**Medical Policy:** HOME DELIVERED MEALS

**Benefit Type:** Medicare

**Original Date:** Sept. 3, 2026 | **Last Review Date:** Sept. 3, 2026 | **Effective Date:** Sept. 3, 2026

## Policy Statement

In accordance with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) it is the policy of Gold Coast Health Plan Total Care Advantage (HMO D-SNP) to cover specialized care and wrap-around services for Total Care Advantage dually enrolled D-SNP beneficiaries.

Meals are a primarily health related benefit when provided to enrollees for a limited period immediately following surgery, or an inpatient hospitalization, or for a limited period due to a chronic illness (beyond limited basis).

Home delivered meals are covered as a Medicare Advantage supplemental benefit for recovery after discharge from an acute care facility for the prevention of readmission. This supplemental benefit is distinct from the CalAIM Medically Tailored Meals / Medically Supportive Food benefit.

The CalAIM Medically Tailored Meals / Medically Supportive Food benefit may be covered after exhaustion of the home delivered meals for eligible members. *(Refer to Medi-Cal Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF) Medical Policy)*

## Purpose

To provide guidance related to the medical necessity, indications and authorization requirements for post-hospitalization home delivered meals and when members may access the Medi-Cal Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF) service.

## Health Equity Statement

Total Care Advantage is committed to the vision in which all Californians equitably benefit from resources and systems that give everyone the opportunity to achieve their optimal health, resulting in communities that thrive.

Total Care Advantage adopts the American Medical Association (AMA) and DHCS commitments to whole-person centered, evidence-based and integrated strategies to advance health equity, addressing social and structural drivers of health. Decisions are therefore based on the evidence-based criteria as well as considerations of the member's social and structural drivers of health, and considerations that the decisions create no harm nor exacerbate existing harms.[1, 2]

## Definitions

**Supplemental Benefit – Meals:** Home delivered prepared meals.

**Medically Tailored Meals (MTM):** Meals that adhere to established, evidence-based nutrition guidelines for specific nutrition-sensitive health conditions.

**Medically Supportive Groceries (MSG):** Preselected whole food items that adhere to established, evidence-based nutrition guidelines for specific nutrition-sensitive health conditions.

**Medically Supportive Food (MSF):** Defined as Medically Supportive Groceries (MSG), Produce Prescriptions, Healthy Food Vouchers and Food Pharmacy.

## Indications

Members may be eligible for home delivered meals for readmission prevention when requested within seven days after discharge from an inpatient stay or outpatient procedure where nutritional support is needed to remain medically stable and to avoid readmission.

## Restrictions / Limitations

1. Home delivered meals provided after acute hospitalization cannot exceed 28 meals per year
    a. This limit renews on January 1st of each calendar year.
2. Meals must not be duplicative of other services (e.g., CalAIM community supports Medically Tailored Meals / Medically Supportive Food services).
3. Member must exhaust the D-SNP home delivered meal benefit before accessing the CalAIM Medically Tailored Meals / Medically Supportive Food benefit.

## Non-Covered Services

Services may not be covered when the benefit is exhausted, or member is receiving other similar services.

## References


1. American Medical Association (AMA). (2023, December 21). AMA Center for Health Equity Mission and Guiding Principles.
2. Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Comprehensive Quality Strategy. (PDF).
3. Medicare Managed Care Manual - Chapter 4
4. Medi-Cal Medically Tailored Meals (MTM)/Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF) Medical Policy
5. Community Supports: Select Service Definition Updates. https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/MCQMD/Community-Supports-February-2025-Service-Definition-Updates.pdf
6. Medi-Cal Community Supports, or In Lieu of Services (ILOS), Policy Guide. https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/MCQMD/DHCS-Community-Supports-Policy-Guide.pdf
7. Dietary Guidelines for Americans https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/dietary-guidelines-americans
8. DHCS Medicare Advantage Options for Dual Eligible Beneficiaries https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/providers-partners/medicare-advantage-options-for-dual-eligible-beneficiaries/

## Disclaimer

Guidelines provide references identified at the time of review. New guidelines or medical literature may emerge and/or been published. Treating health care professionals are solely responsible for diagnosis, treatment and medical guidance.Total Care Advantage regularly reviews and updates these guidelines to provide the most current information.

## History

| CREDENTIALING PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE (C/PRC) GUIDELINE HISTORY | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Adopted By CPRC** | **Reapproved** | **Revised** | **Retired** |
| | | June 4, 2026 | |
| | | Sept. 3, 2026 | |