

NUTRITION HEALTH EDUCATION AND FOOD AND MEAL SERVICES

Bureau of Community Support Services oversees the Nutrition Health Education (NHE) and Food and Meal Services Initiative. The intent of the initiative is to support nutrition interventions that improve, maintain and/or delay the decline of PLWH/A's health status. The initiative has two components; education and food assistance. NHE empowers clients to learn, practice and apply self-management skills needed to achieve optimal health outcomes. Self-management skills development includes teaching independent health care behaviors and decision making, while encouraging clients to be responsible for their health care and lifestyle choices. The food assistance services offer nutrient dense, well balanced, and affordable meals tailored to the specific dietary needs of PLWH/A.

NHE improves health outcomes through the identification of nutritional goals and the development of a plan that supports those goals. NHE provides PLWH/A with health and nutrition information that supports incorporating healthy food in their diets and changes in lifestyle that lead to improved health outcomes. Nutrition workshops are facilitated by a culturally-competent community nutrition educator in group or individual settings. Workshops include relevant information on nutrition for PLWHIV/A and instruction on food purchase and healthy and safe food preparation. The community nutrition educator assists clients in developing personalized nutrition plans.

As part of the NHE and Food and Meal Initiative, providers are charged with fostering collaborations with other providers that benefit clients in meeting both nutrition needs and care and treatment goals. Leveraging community resources enhances provision of services and supports retention in a continuum of care.

The food and meal services component is comprised of:

- Home-Delivered Meals (hot and/or frozen) to maintain or improve the health and well-being of home restricted individuals with HIV/AIDS. Meals and snacks are tailored to the dietary needs of the client. For PLWH/A who lack the ability to shop for and prepare food, home-delivered meals fulfill a critical need, often allowing them to remain in their home.
- Congregate Meals are served in community locations. Many individuals using the congregate meal programs are indigent, homeless, or in marginal housing which lack kitchen facilities and food preparation equipment.
- Food Pantry Bags and Food Vouchers allow PLWH/A with limited financial resources access to nutritious food. Clients who receive pantry bags and/or vouchers also receive education on preparing meals and making informed food choices.