

## Issue Brief

# Impact of the Economic Crisis on Home and Community Care Block Grant Services for Older Adults

In February 2009, providers of Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) Services responded to an online questionnaire developed by the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services. For those services for which providers might maintain waiting lists, respondents were asked how many were currently on the list. Then providers were asked about various service-specific and administrative strategies and issues, and finally, they were given the opportunity to comment. Of the 325 providers, 213 responded (65.5 percent), although rates vary by service. Here is a snapshot of what they reported.

## Service Needs and Wait Lists Are Growing

- ◆ **8,632:** Seniors waiting for HCCBG-funded services (as reported by 65.5% of HCCBG providers)
- ◆ **10,531:** Total seniors waiting for services from any source through HCCBG providers
- ◆ **13,000–16,000:** Estimated number of seniors waiting for home and community services from HCCBG providers (based on projecting responses to 100%)
- ◆ **3,675:** Seniors waiting for in-home aide services under HCCBG; **4,475** for in-home aide services from all sources, the largest waiting list (reported by 60% of providers)
- ◆ **2,455:** Seniors waiting for home-delivered meals through HCCBG; **2,783** for all sources, the second largest waiting list (reported by 62% of providers)
- ◆ **87%:** Senior centers reporting increased demand for programs and services
- ◆ **72.3%:** Providers of information and assistance reporting that requests have increased; **43%** reporting that community resources to which seniors can be referred have decreased

## Access to Services Is Decreasing

- ◆ **Over 30%** of **home-delivered meals** providers are not adding a new client when an existing client ends service, and **almost 25%** more say they may have to freeze slots soon. Half of these providers have either already discontinued holiday or emergency meals or expect to do so.
- ◆ **Almost one third** of **congregate meal** providers anticipate having to reduce the number of days their sites are open (24%) or have already done so (8%)—and about the same proportion have stopped adding new participants or think they may have to stop.
- ◆ **Nearly three-quarters (71%)** of **in-home aide** providers are reassessing clients to identify those whose services can be reduced or ended, with already **41%** cutting the number of hours of in-home aide service, **46%** capping the amount of service that can be used for individual clients, and **34%** not adding a new client when the service for an existing one ends.
- ◆ **About half** of those providing **general transportation** have already reduced the number of routes or the geographic area served (23%), or expect to make this cut (27%), and **almost half** have reduced the number of trips per rider (22%) or expect to do so (26%).

*“Funding appears to be receding on all fronts at the same time. Service needs, on the other hand, appear to be growing exponentially. . . . Many agencies may find themselves forced out of the business of operating Aging programs due to major deficits in funding.”*

—HCCBG Service Provider

### HCCBG Services at a Glance

- ◆ adult day care and day health care
  - ◆ respite
  - ◆ congregate and home-delivered meals
  - ◆ health promotion and disease prevention activities
  - ◆ housing and home repair
  - ◆ care management
  - ◆ in-home aide services
  - ◆ general and medical transportation
  - ◆ information and assistance
  - ◆ senior centers
  - ◆ volunteer coordination
- Providers often use a variety of sources to support these programs.

- ◆ **Nearly one third** of those providing **medical transportation** are reassessing clients to identify those whose services can be reduced or ended, and about **30%** have reduced the number of trips allowed per client.

## Resources Are Dwindling

- ◆ Many, if not most, providers have either seen reductions or anticipate them in one or more of their funding sources, with **60 to 70%** of those receiving United Way, consumer contributions, and donations **reporting cuts**.
- ◆ **About a quarter** have already run out of HCCBG funds for this fiscal year for one or more services.

## What Providers Are Saying

- ◆ “Due to increase in food costs, utilities and health care, seniors are struggling and therefore more are asking for help.”
- ◆ “We are getting more calls from individuals who have never used our services and they are sounding pretty desperate especially for the nutrition program.”
- ◆ “Requests for crisis funding for medication, utilities, food continue to increase.”
- ◆ “Our agency is seeing and continues to foresee service to yet another population of seniors who have never sought-after nor needed services now finding themselves in need because of economic difficulties.”
- ◆ “We have people calling for Home Delivered Meals. We do not get (they won’t give it) the information needed for ARMS [to put on wait list], so we do not have a record of them. However, we would estimate that we have at least 5 people per week that we tell 1) We don’t have a route in your neighborhood 2) The route you live on is filled to capacity 3) We don’t have the funding to place anyone else on our meal routes. They won’t give any information because they say they will be dead or in a nursing home before we can give a glimmer of help—especially if they are waiting on someone on the route to either die or go into a facility. I just know we are drowning here and there doesn’t look like any help in sight.”
- ◆ “Even those who have not been significantly affected by the economy are afraid and are turning to us for services to offset their expenses in order to save for [what] is possibly to come.”
- ◆ “We are serving 58 more people this year than last year, which is an additional 14,500 [home-delivered] meals. The waiting list, though, has increased by 47%; it increased from 197 last year at this time to 291 this year.”
- ◆ “Most of our clients tend to need ongoing In-Home Aide service due to limited support systems. Therefore, many clients on our waiting list have to wait 12-18 months for service, and some never receive it at all.”
- ◆ “I believe that we do a good job of managing our resources but our [in-home] aides are just doing the bare minimum [number of hours] for our seniors, due to the time restraints that we must put on their schedules.”
- ◆ “If we did not have HCCBG funds we would not be able to stay open [to provide adult day services]. HCCBG funds account for 34% of the budget.”
- ◆ “We are getting calls from potential new clients almost on a daily basis [for transportation]. . . . I feel this will only grow as older adults will have to cut back on their driving because of gasoline costs or maybe on car repairs they can no longer afford. . . . Family members are having their own problems (jobless, etc.) therefore having no resources to help parents or grandparents.”

### *About the Home and Community Care Block Grant*

Established in 1992 under NCGS 143B-181.1(a)(11), the Home and Community Care Block Grant was devised to provide a “common funding stream” for a comprehensive and coordinated system of home and community-based services and opportunities for older adults. HCCBG services are available to people age 60 and older, although the ‘average’ client is nearly 80 years old and the program targets individuals who are socially and economically needy. The block grant is administered through the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services and the Area Agencies on Aging. It combines federal and state funds with a local match. The block grant gives county commissioners discretion in budgeting and administering aging funds.