aged believe strongly in this community service, as it provides isolated seniors and adults with disabilities with nutritious meals and companionship from the volunteers delivering the meals. We believe that the Homes are part of their community, with a responsibility to contribute to seniors' healthy living. Toronto Homes for the Aged would like to expand the meals-on-wheels program and start a meals-on-wheels program for vulnerable seniors in a priority neighbourhood; we have included this vision in our four-year plan developed to respond to the Mayor's priorities.

Q: Will the volume of meals-on-wheels meals be reduced as a result of this budget reduction?

A: No – the volume of meals for the meals-on-wheels programs produced will remain the same.

Q: What will the impact of this budget reduction be on the volunteers and the community-based organizations who deliver meals-on-wheels services?

A: No negative impact is expected. The food product will be of the same high quality. The meals will continue to be ready for volunteer pick-up on a timely manner. However, it is acknowledged that there will be less food service worker to volunteer interaction. This reduced communication may result in decreased volunteer satisfaction and decreased exchange of information about meals-on-wheels client preferences, as an example.

Q: Will there be a cost reduction to the meals-on-wheels program as a result of this budget reduction?

A: No. Actually, there will be a cost increase to the agencies in 2007, as the meals-on-wheels program was not operating on a cost-recovery basis, drawing excessive dollars from the Homes' own food service budget. Agencies were notified in February 2007 that the 2007 price for a meal in the meals-on-wheels program will be \$4.25 per meal, effective June 1, 2007. This is a price increase from the current rate of \$4.00 and is the first increase in pricing for meals-on-wheels since 2000.

Q: If the volume of meals will be maintained, what is the key impact of this 5.1 FTE staffing reduction?

A: There will be less staffing hours assigned to non-resident meals days and a significant resultant workload pressure for food service staff involved in meals-on-wheels and day program meals.

Q: Will there be staff lay-offs as a result of this budget reduction?

A: There will be no lay-offs but there will be less hours scheduled for part-time staff. Most of this reduction will be in the scheduling of shifts of less than 8 hours.

Q: Did the Homes for Aged want to put forward this proposed budget reduction?

A: No. Homes for the Aged would prefer not to reduce the food service hours for non-resident meal days. This reduction was offered as a final means of meeting the 0% net increase target.

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Date: April 10, 2007