



CalAIM Medicaid Waiver: Expanding Medically-Supportive Food and Nutrition Services



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CalAIM Medicaid Waiver - Expanding Medically-Supportive Food and Nutrition Services to Improve Health Outcomes and Reduce Healthcare Costs

Opportunity: Section 1115 of the Social Security Act gives the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) the authority to waive certain Federal regulations or pieces of law in order to approve experimental, pilot, or demonstration projects outside the parameters of state plans. California's 1115 Waiver expires in December 2020 and the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) is in the midst of preparing the renewal and update to the waiver. At the same time CMS is also preparing their 1915b(3) waiver. The 1915b(3) waiver, also known as a Non-Medicaid Services Waiver, allows cost savings to provide additional services to beneficiaries. California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) represents DHCS's comprehensive waiver proposal meant to take effect January 2021. In North Carolina, Massachusetts and Oregon waivers have been used to provide food-based support to improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

California should join these pioneering states in their effort to support innovative prevention and treatment strategies. Both waivers provide an opportunity to include medically-supportive food and nutrition into the provision of Medi-Cal to improve health and reduce healthcare costs. The current CalAIM proposal incorporates home-delivered meals at discharge and medically tailored meals as "in lieu of" services for beneficiaries (see pages 159-160 of the CalAIM Proposal) and is a natural starting point for incorporating additional medically-supportive food and nutrition services that can improve health and reduce healthcare costs.

Our Proposal to DHCS:

As part of the overall vision for CalAIM and specifically in an attempt to improve outcomes for the state's most vulnerable populations, we propose expanding medically-supportive food and nutrition services that address food insecurity -- a major social determinant of health -- and nutritional health into Medi-Cal. **To accomplish this goal we propose that CalAIM include "Medically-Supportive Food and Nutrition Services" into its proposal as 1) an expansion of home-delivered and medically tailored meals which are currently included as in lieu of services and/or 2) through other mechanisms within the waiver that would enhance population health and care management.** Healthy food and adequate nutrition are a fundamental part of treating, preventing, and managing chronic disease^{1,2,3} and can significantly improve a patient's quality of life and health status^{4,5} while also reducing health care costs.^{6,7} Expanding the definition of "Medically-Supportive Food and Nutrition Services" would extend allowable services to include other types of medically-supportive food and nutrition that improve health outcomes and reduce healthcare costs in addition to medically tailored meals, services which are already included in the current CalAIM proposal. Evidence suggests that a broader range of healthy food supports beyond medically tailored meals can improve health outcomes^{4,8,9,10,11} and reduce healthcare costs.^{7,8,10} The level of care provided would range from prevention to treatment based on the level of acuity and need of the individuals.

Target Populations:

Meet the health needs-based criteria:

- being food insecure or at risk of food insecurity

AND meet at least one of the risk factors:

- living with a chronic condition or at risk for a chronic condition
- needing assistance with one or more documented activities of daily living or independent activities of daily living
- being pregnant and up to 24 months postpartum
- being homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- children and transitional age youth experiencing four or more categories of adverse childhood experiences

“Medically-Supportive Food and Nutrition Services” would include, but is not limited to:

- Direct medically-supportive food assistance
 - healthy food boxes, groceries, or meals to prevent or manage chronic disease
 - healthy food vouchers and food prescriptions to prevent or manage chronic disease, including but not limited to fruits and vegetables
 - medically tailored groceries
 - medically tailored meals
- Nutrition education, cooking education, and/or behavioral coaching and counseling, when paired with one of the forms of direct medically-supportive food assistance above
- Linkages to community-based food services (SNAP & WIC application assistance, food bank referrals)
- Transportation for accessing healthy food to prevent or manage chronic disease

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