



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CalFIMC and Food For Thought Contact:** Ron Karp, Executive Director, Food For Thought  
[ronk@FFTfoodbank.org](mailto:ronk@FFTfoodbank.org) p: 707.887.1647

## **California’s “Food Is Medicine” Pilot Project Delivers Encouraging First-Year Observations**

*Three-year nutrition intervention project aims to save taxpayer dollars by reducing hospital admissions.*

**FORESTVILLE, Calif., June 7, 2019** –The California Food Is Medicine Coalition reports that preliminary observations of a state-funded Medically Tailored Meals pilot project align with the goal of using food and nutrition therapy to improve the health of low-income Californians living with chronic illnesses, and heart failure in particular. Heart failure is a substantial burden on the U.S. healthcare system, affecting 5.7 million Americans at an annual cost of \$30.7 billion.<sup>1</sup> Of these costs, 68 percent are attributed to direct medical expenditures, a large portion because of hospitalizations for decompensated heart failure.<sup>2</sup>

The three-year, \$6 million project targets Medi-Cal (Medicaid) patients who suffer from ongoing congestive heart failure and provides 12 weeks of meals at no charge that adhere to evidence-based nutrition guidelines. During the Medically Tailored Meal Intervention, a registered dietitian administers a CalFIMC-approved nutrition education curriculum, in-home, virtual, and telephonic nutrition education, wellness checks, and an assessment of program participants.

Richard Ayoub, chair of CalFIMC and executive director of Project Angel Food in Los Angeles, explains the program concluded its first 12 months April 30, 2019. “Participants who completed the program during its first **year reported hospital re-admission rates consistent with reduced re-admission rates of similar intervention programs across the country,**” Ayoub says. “Additionally, patients who completed the CalFIMC program reported improved health outcomes over the course of the intervention.”

CalFIMC comprises six community-based non-profit organizations: **Project Open Hand** in San Francisco, **Food For Thought** and **Ceres Community Project** in the San Francisco North Bay area, **Health Trust** in San Jose, **Project Angel Food** in Los Angeles, and **Mama’s Kitchen** in San Diego. Each organization is implementing the pilot in its local area.

**Food For Thought Executive Director Ron Karp says the Food Is Medicine concept is becoming well-known and utilized in Sonoma County.** “Our outreach efforts are paying off,” Karp explains. “Referrals to our nutrition

services have increased as more providers learn we provide no-cost, evidence-based nutrition interventions to patients with ongoing congestive heart failure.”

CalFIMC is part of a national movement to employ medically tailored nutrition and food interventions as a way to improve health outcomes, decrease hospitalizations, and impact healthcare costs. A study recently published in [JAMA Internal Medicine](#) adds to a growing body of evidence tying medically tailored meals to reduced healthcare utilization.

Funded through California Senate Bill (SB) 97, the program allocates \$6 million dollars to the CalFIMC pilot project over a three-year period culminating in 2021. The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) oversees and will evaluate final results.

To learn more or refer patients in Sonoma County, visit [Food For Thought](#) or call 707.887.1647.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mozaffarian D, Benjamin EJ, Go AS, Arnett DK, Blaha MJ, Cushman M, de Ferranti S, Després JP, Fullerton HJ, Howard VJ, Huffman MD, Judd SE, Kissela BM, Lackland DT, Lichtman JH, Lisabeth LD, Liu S, Mackey RH, Matchar DB, McGuire DK, Mohler ER, Moy CS, Muntner P, Mussolino ME, Nasir K, Neumar RW, Nichol G, Palaniappan L, Pandey DK, Reeves MJ, Rodriguez CJ, Sorlie PD, Stein J, Towfighi A, Turan TN, Virani SS, Willey JZ, Woo D, Yeh RW, Turner MB; American Heart Association Statistics Committee and Stroke Statistics Subcommittee. Heart disease and stroke statistics—2015 update: a report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2015; 131:e29–322. doi: 10.1161/CIR.000000000000152.

<sup>2</sup> Jencks SF, Williams MV, Coleman EA. Rehospitalizations among patients in the Medicare fee-for-service program. *N Engl J Med*. 2009; 360:1418–1428. doi: 10.1056/NEJMs0803563.

###

**ABOUT THE FOOD IS MEDICINE COALITION (FIMC):** The [Food is Medicine Coalition \(FIMC\)](#) is an association of nonprofit, medically tailored food and nutrition services (FNS) providers from across the country. The FIMC advances public policy that supports access to food and nutrition services for people with severe and/or chronic illnesses; promotes research on the efficacy of food and nutrition services on health outcomes and cost of care; and shares best practices in the provision of medically tailored meals and of nutrition education and counseling. [Project Open Hand](#), [Food For Thought](#), [Ceres Community Project](#), [Project Angel Food](#), [Mama’s Kitchen](#), and [Health Trust](#) represent a California contingency of the Food Is Medicine Coalition.

**ABOUT FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** Food For Thought is a nonprofit organization located in Forestville, CA, that provides healing food and nutrition to 700 people living with serious illnesses in Sonoma County. Our life-sustaining services are available at no charge to qualified clients at risk of malnutrition. We offer nutritious and medically tailored food choices to clients at our onsite, specialty food bank and through our home delivery services. We also provide nutrition counseling with a registered dietitian, healthy cooking classes, a freshly prepared lunch program three times a week, and an organic gardening project. Food For Thought advocates for food as medicine at the local and state level.