

## SUCCESS STORY



*This project has helped us kick-start a much larger effort to revamp our food ordering guide, recipes, and menus.*

~Roberta Berner,  
Director GCSCC

### Problem:

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend the average person should consume less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day. African Americans, people with high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, and people 51 or older should limit their intake should be no more than 1,500 mg per day.

In 2014, the GCSCC provided nutrition services to approximately 5,000 seniors. Specifically 77,381 congregate meals and 128,149 home delivered meals were served. Under the GCSCC, there are 8 senior centers that serve Grafton County.

### Project:

In 2015, Grafton County Senior Citizens Council (GCSCC) Inc. collaborated with the NH DPHS to assess current sodium reduction practices and identify areas where sodium could be further reduced from the meals they serve.

### Sodium Reduction in Communities Project - Working Collaboratively to Recognize the Impact of Reducing Sodium Intake

#### Overview:

Grafton County Senior Citizens Council (GCSCC) Inc. is one of ten nutrition agencies that serve home-delivered meals (also known as meals on wheels) and congregate meals (meals served in a community setting such as senior centers) to eligible individuals. Nutrition agencies in NH provide congregate meals and home delivered meals through the Older Americans Act and Social Services Block Grant. Nutrition programs help reduce hunger and food insecurity, promote socialization and the health and well-being of older individuals. These programs also help delay adverse health conditions through access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services. The mission of the GCSCC is to develop, strengthen and provide programs and services that support the health, dignity and independence of older adults and adults with disabilities living in communities within Grafton County. In addition to nutrition services, GCSCC also provides more than 40,000 rides per year for older adults and adults with disabilities; offers outreach and counseling through its senior centers and as a sponsor of ServiceLink of Grafton County; offers a wide range of activities and volunteer opportunities. In 2014, the GCSCC provided meals to approximately 5,000 seniors. Specifically, 77,381 congregate meals and 128,149 home delivered meals were served. Under the GCSCC, there are 8 senior centers that serve Grafton County. In 2015, the GCSCC collaborated with the New Hampshire (NH) Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) on a project to assess current sodium reduction practices and to identify areas where sodium could be further reduced from the meals they serve.

#### Problem:

Reducing the amount of sodium in foods is an important step to improving health. Consuming too much sodium increases one's risk for high blood pressure, a condition that affects 1 in 3 Americans. High blood pressure is also considered the leading cause of heart attack and stroke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the vast majority of US adults consume more than double the recommended maximum amount of sodium. Heart disease is the second leading cause of death in NH and stroke is the fifth.

The [2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommend that the average person limit salt intake to less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. However, African Americans, people with high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease, and people 51 or older should limit their intake to 1,500 mg or less per day.

**Project:** Seven out of eight meal sites under GCSCC submitted one week's worth of menus for sodium analysis to a registered dietitian (RD). Based on the analysis a training was developed and conducted by the RD to address adopting additional sodium reduction strategies for their menus. The training included hands-on activities, one of which involved selecting products staff believed were either high or low in sodium. Seven out of the eight meal sites attended the training. The eighth meal site did not submit menus or attend the training due to the fact that another GCSCC site provides the meals for them and they do not prepare food at their location.

**Project Activities:**

- The GCSCC assessed current sodium reduction practices by completing a survey created by DPHS.
- All GCSCC meal sites responded to the survey, which included questions on current food purchasing and preparation practices
- A training was created and provided to agency staff and meal site volunteers that focused on healthy eating and sodium reduction strategies
- Upon completion of the training, staff worked with the RD to create an action plan to improve nutrition and sodium reduction efforts within menu plans
- All meal sites submitted 2 menus to the RD for analysis and for feedback around possible sodium reduction strategies.

**Next Steps:**

- GCSCC will update their menus and include the sodium reduction strategies learned at the training
- Agency staff will now work to create new menus featuring lower sodium items
- GCSCC will establish a healthy eating and sodium reduction committee, made up of kitchen staff and program directors, to create the new menus and continue finding ways to provide healthier meals.

**Outcomes:**

- Emphasize the use of fresh foods and decrease the use of canned foods that are high in sodium
- Rinse canned foods to remove as much sodium as possible
- Reduce the use of bread served with meals, especially breads with high sodium content
- Develop a food purchasing order guide that emphasizes ordering prepared foods that are lower in sodium including meats

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In collaboration with the NH DHHS, Bureau  
of Elderly & Adult Services



***Registered dietitian Melanie Loschiavo did a great job engaging our cooks and going through common-sense ways to reduce sodium in our meals.***

~Roberta Berner, Director  
GCSCC



**Outcomes:**

GCSCC meal sites will:

- Emphasize the use of fresh foods and decrease use of canned foods that are high in sodium;
- Rinse canned foods to remove as much sodium as possible;
- Reduce the use of bread served with meals;
- Develop a food purchasing order guide that emphasizes ordering prepared foods that are lower in sodium including meats.