



Pennsylvania Department of Human Services

Keystones of Health Food is Medicine Stakeholder Sessions

Overview

Food is Medicine is now a widely recognized strategy to prevent, manage and treat disease. With growing evidence of the impact of Food is Medicine, the US Department of Health and Human Services and bipartisan policymakers have advocated for expanding these initiatives. These programs emphasize the role that healthy food can play in preventing avoidable health care use like costly emergency room visits and hospitalizations while improving quality of life. Pennsylvania is home to many charitable food and community organizations that have partnered with hospitals and health systems to pilot various Food is Medicine initiatives like medically tailored meals and healthy produce programs.

In December 2024, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), approved a 5-year waiver (Keystones of Health) for Pennsylvania that grants federal authority to include Food is Medicine tools in the Pennsylvania Medicaid program. This provides the opportunity to expand programs across the Commonwealth that are proven to work.

While this portion of the demonstration waiver is not in the Governor's proposed budget for state fiscal year 25-26 and future implementation is contingent on budget appropriations from the General Assembly, DHS is planning a virtual "looking ahead" series of stakeholder engagement sessions to determine what would be necessary for successful implementation. This series will help inform CMS-required deliverables due in summer and fall 2025 regardless of the year we implement.

Sessions will bring together representatives from food and nutrition organizations, hospitals and health systems and other health care providers, managed care organizations, and state government. Through these sessions, DHS will share information and seek input on key drivers to achieve success and impact.

Goals

The goals of this series of "Food is Medicine Stakeholder Sessions" are to identify key steps and needs for implementation and measures of program success.

First Session

The first *virtual* stakeholder engagement session will be held **April 21, 2025 (1:00-2:00 PM)** and will serve as an opportunity to share updates regarding the status of the Keystones of Health waiver and CMS approvals. We will then have opportunities for discussion of needs and future strategies for implementation. Future implementation is contingent on budget appropriations.

Subsequent Sessions

Future monthly sessions will focus on specific aspects of implementation ranging from screening and referring consumers to the delivery of services to translating time-limited services to long-term impact. Sessions will be held on the **3rd Monday of the month (1:00-2:00 PM) through August 2025.**