



**MEALS ON WHEELS RI, BLUE CROSS & BLUE SHIELD OF RHODE ISLAND  
PARTNER TO PILOT CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE HOME-DELIVERED MEAL PROGRAM**

PROVIDENCE, R.I.—Meals on Wheels of RI, with funding granted by Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI), has piloted a year-long culturally responsive home-delivered meal program, the two organizations announced today.

This program, which provides Meals on Wheels of RI Home-Delivered Meal Program clients with foods reflective of their heritage and cultural preferences alongside a daily well-being check and social visit, began in January 2022. It is part of Meals on Wheels of RI's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategy.

"Realization of this pilot program is made possible by the generosity of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, our longtime partner in our work to address food insecurity and social isolation amongst homebound seniors," said Meals on Wheels of RI Executive Director Meghan Grady. "We are proud to offer our clients what they've asked for and to offer meals that better represent the communities that we serve."

"For our clients who utilize both Medicare and Medicaid for their healthcare needs, improving ease of access to the things they need to stay healthy—such as the foods they know and like to eat—is an essential part of helping them maintain their overall good health," said Leanna Moran, BCBSRI's Managing Director of the Duals Market. "We are thrilled to partner with Meals on Wheels of RI to understand this program's impact."

The pilot program is providing Meals on Wheels of RI clients with a meal designed to be reflective of Hispanic and Latin American cultures, in lieu of the meal included on the regular Home-Delivered Meal Program menu.

In 2021, approximately 7 percent, or 210, of Home-Delivered Meal Program clients self-identified as Hispanic. Client participation in the pilot program is self-elected. As of March 31, 74 clients have participated, and the program has delivered a total of 2,919 culturally responsive meals.

"Clients have responded to our annual feedback survey with a clear ask—they want to receive the kinds of meals they had growing up, that they cooked for their families, that they can no longer make for themselves," Grady said. "We know that by bringing our clients the foods that are interwoven with their memories, their customs, and their traditions, we are helping to meet not only their nutritional needs but their need for community connection as well."

Dishes from the program menu include chili con carne with arroz, pollo margarita with frijoles negros, and pollo con queso with a quesadilla. Clients receive complete meals,



including an entrée, starch, vegetable, dessert and milk or juice. Meals meet one-third of a senior's daily dietary requirement and are prepared by the same caterer that prepares the program's traditional meals, TRIO Community Meals.

With each home-delivered meal, all Home-Delivered Meal Program clients receive a daily well-being check and social visit under Meals on Wheels of RI's "More-Than-A-Meal" service model, as well as health education material. Pilot program clients are receiving this material provided in Spanish by the University of Rhode Island's SNAP-Ed Program.

For more information on this and other Meals on Wheels of RI programming, visit [www.rimeals.org](http://www.rimeals.org).

### **About Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island**

Since 1969, Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island's programs have directly addressed the issues of food insecurity and social isolation as risk factors for loss of independence amongst older adults. Our mission is to meet the nutritional and special needs of older adults and other eligible populations in order to help them maintain their independent lifestyles through our Home-Delivered Meal Program, the only nonprofit meal delivery program of its kind in Rhode Island; the Capital City Café Program and Senior Restaurant Program, which offer community-based dining for more mobile seniors; an Emergency Meal Program; the Senior Wish Program, providing necessities for seniors in need; and the Pet Food Program.

Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island, a 501 (c) (3) organization, is not an affiliate of a national organization and relies on donations from individuals, corporate funding and sponsorship and foundation grants. All funding received directly provides services for RI residents.

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