



ABOUT THE

Food as Medicine Collaborative



Formed in 2015, the Food as Medicine Collaborative (FAMC) is a multi-sector coalition of over 20 organizations including community clinics, food nonprofits and businesses, and the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH). FAMC is fiscally sponsored by the nonprofit SF Public Health Foundation.

The mission of the Food as Medicine Collaborative is to bridge healthcare and food systems to address food insecurity, support nutritional behavior change, and advance health equity. **Our vision** is of thriving, healthy communities supported by equitable, respectful healthcare and just, resilient food systems. We strive to achieve this by challenging institutional systems that have been structured to keep low-income and BIPOC communities at a disadvantage. We work with healthcare systems to tackle root causes of health disparities, advocating for them to leverage their power to champion food justice and food security.

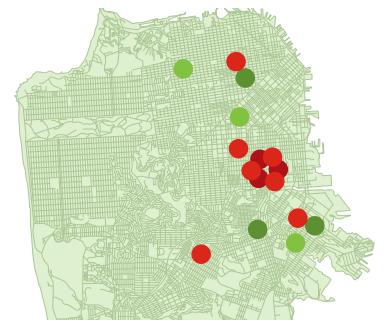
FAMC's goals include:

1. Catalyze the creation and expansion of food programming within healthcare settings through robust clinical-community linkages, specifically through our Food Pharmacies;
2. Promote culture and systems change in healthcare to embrace food insecurity as a healthcare issue; and
3. Advocate for policy change in healthcare, such as ensuring health insurance covers food as a medical benefit.

Impact

PROGRAMS

In 2022, Food Pharmacy programs supported by FAMC provided services to over 2,000 patients across 12 clinics, reaching over 6,000 San Franciscans, as food provided to patients feeds their families as well. Participants report sustained benefits from Food Pharmacies, including a strengthened sense of community-building and identity, and evaluation data reveal statistically significant decreases in blood pressure for patients who attend five or more Food Pharmacy sessions.



FAMC Interventions in Clinics 2017-2020

SYSTEMS

FAMC cultivates culture change within healthcare systems, seeking to integrate nutrition security interventions into day-to-day healthcare work. Our systems change work has resulted in healthcare embracing food as a critical health issue, allowing us to scale up on-site food programming from one pilot in 2015 to, currently, 12 programs across four health systems. This systems change has proven to be resilient. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, our healthcare partners increased their investments in food security, with six more clinics expanding food and nutrition services for at-risk, food-insecure patients.

POLICY

While working to improve individual and collective health for diverse SF residents, FAMC is also advancing our food-as-medicine approach at a large scale. In 2021, after a year and a half of collective advocacy, our Collaborative successfully led efforts to persuade the California Department of Healthcare Services to include medically supportive food and nutrition (MSF&N) services in California's Medicaid Waiver (CalAIM), enabling food to be a covered medical benefit under California's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal, beginning in 2022. Now we are working to encourage health plans, health systems, and food organizations to work together to provide medically supportive food and nutrition services supported by Medi-Cal funding.



Food Justice & Racial Equity

As a food justice program that serves low-income, racially diverse populations, especially Black/African-American and Latinx, FAMC is committed to ensuring Food Pharmacies are informed by the diverse patients and communities we serve. Throughout FAMC’s development and growth, we have worked with experts in human-centered design and patient advisors to ensure our work is community-informed and culturally responsive. By soliciting feedback from patients through surveys, focus groups, and informally at Food Pharmacies, we continue to refine our services and our racial equity focus.

FAMC Founder and Medical Director Dr. Rita Nguyen has committed her career to addressing structural racism and oppression. As a first-generation, Asian-American woman who grew up in a low-income neighborhood in East San José, it is critical to Dr. Nguyen that Food Pharmacies are community-informed, meet food access needs with dignity and respect, and contribute to deeper systems change that rectifies structural oppression.

Values



EQUITY

Our current systems are designed to advantage certain groups while limiting opportunity for others. We believe in systems and policies which provide opportunities for everyone to be healthy, live with dignity, and achieve their full potential.

HEALING

We believe that improved health empowers individuals and communities. Addressing food insecurity as a key social determinant of health requires challenging and dismantling underlying injustices in our food and healthcare systems in order to give power and agency to historically disadvantaged communities.

PARTNERSHIP

Systems change requires deep, interwoven, and effective collaborations. We believe that there is tremendous opportunity for alignment between healthcare and food systems to leverage resources and co-create strategies that build resilience and capacity within both sectors to improve patient and community health.

HUMILITY

We believe that addressing health disparities requires deep listening to those directly affected by food insecurity and chronic disease. Our programs and policies must be responsive to the needs of patients and community stakeholders, and they should have a seat at the table in decision making.

Funders & Supporters

HELLMAN FOUNDATION

