

FOOD AS MEDICINE

Investing in Michigan's Future Health Outcomes

Developed by:

University of Michigan Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health Policy | Healthy Behavior Optimization for Michigan's Nutrition Value Pathways Initiative



What is Food as Medicine (FAM)?

Food as Medicine (FAM) programs use medically appropriate nutrition interventions to prevent, manage, or treat disease.

Example program components include:

- Medically Tailored Meals for patients with diabetes, heart failure, cancer, high-risk pregnancies, or post-hospitalization recovery needs
- Produce Prescriptions to increase access to fruits and vegetables
- Healthy Grocery Boxes / Food Packs
- Medical Nutrition Therapy with a dietitian
- Diet specific educational tools and resources

Food as Medicine is different from food assistance programs like SNAP.

Food Assistance	Food as Medicine
Addresses hunger / food insecurity	Addresses disease / health outcomes
Broad eligibility	Clinically targeted
Social support program	Health care intervention
Goal: Increase access to food	Goal: Improve outcomes and reduce costs

The Evidence is Clear

Food as Medicine works and pays for itself.

Studies show that nationally, medically tailored meals can avert **1.6 million hospitalizations** and have a net cost savings of

\$13.6 billion annually.¹

Another large-scale study estimated that in Michigan specifically, medically tailored meals can avert

85,400 hospitalizations and save **\$1,812 in healthcare expenses annually** per enrolled Michigander.²

Michigan is Poised to be a Leader

Michigan already has momentum through:

- Medicaid In Lieu of Services (ILOS) nutrition benefits
- Numerous FAM pilots
- Hospital and community-based nutrition programs
- Robust local food networks

Opportunity Area: Medicaid In Lieu of Services (ILOS)

These programs need support to thrive in our state!

ILOS allows health plans to optionally offer FAM benefits to address members' nutrition-related health needs. These benefits are funded by the health plans themselves as lower-cost alternatives to more expensive medical care. Seven Medicaid health plans currently offer ILOS nutrition benefits in Michigan.

ILOS has already shown strong results in other states. In California, FAM benefits were associated with an **18.7% reduction in inpatient service costs, 6.0% reduction in outpatient service costs, and 20.0% reduction in emergency room costs after just six months.³**

The Impact of FAM

Expanding FAM programs and benefits in Michigan will support:

- Millions in reduced hospital costs
- Lower Medicaid spending
- Improved patient outcomes and chronic disease management
- Improved patient satisfaction
- More dollars flowing to Michigan farmers, grocers, and food suppliers

One Food as Medicine meal provider estimates spending over

\$3.5 million on Michigan-grown and Michigan-sourced ingredients in 2025 alone.

What's Needed

- Expansion of ILOS implementation
- Support for FAM pilots and evaluation
- Investment in digital infrastructure to strengthen connections between local food producers and healthcare



¹ Hager K et al. Association of National Expansion of Insurance Coverage of Medically Tailored Meals With Estimated Hospitalizations and Health Care Expenditures in the US. JAMA Netw Open. 2022;5(10):e2236898. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.36898

² Deng S et al. Estimated Impact Of Medically Tailored Meals On Health Care Use And Expenditures In 50 US States. Health Affairs 2025 44:4, 433-442

³ Community Supports, or In Lieu of Services (ILOS), Annual Report: Department of Health Care Services (dhcs) 1915(b) Waiver Report to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (cms) for calendar year (cy) 2024. 2025. <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/documents/mcqmd/dhcs-1915b-annual-report-on-ilos-stc-b20-2025.pdf>

Patient Voices

"Without this program I believe beginning anything of this kind would have been for naught."

- Patient with type 2 diabetes discussing their experience with a Lower Carbohydrate Eating FAM program where they received healthy grocery delivery for 3 months



"The cancer patient has been extremely underweight (95 pounds) and expressed frustration with attempting to make meals as well as afford healthy meal options.

I am happy to report while just receiving meals for three weeks, she has gained 7 pounds!!!!!! She said, 'the food is there, and when I am exhausted from treatment, I can just pop it in my oven.'"

- Clinician describing a patient who participated in an FAM program for patients experiencing food insecurity during cancer treatment