

Food as Medicine

District of Columbia
Food Policy Council



Policies and programs integrating healthy food access as a core component of health care

DC HEALTH
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Supported across multiple sectors, the growing food as medicine movement recognizes the complexity in accessing healthful food and nutrition education needed to prevent, treat, or intervene individual and population health issues. Food as medicine programs provide nutritious, often medically tailored, food to improve individuals' health. Studies show that these programs reduce healthcare utilization and costs, increase vegetable consumption, and improve health.

In Summer 2019, the DC Food Policy Council examined the current food as medicine programs in the District, researched best practices across the country, and considered opportunities for enhanced integration of food as medicine programs within the health care system.

DC Programs



Medically Tailored Meals Programs

Home-delivered meals tailored to dietary needs of specific illnesses

Food & Friends, Mom's Meals



Medically Tailored Food Programs

Food or groceries tailored to specific illnesses; sometimes home-delivered

Food & Friends' Groceries-to-Go



Produce Prescriptions Programs

Vouchers for fresh produce prescribed to address diet-related illnesses

DC Greens' Produce Rx



Population-Level Healthy Food Programs

Combining food access and health care initiatives for all food-insecure individuals, regardless of health status

DC Central Kitchen's Healthy Corners



Screen and Intervene
Tailored questions about food security and/or health status used for service referral to all programs
DC Health requires food insecurity screenings in its local healthy food programs like Produce Plus and Joyful Markets

Sources

¹ Berkowitz et al, "Meal Delivery Programs Reduce the Use of Costly Health Care In Dually Eligible Medicare and Medicaid Beneficiaries," Health Affairs, 2018.

² Wholesome Wave, "Fruit & Vegetable Prescription Program," 2018.

³ Seligman et al, "A Pilot Food Bank Intervention Featuring Diabetes-Appropriate Food Improved Glycemic Control Among Clients In Three States," Health Affairs, 2015.

⁴ Randy Smith, "Food Access in D.C. is Deeply Connected to Poverty and Transportation," D.C. Policy Center, 2017.

⁵ "District of Columbia Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS): "2017 Annual Report," D.C. Health, 2019.

Food as Medicine

Opportunities in DC

Increase collaboration through a summit and working group

Convene community based organizations, health providers, health insurers, and other stakeholders to discuss how to strengthen and expand these programs in DC.

Centralize information to improve referrals and increase knowledge of programs

Centralize and distribute information about available services to providers and vulnerable populations to increase access to services and reduce duplication.

Integrate food as medicine into insurance payment structures

Examine feasibility of integrating coverage of food as medicine programs into health insurance payment structures to encourage long-term program sustainability.

Gather more evidence to advocate for expansion of programs

Increase data collection and standardize key metrics to better evaluate programs and their impacts on health, food access, and equity.

Encourage more nutrition education in the healthcare profession

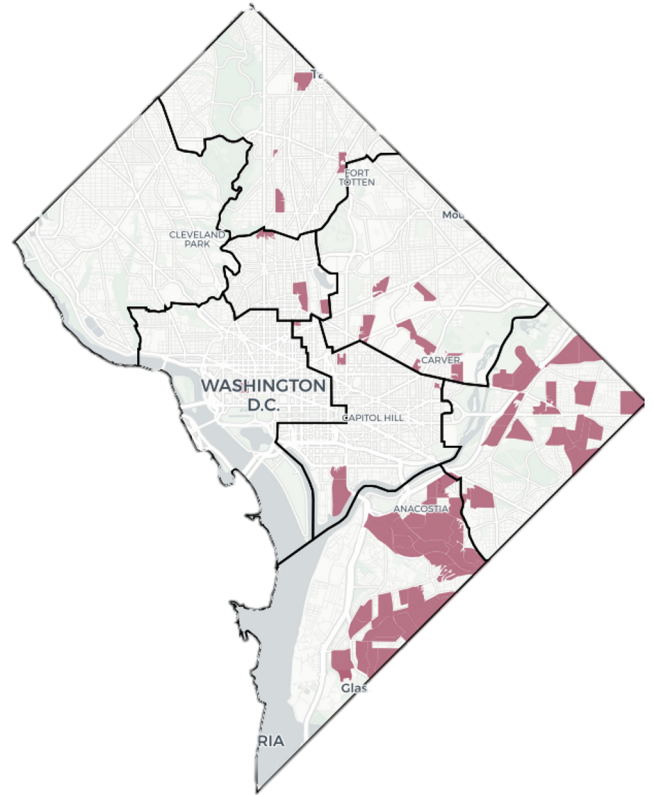
Explore opportunities to increase nutrition education for health professionals and medical students in DC.

Identify alternative funding sources to support existing and future programs

Determine new sources of public or private funding to support the advancement of food as medicine in DC.

If you know of other food as medicine programs or organizations not included here, please email dcfoodpolicy@dc.gov. Learn more about DC Food Policy Council at dcfoodpolicy.org.

Low Food Access Areas in DC⁴



Adult Diabetes Rates in DC⁵

