

# Food As Medicine as a CT Policy Priority



## At a Glance

Produce prescription programs are an effective and cost-saving method to improve health and food security for Connecticut residents. Local studies show feasibility and client satisfaction. Policy changes such as a Medicaid 1115 waiver would significantly support scale-up, positively impact population health, allow long-term sustainability, and save taxpayer dollars.

## Chronic Disease & Food Insecurity

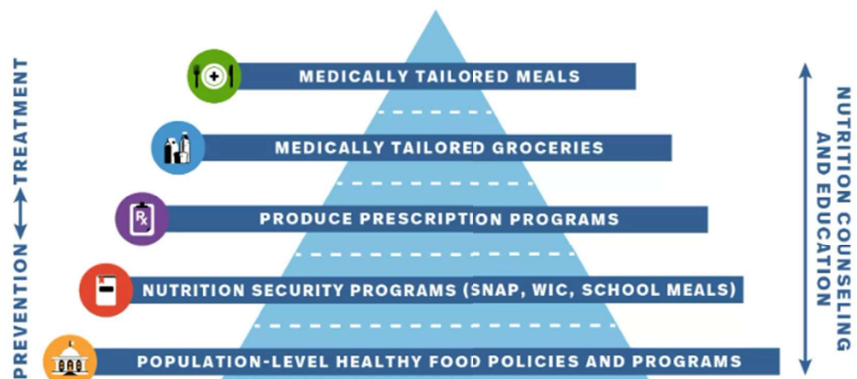
Nutrition-related chronic diseases are leading causes of death and disability in Connecticut. Nearly 11% of adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, with 17,000 new cases reported annually. In 2021, heart disease accounted for 20% of deaths and stroke accounted for an additional 4%.

At the same time, food insecurity has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic and the elimination of federal relief programs. Currently, 18% of residents are food insecure, reporting they could not afford enough food to feed themselves or their families.

## Food As Medicine

“ Food As Medicine can be defined as food-based nutritional interventions integrated within health systems to treat or prevent disease and advance health equity.

Dariush Mozaffarian, MD, DrPH



Tufts Food Is Medicine Institute (2024)



Produce prescription programs (PRx) allow healthcare providers to prescribe produce to patients who meet specific criteria like food insecurity and nutrition-related diseases.



Produce prescription programs (PRx) have been shown to

- Increase access to [healthy foods, health care, and nutrition knowledge](#)
- Improve [diet quality](#), especially fruit and vegetable consumption
- Improve [health outcomes](#) like diabetes control and cardiovascular disease
- Save on [healthcare costs](#) (like Medicaid spending)

# Produce Prescriptions in Connecticut



The Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center partners with community and healthcare organizations on produce prescription programs in CT.

| Program Name         | Population                                   | PRx type   | Location                | Partners   |
|----------------------|--|--|-------------------------|--|
| Produce4Life         | Medicaid-eligible, type 2 diabetes, Hispanic | Fresh Connect card, nutrition education, community health worker - \$40/mo for 6 months                  | Greater Hartford region | Hispanic Health Council, Hartford Hospital, Wholesome Wave, Emory University |
| Food4Moms            | Low income, pregnant Latinas                 | Fresh Connect card or delivery, nutrition education - \$100/mo for 10 months                             | Greater Hartford Region | Wholesome Wave, Hispanic Health Council, About Fresh                         |
| Griffin Hospital PRx | Medicaid eligible, pre-diabetes or diabetes  | Fresh Connect card, nutrition education - \$40/mo for 1 person and \$5 per additional person for 6 month | Lower Naugatuck Valley  | Griffin Faculty Practices, Griffin Hospital, About Fresh                     |

## Recommendations from Community Co-Design

- Provide flexibility in purchase options (stores, delivery, electronic benefit)
- Link nutrition education to PRx (e.g., SNAP-ED, EFNEP)
- Engage Community Health Workers in a central role
- Increase benefits for larger households
- Support use of all federally funded nutrition programs (SNAP, WIC, School Meals etc.)

Equitable and participatory community input is key to designing an effective Medicaid 1115 Waiver and corresponding state program.

## Policy Implications

- Supporting the application and implementation of a [Medicaid 1115](#) waiver to support Produce Prescriptions for Medicaid beneficiaries with nutrition-related chronic disease
- Addressing barriers to participation in the [WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program](#)

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Contact us!

For more information about our program, contact Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, PhD, PRC Principal Investigator  
[rafael.perez-escamilla@yale.edu](mailto:rafael.perez-escamilla@yale.edu)



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