

10.3.19
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Leading the Field in Food is Medicine

By [Alissa Wassung, Director of Policy & Planning](#)

God's Love We Deliver acts as the convener of the Food is Medicine Coalition (FIMC), an association of nonprofit medically tailored food and nutrition service providers. Each September, we coordinate the Food is Medicine Coalition National Symposium in Washington, D.C. This Symposium is made possible by generous funding from the MAC AIDS Foundation. This past September, we successfully hosted our 9th Annual Symposium. This year's symposium felt particularly momentous because of the widespread attention that the social determinants of health are receiving in the healthcare community. The Symposium gave us the chance to come together and reflect on the past year, discuss exciting new research, learn about the innovative work being done across the country, and advocate for policies that expand access to medically tailored meals.

This year, there was no shortage of expert guest speakers. Former NYS Medicaid Director and Partner at Manatt Health, Deborah Bachrach, joined us to discuss Medicaid's role in addressing the social risk factors that influence health. Senator Bob Casey Jr. of Pennsylvania provided us with opening remarks to kick off our Hill Visits where FIMC agencies meet with elected officials to educate them about the medically tailored meal intervention and the work of the Food is Medicine Coalition. And finally, we had the pleasure of receiving closing remarks from Congressman Jim McGovern of Massachusetts who co-leads the Food Is Medicine Working Group of the House Hunger Caucus. Representatives from the Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School, AIDS United, Manatt Health, NASTAD, Nonprofit Finance Fund, Northwestern Medical Center, Unite Us, and Kaiser Permanente also presented.

Amid planning for a National Symposium, the Policy & Planning team took our message on the road, presenting at several national conferences. In August, Alissa Wassung, Director of Policy & Planning, was in Washington, DC, presenting at the convening of the National Resource Center on Nutrition & Aging, alongside colleagues from the Center for Health Law & Policy Innovation at Harvard Law School, Community Servings in Boston and Project Angel Heart in Denver. Collectively, partners addressed the need to nourish seniors through medically tailored meals.

Alissa also presented in August at the American Sociological Association's annual meeting with our colleagues from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health on a panel titled Food Insecurity and HIV/AIDS. Alissa discussed our joint research, as well as the need for additional support for research in the field of nutrition.

Each year, God's Love We Deliver is honored to present at the United States Conference on AIDS (USCA). This year Karen made her way to DC to join our Food is Medicine Coalition colleagues on a panel titled Food is Medicine: Addressing Access Barriers through Nutrition Services. Karen discussed the development of the Food is Medicine Coalition's national nutrition standards for medically tailored meals, which were recently adopted by the NYC Health and Human Services Planning Council to improve the quality of food for people living with HIV.

To finish out a busy summer and fall conference season, Alissa will join our Food is Medicine Coalition partners at the end of October at the Root Cause Coalition's 4th Annual Summit on the Social Determinants of Health: Health Equity in our Time. Alissa and partners will host a Pre-Conference Institute titled Addressing Health Inequities through Innovative Partnerships Providing Access to Food is Medicine Interventions. The Root Cause Coalition Summit provides an opportunity for healthcare providers and community-based organizations to come together and discuss the social determinants of health and learn from the innovative partnerships taking place across the country.

For years, we have continuously stressed the importance of nutrition as a social determinant of health. We are so pleased that this concept is receiving the national attention it deserves and we hope that these educational opportunities serve as a catalyst for bringing our life saving services to more people in need.



Alissa with our colleagues from the Food is Medicine Coalition

On news stands across the country, Buhl's piece focuses on a pilot run by Medi-Cal, California's version of Medicaid, which studies the benefits of medically tailored meals for patients living with congestive heart failure. He reports that this disease has some of the highest rates of re-hospitalization, and its treatment requires a strict and expensive diet. This is difficult for anyone to follow, but can be particularly challenging for low income patients. In the article, Buhl quotes Tanvir Hussain, a clinical cardiologist and [Project Angel Food](#) board member, who says that unless congestive heart failure patients follow dietary guidelines, the drug therapy doesn't work to keep them out of the hospital.

Buhl's reporting focuses both on the financial benefits of providing medically tailored meals, and also on how this intervention allows patients to maintain full and healthy lives. He frames the article with the story of Diane Henry, a congestive heart failure patient who says that since receiving medically tailored meals, she has more energy and has lost weight. "What I want to do is be able to take a long walk, go dancing. And wear my heels! I'm 54 and I still have a lot of life left." Buhl concludes with Dr. Bernard Lewin, who argues that medically tailored meals represent a "shift in thinking from a problem-based medical delivery system to a holistic, wellness-focused preventive maintenance." God's Love We Deliver leads the Food Is Medicine Coalition and is honored to partner with our peer medically tailored meal organizations.

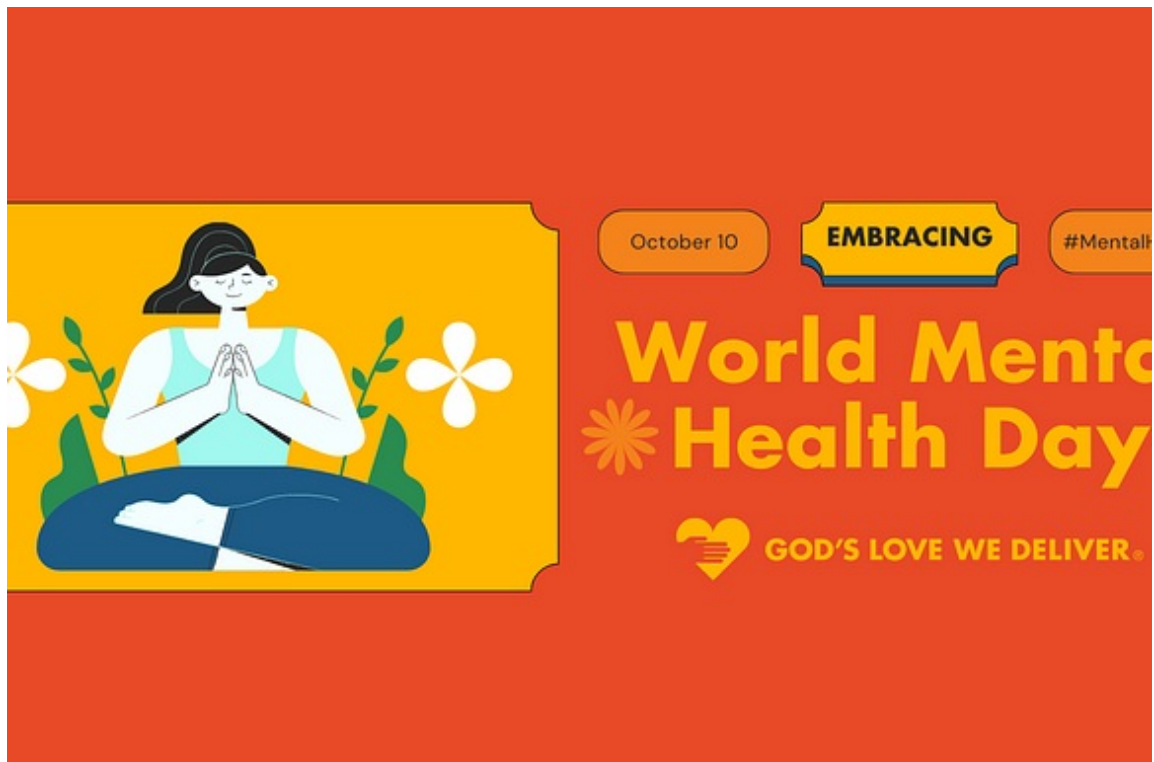
Together, we are working to make the healthcare system focus on *health* and not just illness.

It is an exciting moment in the Food is Medicine movement. As the healthcare system is coming to recognize that food and nutrition services are an integral component of keeping people healthy and bringing people from illness to wellness, we are certain to see more actions like the Medi-Cal pilot.

"We know that food insecurity and malnutrition exacerbate existing disparities in health outcomes, but medically tailored meals are an affordable, noninvasive intervention that support patients and cost less for the health care system."

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10.10.24 / Community

Commemorating World Mental Health Awareness Day

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. If you feel that you need support with your mental health, the first thing to know is that you are not alone.



9.26.24 / Nutrition

Keeping Safe with Food Safety Tips from our RDNs

This September and throughout the year, we encourage you to follow our food safety guidelines to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.



9.24.24 / Policy

God's Love We Deliver Receives Accreditation from the Food is Medicine Coalition!

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