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## Medical Residents Learn Food is Medicine

By [Lisa Zullig, Director of Nutrition Services, MS, RDN, CSG, CDN](#)

Last year, God's Love We Deliver received an Improving Collaborations between Primary Care Residency Program and Community-Based Organizations grant from the Greater New York Hospital Association to develop an immersion training program for medical residents. The purpose of the program was to provide residents with first-hand knowledge of how the social determinants affect health from the perspective of community-based organizations. Our program focused on the fundamental role of medically tailored food and nutrition services in addressing the health needs of people living with serious illness. Additional objectives included how to determine risk for malnutrition, food insecurity, and how to identify those who might benefit from community nutrition services including medically tailored home delivered meal services. God's Love was matched with SUNY Downstate Family Medicine Residency for the project.

The God's Love Nutrition Services team, along with the SUNY Downstate Family Medicine Residency Director, designed a full-day program for residents to experience a combination of hands-on activities, lecture and discussion at our facility. It was structured into three parts: a morning in our kitchen assisting with the preparation of our medically tailored meals; a shared meal prepared by our kitchen team; and then an interactive educational program conducted by our Registered Dietitian Nutritionists.

During the grant period, we held three one-day immersion trainings for SUNY Downstate Family Medicine Residents. Residents commented that in addition to learning about the food is medicine research and useful tools for their practice, they loved seeing how the food was prepared and how it tasted: these tangible elements make patient referral easier. In November 2018, along with SUNY Downstate staff, I presented about the program at the Family Medicine Education Consortium meeting, and we are currently on track to expand the program beyond the original grant. The next group of SUNY Downstate Family Medicine residents will be at God's Love this month, and we are offering this training to additional programs as well.

The social determinants of health have a huge impact on health achievement. The collaboration of Community-Based Organizations and the healthcare system is critical for better health outcomes, and we are enthusiastic to share our expertise about the efficacy of evidence-based, cost effective medically tailored meals for people living with severe illness.

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