

Care for the Common Good

Improving Healthy Food Access Food Is Medicine



Trinity Health is one of the largest not-for-profit, Catholic health care systems in the nation, serving diverse communities across 23 states. We advocate for public policies that promote the common good including sustaining our faith-based mission, improving community health, and growing our workforce while addressing the continuously shifting national health care system landscape.

Trinity Health believes food is medicine

Diet-related chronic diseases affect nearly half of all Americans and cost the U.S. approximately \$1.1 trillion¹ each year. Food is medicine (FIM) programs help address challenges by increasing access to healthy foods and offering practical nutrition support.

Individuals and families who face food insecurity are more likely to experience common and costly health problems for all age groups including diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and obesity. Improving the health of individuals and communities by addressing social needs, including food insecurity, is at the core of Trinity Health's Mission.

FIM initiatives include population-level interventions designed to address food insecurity and healthy food access, and clinical interventions that leverage healthy food and nutrition education to prevent, treat or manage diet-related chronic diseases.

What can policymakers do?

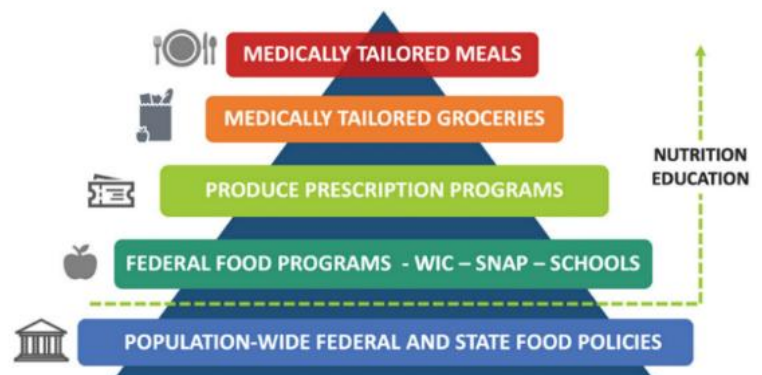
Increase access to healthy and affordable food through federal nutrition programs

- Improve the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):
 - Restore the SNAP-Ed nutrition education program.
 - Eliminate waiting periods and work requirements; streamline applications and renewals.
 - Modernize SNAP eligibility guidelines to the low-cost food plan.
 - Maximize participation of retailers and farmers by maintaining cost neutrality and providing support to invest in technology to accept multiple payment methods.
 - Expand summer electronic benefit transfer (EBT) to support healthy food access for children.
- Strengthen the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) program.

Implement effective food is medicine policy

- Increase support for food is medicine (FIM) programs that directly impact health and clinical outcomes such as:
 - Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) policies supportive of 1115 waivers, in lieu of services, and other policies that allow for implementation of produce prescriptions, healthy food packs, medically supportive groceries or meals, and medically tailored meals.
 - Expand the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program to inform best practices in FIM on a broad scale.
- Require FIM programs to have policies that prioritize procurement of agricultural products from local farmers.
- Include medical nutrition therapy (MNT) and/or appropriate nutrition education as a requirement of clinically integrated FIM programs.

Food Is Medicine Pyramid



¹ The Rockefeller Foundation. True Cost of Food: Measuring What Matters to Transform the U.S. Food System. July 2021. <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/True-Cost-of-Food-Full-Report-Final.pdf>

Improving healthy food access: food is medicine

Trinity Health's Best Practices in Healthy Food Access Programs

Trinity Health Michigan: Food is Medicine and The Farm

Trinity Health Food is Medicine (FIM), a core pillar of Community Health and Well-being, integrates social and clinical care by offering locally grown food to patients experiencing food or nutrition insecurity, or managing a diet related chronic disease. This integration addresses the root cause of health disparities while improving outcomes, cost of care, and patient experience.

Trinity Health FIM operates in three locations: Muskegon, Pontiac and Ypsilanti, Mich. Each location offers five core areas of integration including hospital-based farms, clinically integrated food pantries and farmer's markets, evidence-based nutrition education, and a clinically integrated aggregate community supported agriculture program, known as The Farm Share.



The Farm Share connects local food weekly from 47 farms to more than 900 unique families throughout the year. The program has been proven to improve patients' food security by 125%, increase fruit and vegetable consumption by one-quarter cup each day, and improve the health status of participants.

Trinity Health Of New England: The Joan C. Dauber (JCD) Food Pantry

Saint Francis Hospital has been serving the Hartford, Conn. community for more than four decades. Established in 1976 by Joan C. Dauber, a registered dietitian and U.S. Army veteran, the pantry was the first hospital-based food pantry in the U.S. It began as a small initiative helping discharged patients who had no access to nutritious food and has grown into a comprehensive program addressing food insecurity, a critical social determinant of health. Today, the pantry serves approximately 2,500 households monthly including patients, seniors, employees and members of the public. It provides nutritious whole foods, diapers, clothing and toiletries to families in need.

Beyond food assistance, the pantry is evolving to address broader social needs. Community health workers screen guests seeking food assistance to identify other non-medical needs that can be addressed and resolved during their visit, including connecting them to primary care services. It now incorporates connections to job readiness programs and workforce development resources specifically for at-risk youth, recognizing that economic stability is essential for long-term health and well-being. By linking food access, health education and employment support, the pantry helps reduce preventable hospitalizations and advances health equity in the community.

Trinity Health Mid-Atlantic: Fresh Connect

The Fresh Connect program is a free mobile farmers market bringing fresh produce to four sites in Bucks County, Pa. with the support of local farmers, food banks, volunteers and community partners. The program serves 750 families weekly. The Farmbox program is a weekly distribution to community sites, physician practices and hospitals, providing fresh produce from local organic farmers. There are nine sites across the regional health system. Prepared and medically tailored meals are provided to patients with hypertension, congestive heart failure (CHF) and diabetes. This service reduces disparities and improves health outcomes.

Mission

We, Trinity Health, serve together in the spirit of the Gospel as a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities.

Core Values

Reverence • Commitment to Those Experiencing Poverty • Safety • Justice • Stewardship • Integrity