



MEDICALLY TAILORED MEALS / MEDICALLY TAILORED GROCERIES GUIDELINE

Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) and Medically Supportive Foods (MSF) services are designed to address individuals' chronic or other serious conditions that are nutrition sensitive, leading to improved health outcomes and reduced unnecessary costs.

1. Service Definitions:

- Medically Tailored Meals (MTM) is defined as meals that adhere to established, evidence-based nutrition guidelines for specific nutrition-sensitive health conditions.
- Medically Tailored Groceries (MTG) is defined as preselected whole food items that adhere to established, evidence-based nutrition guidelines for specific nutrition-sensitive health conditions.
- Medically Supportive Foods (MSF) is defined as:
 - a. Medically Supportive Groceries: Preselected foods that follow the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans and meet recommendations for the nutrition-sensitive health conditions of the recipients to whom they are prescribed.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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 health care 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 supports, nutrition education, counseling, and/or culinary classes to build cooking and healthy eating skills and habits.

2. No authorization is required for services for the first 90 days of service. Authorization is required after the initial 90 days of service (per the state Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Medi-Cal Community Supports, or In Lieu of Services (ILOS), Policy Guide).

- a. Individuals who have chronic or other serious health conditions 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 / 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.

3. The following defines the medical eligibility and population subset that are eligible for authorization of this service:

- a. These clinical conditions qualify a member for extension of the authorization of MTM / MSF for an additional 90 days. For this extension, authorization is required:
 - i. Malnutrition with malnutrition screening tool (MST) Score of ≥ 3
 - ii. Diabetes (A1C $\geq 9\%$ on referral)
 - iii. Cardiovascular disease
 - iv. Liver disease (NASH, NAFLD, end stage liver disease, cirrhosis, MASLD)
 - v. Congestive heart failure (class 3 or 4) and hospitalized x1 in the last six months



- vi. Renal failure (Dialysis or stage 4 or 5) with hospitalization x1 in the last six months
- vii. Stroke (post-discharge) and excluding TIA or RIND
- viii. Chronic lung disorders (COPD, CF, emphysema, interstitial lung, allergic asthma, or other severe lung disease post-hospitalization)
- ix. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) with MST Score of ≥ 3
- x. Cancer post-hospitalization or active chemotherapy or during radiation therapy
- xi. Gestational diabetes
- xii. Postop bariatric
- xiii. High-risk perinatal conditions while pregnant
- xiv. Elevated lead levels

4. Not medically necessary. The following does not meet inclusion criteria for extension of services:

- a. Services will be denied if:
 - i. Medically tailored meals / groceries services are considered not medically necessary when the treatment plan provided by the registered dietitian nutritionist or other qualified health care provider does not specifically document the continued need for medically tailored intervention or the goals have been met.
 - ii. No chronic or other nutrition sensitive, serious health conditions are documented by the registered dietitian nutritionist or health care provider.
 - iii. Members with chronic or disabling mental or behavioral health disorders in the absence of an accompanying nutrition-sensitive health chronic condition.
 - iv. Without evidence of an acute health event such as hospitalization or new diagnosis of nutrition sensitive chronic condition in the last 30 days for a member previously on MTM / MSF services and who has not been recommended to continue the program or graduated from this service by provider. Graduated individuals are listed on the return transmission file as program completed / graduated or graduated per clinical documentation from provider RDN staff.
 - v. Member has received a total of one year (365 days) of MTM and/or MSF.
 - vi. Member is receiving a duplicative MTM service.
 - vii. GCHP compliance investigation identifies reasonable evidence of fraud, waste, and abuse.

5. Restrictions / Limitations:

- a. Service covers up to two meals and/or meal packages per day using a combination of MTM and MSF interventions.
 - i. MTM / MSF can be provided (without authorization) for up to 90 days and then may be authorized thereafter for an additional 90 days if medically necessary. MCPs and their MTM / MSF providers are encouraged to check in with members who are receiving this community support at a more frequent cadence to assess whether Members are obtaining and eating the foods / meals provided through this community support, and whether any changes need to be made to improve the effectiveness of the MTM / MSF.
 - ii. Meals, food, payments, and nutrition services that are eligible for or reimbursed by alternate programs for the member cannot be funded or counted by MCPs as an MTM / MSF community support.
 - iii. Because MTM / MSF services are delivered as part of the member's clinical care to address or mitigate nutritional needs from a chronic or serious health condition, they are not covered to respond solely to food insecurities. Given the coexistence of food and nutrition insecurity in populations afflicted by chronic and other serious health conditions, DHCS encourages screening and facilitating access to additional resources (e.g., SNAP, WIC, local food pantries) to combat food insecurity and enhance physical and mental well-being. DHCS considers food assistance benefit programs such as SNAP or WIC not to be duplicative of MTM / MSF services because both benefits are designed to mitigate food insecurity for a household, while MTM / MSF services are provided to the authorized member as part of a clinical care plan to address their specific, eligible chronic or serious health condition(s).



- iv. Extensions for MTM or MTG / MSF may be authorized for no longer than 90 days (three months) unless both services are combined on one authorization request (90 days each), in which case a combined total of 180 days (six months) will be allowed.
- v. In extenuating circumstances re-authorizations for an additional 90 days beyond one year (365 days) of any combination of MTM / MSF / MTG service will only be considered if there is a compelling acute event such as hospitalization or if there is a new diagnosis of a nutrition sensitive chronic health condition listed above. This includes members who have been listed as program completed / graduated on the return transmission file.

References

Community Supports: Select Service Definition Updates.

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/MCQMD/Community-Supports-February-2025-Service-Definition-Updates.pdf>

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>

CREDENTIALING / PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE GUIDELINE HISTORY			
Adopted By CPRC	Reapproved	Revised	Retired
September 4, 2025			