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## Meals on Wheels changes arriving

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### *Presbyterian Homes to replace HSI, White Bear Senior Program to continue*

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WHITE BEAR AREA — Meals on Wheels recipients are getting a wider variety of food delivery options.

The Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging has selected Presbyterian Homes & Services to provide federally-subsidized meal deliveries in Ramsey and Washington Counties next year.

Human Services Inc. (HSI), which currently provides meal services in Washington County, will stop delivering at year-end. Most Washington County residents will then receive their food from Presbyterian Homes.

The White Bear Lake Area School District 624 will continue to operate its Meals on Wheels program without federal funding. District 624 meal recipients can choose to continue with the District 624 program or can switch to Presbyterian Homes.

The Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging administers the federal funding for meal delivery services throughout the seven-county metro area. Its selection of Presbyterian Homes as the new provider for Washington and Ramsey Counties set off rumors that daily hot meal delivery would cease.

In fact, both providers will provide a greater variety of options including daily hot meals and daily or weekly cold meals which recipients can heat at home.

Roseville-based Presbyterian Homes and Services has nearly 40 senior living facilities, as well as in-home care services. According to its website, the company currently provides Meals on Wheels to 100 clients in Ramsey County and serves meals at 17 congregate dining sites in the Twin Cities.

"Our mission is to serve the seniors and give them what they would like," said Presbyterian Homes Creative Services Dining Director Bill Hagstrom in a press release. "We're very confident that the participants will be satisfied with our program." Presbyterian Homes and Services will offer more than 80 meal menus, according to a press release. Recipients can have frozen meals delivered weekly or hot meals delivered daily. Frozen meal recipients also can request a daily visitor to check in on them and help them prepare the meal.

According to HSI CEO Mark Kuppe, adding frozen meal options has become a national trend. Presbyterian Homes can provide meal delivery at a lower cost because it will make the meals in-house. HSI outsources the meal preparation.

Kuppe said HSI and Presbyterian Homes officials are working together to ensure a smooth transition with no service interruption. At least some of HSI's Meals on Wheels staff will transfer to Presbyterian Homes. HSI delivery volunteers also are being welcomed to serve with Presbyterian Homes.

HSI has provided Meals on Wheels for more than 30 years. It delivered approximately 63,000 meals in 2009 and expects to deliver approximately the same number this year to its 240 clients, Kuppe said.

"It's always hard to let go of something you've been a part of for a long time but it's a lot easier when you have confidence in the new provider," Kuppe said.

The CEO said HSI will refocus its work on its mental health services.

"This gives us the opportunity to expand in our core service areas," Kuppe said.

The nonprofit HSI recently took over Crisis Connection, a Minneapolis nonprofit which provides 24-hour telephone counseling.

District 624's Senior Program also has provided Meals on Wheels for more than 30 years. Volunteers deliver nearly 23,000 meals annually.

A district press release indicates it will continue to deliver meals even after it loses federal funding, which accounted for 35 percent of the annual budget. Several other members of the Senior Services Consortium of Ramsey County, including the Mounds View School District, also will continue to provide Meals on Wheels.

"Community-based Meals on Wheels programs, like the one that is part of the Senior Program, provide more than just a meal," said White Bear Senior Program Coordinator Barb Green. "The daily delivery of Meals on Wheels provides the individual with the security of knowing someone will be checking to see how they are doing. For many seniors, Meals on Wheels is the access point to other community-based services that also assist them in remaining independent, such as transportation, housecleaning and yard work."

White Bear's Meals on Wheels also is adding new options. Recipients may have daily meals delivered hot or cold, or they can have a supply of frozen meals delivered once per week.

The county consortium members have hired a new caterer, Open Arms of Minnesota, which is a Bloomington-based Meals on Wheels provider. The new caterer will provide fresh, local organic food.

"They have a wonderful reputation in the Twin Cities area for providing a high quality meal," Green said.

### **Get involved**

- The Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging board of directors will hold a public forum about congregate dining and home-delivered meal services from 2-5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 30 at the Ramsey County Library in Maplewood. After a brief presentation about 2011 services, community members will be invited to share comments. Speakers must sign in and limit their comments to 3 minutes.
- White Bear Meals on Wheels is seeking donations to help offset the funding loss. Donations should be made to the White Bear Area Senior Program and sent to 2484 East County Road F, White Bear Lake, MN 55110.
- For more information about Presbyterian Homes & Services call 651-631-6100 or visit [www.preshomes.org](http://www.preshomes.org).

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