



9.5.18 / [Community](#)

The United States Conference on AIDS: Food Is Medicine for People Living with HIV

By [Karen Pearl, President & CEO](#)

What if we could end the HIV Epidemic in just a few years? While we know that HIV diagnoses are overall declining, we are still far from this goal. There continues to be 40,000 new HIV infections each year in the US, and new infections disproportionately affect minorities, and, especially in the South, women. To truly End the Epidemic, we need to support those who are diagnosed by linking them to and retaining them in HIV healthcare to improve their health and quality of life and to maximize viral suppression to prevent further transmission.

Access to food and nutrition is key to this worthy goal. Nutritional status is strongly predictive of survival and functional status among people living with HIV (PWH). Nutritional problems can occur at any state of illness and can contribute to impaired immune response, accelerated disease progression, an increase the frequency of opportunistic infections, and may impede the effectiveness of medications. Furthermore, adherence to antiretroviral regimens is complex and often poor due to extraordinarily rigid adherence requirements, dietary guidelines, and side effects. [Research shows](#) that access to medically tailored meals (MTM), like those from God's Love, help people living with HIV (PWH) remain nourished, adhere to their medications and achieve viral suppression. The same services improve health outcomes and lower the cost of care for those living with HIV.

Despite convincing outcomes, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, the only dedicated funding for food and nutrition services (FNS) for

people with HIV, does not cover all those who seek services, forcing many agencies to institute waiting lists or reduce services. Even when individuals receive these low-cost and clinically effective interventions through Ryan White funded programs, they are often not enough, as many PWH remain food insecure. We must change this reality.

For many years, God's Love We Deliver has been an outspoken advocate for the recognition of the importance of including our services in care plans for PWH. We work hard at the local, state and federal level to expand coverage of FNS, so no one falls through the cracks. Our staff sit on our local HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council. I sit on the AIDS United Public Policy Committee and Alissa Wassung, our Director of Policy & Planning, Co-Chairs the Structural Interventions Working Group (SIWG) of the Federal AIDS Policy Partnership.

Through the work of the SIWG, the [United States Conference on AIDS](#) hosts a Structural Interventions Track each year. Tomorrow, alongside colleagues from our national [Food Is Medicine Coalition](#), I will present at a session titled, *Food Is Medicine for People with HIV: Addressing Access Barriers through Nutrition Services*. Our session focuses on the crucial role that proper nutrition plays in managing and treating HIV. We will share best practices, research and policy, and their combined potential for addressing the gaps in HIV services so that we can bring high quality care to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. I hope you will join me in person, or virtually, as together we work to End the Epidemic.

Related Blog Posts



7.1.20 / Community

Rising to the Challenge: God's Love We Deliver Response during COVID-19

It's the start of our new fiscal year, and we look forward to all that we will accomplish together! In our past year alone (June 2019-June 2020), God's Love cooked and home-delivered 2.33 million nutritious, indiv...



6.30.20 / Community

Town Hall Meeting: Our COVID-19 Response

God's Love We Deliver turns 35 years old today. We are so proud and honored to be here with you. We began with the simple principle that no one should ever have to face the dual crises of illness and hunger. We brought meals...



6.21.20 / Community

Natasha Pickowicz's Pride Cake

We're kicking off Pride week in delicious, colorful style with an olive oil cake from NYC-based pastry chef and activist, Natasha Pickowicz. She wrote this incredible recipe for you to get creative with, so get baking a...