



*Meals on Wheels*  
OF RHODE ISLAND

# Home-Delivered Meal Program Volunteer Handbook

Meals on Wheels of RI, Inc.  
70 Bath St.  
Providence, RI 02908  
(401) 351-6700

Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Voicemail is available 24 hours per day

[www.rimeals.org](http://www.rimeals.org)





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Dear Volunteer,

On behalf of everyone at Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island, thank you for your dedication to our vital work in the community.

By volunteering with us, not only are you helping to provide homebound seniors with nutritious meals that keep them physically healthy, but you are also giving them daily interaction that vastly improves the isolation and loneliness they live with on a daily basis. And, you are a critical part of ensuring their everyday safety as they remain living independently in their own homes.

Did you know that each year, we rely on a network of 700 generous volunteers like you to help Meals on Wheels of RI enact our everyday mission? With your help, we serve thousands of seniors, and other homebound adults, all across Rhode Island. We simply could not do this without you.

Once again, thank you. And, don't forget to sign up for our emails and to follow us across social media!

In gratitude,

Meghan Grady  
Executive Director





## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to meet the nutritional and other special needs of older adults and other eligible populations in order to help them maintain their independent lifestyles.

## **Our Vision**

A Rhode Island where all seniors live nourished lives with independence and dignity.

## **Our History**

Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island was established on Feb. 17, 1969 by founder Joe Brown (1924-2014) who saw an unmet need in his community to provide nutritious meals to homebound seniors.

With a small group of volunteers, he began delivering lunchtime meals to 17 seniors in Providence out of space donated by Grace Church, located in downtown Providence.

In 1972, an amendment to the Older Americans Act allowed great expansion of this new Home-Delivered Meal Program as well as the addition of new and much-needed services to serve homebound seniors statewide.

Within its first 10 years in operation, Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island celebrated the delivery of its one millionth meal to a senior in need.

In 2019, the organization celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> year and delivered its 19 millionth meal to a homebound senior. Also in 2019, the organization welcomed its fourth executive director, Meghan Grady, marking a new era of growth for Meals on Wheels of RI as it works to meet the needs of a growing senior population.

In 2020, we delivered more than 336,000 meals to 2,748 seniors through our Home-Delivered Meal Program. Another 605 seniors were served through the Capital City Café Program.

Over the years, much, of course, has changed at Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island, but our mission remains the same—to help enable our state's homebound older adults to remain living independently in their own homes by



providing them with complete and nutritious meals, vital safety checks and critical opportunities for socialization.

### **Home-Delivered Meal Program**

The Home-Delivered Meal Program is Meals on Wheels of RI's longest-running and most-recognized nutrition program, in 2020 serving 2,748 homebound Rhode Islanders statewide.

For qualifying clients, the program provides a daily-delivered, complete and nutritious meal along with a life-saving well-being check and opportunity for socialization.

It is the only non-profit, home-delivered meal program of its kind in Rhode Island.

To qualify for the program, a Rhode Island resident must be:

- 60 years of age or older OR under 60 years of age with an approved waiver.
- Homebound-unable to safely leave the home on their own.
- Unable to prepare nutritious meals on their own due to physical and/or psychological conditions.
- Not participating in an adult day care program or other dining program on a day they are scheduled to receive meals.

Each meal is delivered fully cooked and chilled.

Each meal comes in two parts—a two- or three-compartment tray that can be reheated safely in a microwave or conventional oven and a cold pack. The meal contains a protein, starch, vegetable, milk or juice, bread and dessert.

Diabetic dessert substitutions are available, as are chopped meals for those unable to cut-up their meal. Some clients also receive an alternative meal. These designations are made on the delivery route sheets.

## Volunteer Job Duties

The volunteer is responsible for the delivery of lunch-time meals to homebound individuals in a timely manner and will:

- Arrive at the designated meal pick-up site at the assigned time (9:30-11:30 a.m.).
- Count meals in coolers and compare numbers to those on the delivery route sheet, ensuring that there are a sufficient number of meals for each client.
- Report any shortage in meals or cold packs to Providence headquarters before you start your deliveries.
- Deliver each meal to the appropriate client, making sure that each client gets the meal indicated on the delivery route sheet.
- Report all “No Answers” and concerns to Providence headquarters immediately by phone.
- Return coolers to meal pick-up site at the end of the route.
- Deliver nutrition education material, pet food and supplies, and other items as provided.

## Personal Safety and Comfort

- Dress comfortably.
- Turn off your engine and take your car keys with you when delivering each meal.
- Wearing of face masks is required for unvaccinated volunteers and encouraged for all volunteers during all client interactions, even when outside.
- Maintain at least six feet of social distance between yourself and the client at all times.
- Limit in-person interaction with the client to 10 minutes.
- If presented with a potentially dangerous situation, leave immediately and inform the Meals on Wheels of RI headquarters immediately by phone.





## Delivery Process

- Please program/save the Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island phone number, (401) 351-6700 into your cell phone as a contact. We may need to call you with any changes in your delivery schedule or route.
- Meal pick-up at the Meals on Wheels office, 70 Bath St, Providence, is between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. Some meal pick-up locations may have different pick-up times, which will be discussed during your training.
- Volunteers may utilize the coolers that the meals and cold packs arrive in. These items must be returned to the site when the delivery route is completed.
- Alternatively, volunteers may use their own insulated bags. When this is the case, they must bring an ice pack for each bag to keep meals at the correct temperature.
- Meals must be counted against clients listed on the delivery route sheet to ensure there are the right number of meals and cold packs (regular, alternates, chopped, juice, milk, etc.) for each client.
- The route sheet has client names, addresses and directions regarding where to deliver the meal.
- Every client receives a meal and a cold pack containing either milk or juice.
- Some clients have food restrictions and receive an altered meal. This will be indicated with a label on the meal.
- Diabetic desserts are in a Red/Pink tray with either milk or a juice.
- Some clients receive 2 meals and 1 double milk or juice. Their name is listed twice on the route sheet. Double check the number of meals and cold packs to ensure client receives correct combination of items.
- It is important to only give the meal directly to the client. If someone else is at the home accepting the meal for the client, ask to see or hear the client in the home.
- In certain instances, clients are allowed to verbally acknowledge their presence and safety at home, and the volunteer will not see the client accept their meal. In these cases, the client's door will be left open and the volunteer should knock, call the client's name and wait for the client to respond. Meals should be put in the client's refrigerator.

## No Answer Process

- If a client does not answer the door and their phone number is listed on the route sheet, please call them.
- If their number is not listed or they do not answer when you call, please call the Providence headquarters and we will also attempt to reach them while you are at their door.
- If the client does not answer the phone for the office team, we will reach out to their contact(s) to ensure their safety.
- If we are unable to reach any of their contacts, it may become necessary for us to call the local law enforcement agency to perform a wellness check.
- A meal **should not** be left at the home of a client unless there is verbal or visual confirmation the client is in their home and is able to retrieve the meal immediately.
- You may give a “No-Answer” meal to someone else on your route.

## Client Safety

- If a client needs medical attention, **call 911** and then call the Providence headquarters. The phone number is always listed at the bottom of the delivery route sheet.
- If a client has fallen, do not attempt to move the client but do stay with the client until help arrives.
- Volunteers should only provide services or perform tasks as outlined in the volunteer duties description. If you believe a program client is in need of additional support—i.e., house cleaning, yard work, personal hygiene, personal shopping, etc.—contact our Providence headquarters with your concerns.

## Elder Abuse

- As a Meals on Wheels of Rhode Island volunteer, you may encounter clients who are suffering from abuse or neglect.
- Abuse/neglect can be physical, verbal, sexual, financial, or psychological—and some people may experience multiple forms of abuse concurrently.
- In the State of Rhode Island, it is mandatory that any person witnessing any form of abuse make a report of witnessed abuse to the police. This is called **mandatory reporting**.



- As a Meals on Wheels of RI volunteer, you must also report any abuse you witness to Meals on Wheels of RI Executive Director Meghan Grady.
- Forms of abuse/neglect can include—but are not limited to—hitting/slapping, withholding food or medical care, use of chemical or physical restraints, yelling, insults and threats of violence, misuse of funds, theft, and fraud.
- For more information on the signs of elder abuse please call the RI Office of Healthy Aging at 401-462-0555.

### Donation Collection Process

- Client donations are a vital component of Meals on Wheels of RI's operating budget. As a volunteer, your participation is required in the collection of client donations.
- Client donations are strictly voluntary; no client is penalized for not donating.
- The suggested donation is \$3.00 per meal, but any amount is accepted.
- Donations are collected weekly.
- A collection envelope is attached to the route delivery sheet on designated days for donation collection.
- If "DNC" is indicated next to a client's name, do not ask for a donation. It stands for do not collect.
- Continue to ask the client for a donation each week even if the client has not donated in the past.
- Never argue with a client about donations.
- Never demand a donation from the client.
- Suggestions on asking for the donation:
  - Do you have a donation for the meals you received this week?
  - Are you able to make a donation for the meals this week?
  - Today is collection day for meals, are you able to donate?
- When a donation is given, thank the client and place the donation in the return envelope.
- If a client does not donate, you can say **"Thank you – maybe next time."**
- If you feel a client cannot afford to donate or if a client becomes angry or uncomfortable when asked to donate, please inform us immediately.
- If a client gives a donation on a non-collection day, please accept the donation.



- Upon receipt, mail or drop off the donations to:  
Meals on Wheels of RI  
70 Bath St.  
Providence, RI 02908
- Self-addressed return envelopes are available upon request.

### **Confidentiality**

- Observe, maintain and protect the confidentiality of clients and avoid sharing information that identifies clients.
- Due to the confidentiality policy, we are unable to disclose to volunteers why a client is no longer on a specific route.

### **Photography/Video**

- No photos or videos should be taken of the client, their home or personal belongings.
- Please contact the Providence headquarters if you have a client who would like to share their story for public relations.

### **Gift Acceptance**

- No monetary gifts should be accepted from clients.
- Gifts of food, crafts, etc., are acceptable.

### **Cancellations & Time Off**

- If you are unable to deliver on your scheduled day, please call the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible. Twenty-four hours of notice is recommended. We understand that emergencies occur. However, ample notification is needed in order to find coverage.
- If you are running late and are still able to deliver your route, please contact the volunteer coordinator immediately.
- If you will be away on vacation or otherwise unable to deliver on your scheduled date, please contact the volunteer coordinator at (401) 351-6700, ext. 110 or email [osilva@rimeals.org](mailto:osilva@rimeals.org).
- Our voicemail is available 24 hours per day.





- Chill Reg—Meal of the day
  - Chill Chop—Meal of the day, chopped up
  - Second Chill Reg—the following day's meal
  - Second Chill Chop—the following day's meal, chopped up
2. Meal restrictions:
- If a meal restriction is noted, the client should receive a meal marked "Alt" for either Chill Reg or Second Chill Reg
3. Beverage types:
- M 1% or Juice—single Milk 1% or Juice in a white foam tray with dessert, bread, condiments
  - Diet M 1% or Diet Juice—single milk 1% or Juice in red tray with sugar-free dessert, bread, condiments
  - M 1% dbl-pack or Juice dbl-pack—2 beverages on white tray with dessert, bread, condiments
  - Diet M 1% dbl-pack or Diet Juice dbl-pack --2 beverages on red tray with sugar-free dessert, bread, condiments

## Contact Information

Osvalda "Ozzie" Silva  
Volunteer Coordinator  
[osilva@rimeals.org](mailto:osilva@rimeals.org)  
(401) 351-6700, ext. 110

Additional Home-Delivered Meal Program team members are available to assist with cancellations, no answers or with general information about the program.

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