

Food is Medicine:

The Effectiveness of Delaware's Feeding Families Program in Managing Chronic Conditions

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Abstract

Objective: Over the last decade, the concept of 'Food is Medicine' (FIM) has gained significant recognition among health practitioners and researchers as a promising approach to addressing both the nutritional needs of patients with chronic diseases and the broader social determinants of health. This study assesses the impact of the Feeding Families (FF) program, a FIM initiative by Westside Family Healthcare in Delaware, which was conducted between February 2023 and February 2024 and designed to support individuals with diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

Methods: Using a quasi-experimental design, we assessed the program's implementation and effectiveness over 12 months. Participants received nutrient-dense food, biweekly nutrition counseling, and behavioral support. Data on body mass index (BMI), glycated hemoglobin (A1C), fruit and vegetable intake, dietary behaviors, and food security were collected from 43 participants at baseline, midpoint, and endpoint. **Results:** Findings revealed significant reductions in BMI and improvements in dietary behaviors, including reduced sodium, sugar, and fat consumption. Although changes in A1C levels were not statistically significant, the overall trend suggested improvement. The program also contributed to modest gains in food security.

Conclusions: These findings highlight the potential of integrating nutrition, behavioral support, and healthcare services to manage chronic conditions. Expanding FIM initiatives, including Medicaid waivers for funding, could strengthen health outcomes in Delaware and beyond.

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