

Medical Policy: **MEDICALLY TAILORED MEALS (MTM)/MEDICALLY TAILORED GROCERIES (MTG) AND/OR MEDICALLY SUPPORTIVE FOOD (MSF)**

Benefit Type: **Medi-Cal**

Original Date: September 4, 2025 | **Last Review Date:** May 20, 2026 | **Effective Date:** June 4, 2026

Policy Statement

In accordance with the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), it is the policy of Gold Coast Health Plan (GCHP) to include medically necessary Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF) as a covered benefit under Medi-Cal for all eligible beneficiaries.

Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG), and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF) services are designed to address individuals' chronic or other serious nutrition sensitive health conditions to support improved health outcomes and reduced unnecessary costs and are not covered for food insecurities.

Purpose

To provide guidance related to the medical necessity, indications and authorization requirements for Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG), and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF).

Health Equity Statement

GCHP 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.

GCHP 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 members' social and structural drivers of health, and considerations that the decisions create no harm nor exacerbate existing harms.^{1,2}

Definitions

Food Pharmacy: A model that specifically combines MSF and nutrition supports to remove barriers to healthy eating and build the knowledge and skills of participants to cook and eat foods appropriate for their nutrition-sensitive conditions. Food pharmacies are often housed within (or managed by) a healthcare setting, providing a patient cohort with coordinated clinical, food, and nutrition education services targeted at specific nutrition-sensitive health conditions. The healthy food "prescription" includes access to a selection of specific whole foods appropriate for the specific chronic or serious health condition(s) that follow the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans and meet recommendations for the targeted health condition(s). The food is typically paired with peer support, nutrition education, counseling, and/or culinary classes to build cooking and healthy eating skills and habits.

Healthy Food Vouchers: Vouchers used to procure pre-selected foods that follow the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans and meet recommendations for the nutrition-sensitive health conditions of the recipients, via retail settings such as grocery stores or farmers' markets.

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

Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG): 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.

Medically Supportive Groceries (MSG): Preselected foods that follow the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans and meet recommendations for the nutrition-sensitive health conditions of the recipient to whom they are prescribed.

Nutrition-sensitive health conditions: Medical conditions and illnesses that are caused, exacerbated, or managed by an individual’s diet, nutritional status, or environmental factors affecting food intake that are nutrition sensitive, such as (but not limited to): cancer(s), cardiovascular disorders, chronic kidney disease, chronic lung disorders or other pulmonary conditions such as asthma / chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart failure, diabetes or other metabolic conditions, elevated lead levels, end-stage renal disease, high cholesterol, human immunodeficiency virus, hypertension, liver disease, dyslipidemia, fatty liver, malnutrition, obesity, stroke, gastrointestinal disorders, gestational diabetes, high-risk perinatal conditions, and chronic or disabling mental/behavioral health disorders.

Produce Prescriptions: Fruits and vegetables, typically procured in retail settings, such as grocery stores or farmers’ markets, obtained via a financial mechanism such as a physical or electronic voucher or card.

Indications

Members may be eligible when diagnosed with a chronic or other serious health condition that is nutrition-sensitive such as, but not limited to the following:

Indication	Criteria
Malnutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical evidence of malnutrition Malnutrition Screening Tool (MST) Score of ≥ 3
Diabetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A1C $\geq 9\%$ on referral Diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) or hospitalization for diabetic complications within the past 12 mo.
Cardiovascular Disease	Atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease (CAD), cerebral vascular disease (CVD), peripheral vascular disease (PVD), peripheral artery disease (PAD)
Liver Disease	Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH), non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), end stage liver disease, cirrhosis, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)
Renal Failure/Chronic Renal Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialysis or Stage 4 or 5

Indication	Criteria
Chronic Lung Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis (CF), emphysema, interstitial lung, allergic asthma, or Other severe lung disease
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical evidence of moderate/severe malnutrition Malnutrition Screening Tool (MST) Score of ≥ 3
Cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-hospitalization or Active chemotherapy or during radiation therapy
Gestational Diabetes	
Bariatric	Post-hospitalization within six months of surgery (evidence most complications happen within one year)
High-Risk Perinatal Conditions While Pregnant	
Elevated Lead Levels	
Gastrointestinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ileostomy/colostomy, chronic gastroparesis, inflammatory bowel disease, and other GA associated with: APL 26-005 Maternity Services for Pregnant and Postpartum Medi-Cal Members
Wounds and other criteria	Venous stasis ulcers, decubitus ulcers, non-healing diabetic ulcers, actively receiving wound care from a wound care clinic or specialist

Restrictions/Limitations

- Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF) can be authorized beyond 12 months (365 days) in up to 90-day increments if meets medical necessity criteria after physician review.
 - Extensions may be authorized for 90 days (3 months) unless both services (MTM and MTG) are combined on one authorization request (90 days each), in which case a combined total of 180 days (six months) will be allowed.
 - Extenuating circumstances for an additional 90 days beyond the 12 months will be considered when there is a compelling acute event (i.e., hospitalization) or there is a new nutrition sensitive chronic disease diagnosis.
- Two meals and/or meal packages per day in combination of Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF)
- Meals, food, payments and nutrition services eligible for/or reimbursed by alternative programs will not be funded/counted as community support.
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are not considered duplicative.

Non-Covered Services

Services may not be covered when:

1. Registered dietitian, nutritionist, or other qualified healthcare provider does not indicate services are medically necessary or indicates that goals have been met.
2. No chronic or other nutrition-sensitive, serious health conditions identified.
3. When the member has previously received Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF).
 - a. With no evidence of an acute health event in the last 30 days when Something is missing here.
 - b. No identified need for continuation of services.
 - c. Graduated from the service provider by registered dietitian.
4. Members have received Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) / Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) and/or Medically Supportive Food (MSF) for nine months/270 days.
5. Member receiving duplicative services.
6. GCHP identified fraud, waste, and abuse.

References

1. American Medical Association (AMA). (2023, Dec. 21). [AMA Center for Health Equity Mission and Guiding Principles](#).
2. DHCS Comprehensive Quality Strategy. (PDF), published Feb. 4, 2022.
3. Community Supports: Select Service Definition Updates. <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/MCQMD/Community-Supports-February-2025-Service-Definition-Updates.pdf>
4. 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>
5. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/dietary-guidelines-americans>

Disclaimer

Guidelines provide references identified at the time of review. New guidelines or medical literature may emerge and/or been published. Treating healthcare professionals are solely responsible for diagnosis, treatment and medical guidance. GCHP 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	