



IN CANCER CARE, FOOD IS MEDICINE

A Cancer Service Line Initiative

IMPACT REPORT

2025-2026

Prepared By:

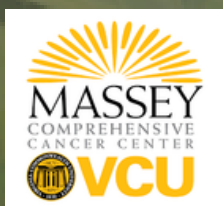
Cynthia J. Avila, MBS

Prepared For:

McKesson Foundation

During the second year of implementation, the Food is Medicine program at Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center strengthened its operations, building on the foundation established in Year 1 to deliver more efficient and effective services. Through refined workflows and improved coordination among partners, the program expanded its reach and increased its impact among cancer patients experiencing food insecurity.

We remain committed to providing reliable access to food and practical nutrition education. The dedication of program staff and community partners has strengthened the program's capacity, positioning Food is Medicine for long-term sustainability and improved patient health outcomes.



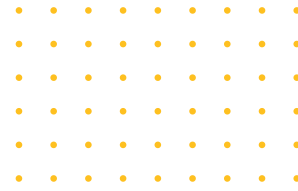
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Welcome To *In Cancer Care, Food is Medicine*

The Message from Dr. Susan Hong, Director of Cancer Survivorship



Reporting Period: August 1, 2025 - July 31, 2026

The Food is Medicine (FIM) program is fully operational and continues to meet the objectives outlined in the grant. We are pleased to report continued progress on all funded activities during the second year of implementation.

Advancing Cancer Care Through Food is Medicine

In its second year, the Food is Medicine (FIM) initiative at Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center has become an established component of cancer care delivery. Since its launch in October 2024, the program has touched 984 patients. Across 11 cancer clinics, we have significantly improved the program's ability to identify and reach cancer patients who screen positive for food need.

Year 2 marked a time of notable momentum. Food is Medicine sustained a continuous weekly cooking and nutrition education schedule over a 12 month period and tripled the distribution of food boxes and produce vouchers compared to Year 1. By embedding evidence-based nutrition interventions into routine oncology care and connecting patients with community-based resources, the FIM initiative has established a sustainable model that reduces barriers to food access and supports patients in focusing on healing rather than hunger. We are deeply grateful for the McKesson Foundation's partnership and continued investment in advancing this important work.

Susan Hong, MD, MPH, MS FACP

RGC Professor in Cancer Research
Director of Cancer Survivorship
VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center

Navigating Our Journey

On Oct. 1, 2024, funding from the McKesson Foundation commenced to support the development of *In Cancer Care, Food is Medicine*, an inaugural initiative at VCU's Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center. This initiative is dedicated to advancing cancer research related to food and nutrition, as well as enhancing patient services to alleviate food insecurity. We believe lack of access to food should not be a barrier to receiving life-saving cancer treatment.



Quarter 5: August 1, 2025 – October 31, 2025

Clinic Workflow & Staff Education

Focused screening efforts were launched at the Adult Outpatient Pavilion through weekly patient outreach in the waiting areas on Floors 2, 4, and 5. To support consistent implementation across oncology clinics, continuous training has been provided to nurse managers on food insecurity screening workflows and referral processes.

Cancer Retreat Center Partnership

The Food is Medicine program established a new partnership with the Blanton House Cancer Retreat Center, expanding patient awareness of survivorship resources through the distribution of support services materials, including information about the Lunch & Brunch survivor meet-up program.

Quarter 6: November 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026

Part-Time Food Resource Desk Coordinator

Our team expanded in Year 2 with the addition of a part-time program coordinator position to meet the program's growing operational needs. This role has been instrumental in maintaining daily Food Resource Center operations, coordinating bi-monthly Feed More food deliveries, supporting weekly nutrition education classes, and data entry for the Food is Medicine registry.

Number of total patients served to date:

984

Underground Kitchen Partnership: Thanksgiving Fresh Produce Box Deliveries

On November 24 and 25, Food is Medicine partnered with The Underground Kitchen (UGK) to deliver complimentary Thanksgiving food boxes to 60 cancer patients in active treatment experiencing the greatest food need across the greater Richmond area. Each box included fresh produce, recipe card, and ingredients to prepare a meal that could feed a family of four for 2-4 days. This effort was intended to reduce barriers to healthy eating and provide meaningful holiday support to our most food-insecure patients. We extend our sincere appreciation to UGK and its volunteers for making the deliveries possible.

Underground Kitchen Partnership: Christmas Fresh Produce Box Deliveries

Continuing on the success of the November holiday effort, we expanded our holiday meal initiative to serve 100 active cancer patients living in the greater Richmond community. Holiday meal boxes were delivered to patient homes the week of Dec. 22nd

Nutrition Education & Cooking Demonstration

Cohorts 5-9 of the nutrition education class were successfully completed, with continuous weekly sessions offered from February through end of July. Each cohort registered 25 active cancer patients and consisted of a four-class series, with each session lasting one hour. Classes included 30 minutes of evidence-based nutrition education followed by a 30-minute live cooking demonstration led by a VCU Health System chef. To support long-term behavior change and reinforce learning beyond the classroom, participants received take-home cooking supplies and prepared samples of each demonstrated recipe. This structured, hands-on approach continues to enhance patient engagement, build confidence in preparing nutritious meals, and support the integration of healthy eating practices throughout the cancer treatment journey.



Food Insecurity Cancer Interventional Study

We are measuring how food access helps cancer patients in treatment complete their cancer care. For more information, please visit <https://clinicaltrials.gov> and search NCT07706192

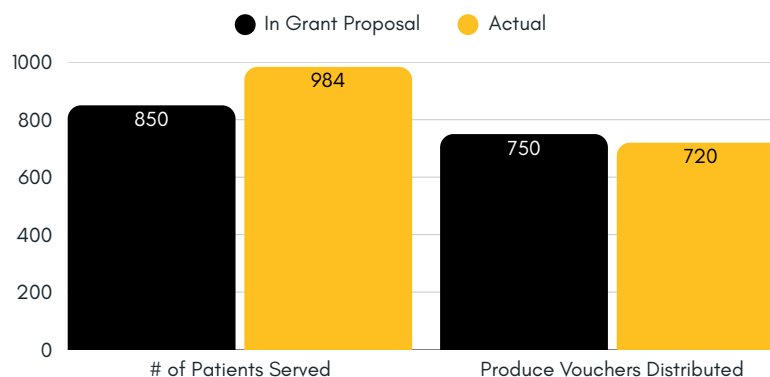
Quarter 8: May 1, 2026 - July 31, 2026

Food is Medicine Advocacy

An important focus in Year 2 was the dissemination of program findings and active engagement in the broader Food is Medicine movement. Massey had strong representation at the American Cancer Society Food is Medicine Symposium in D.C. and Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill.



Targets vs. Actuals



WORKFLOW

On December 9, 2024 the Food is Medicine program launched food insecurity screening in EPIC using the validated Hunger Vital Sign™ questions pulled from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Health Related Social Needs Screening Tool.

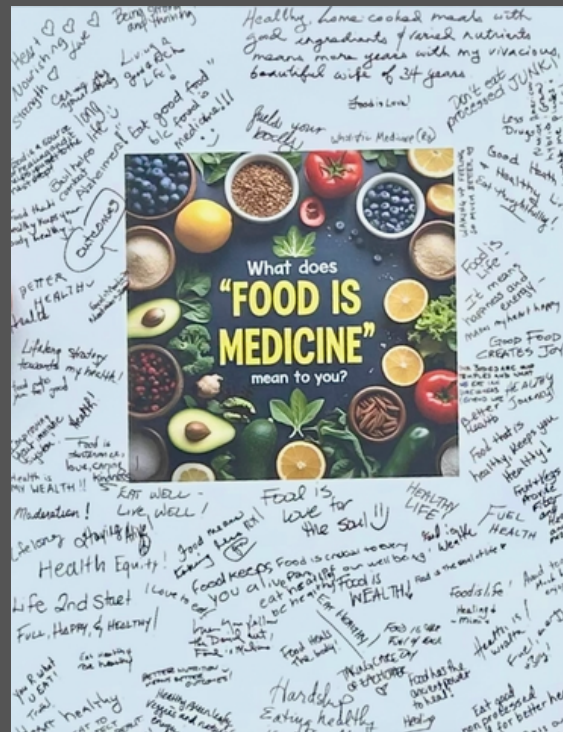
* 2 HUNGER VITAL SIGN Q'S

1. Within the past 12 months, the food you bought just didn't last and you didn't have money to get more,
2. Within the past 12 months, you worried that your food would run out before you got money to buy more.

Response options include Never True, Sometimes True, Often True, or Decline. Patients who respond **Sometimes True** or **Often True** to any one of the two questions are eligible for food resources through the McKesson grant-funded FIM program.

PARTICIPATING CLINICS

Medical Oncology (including Leukemia and Lymphoma programs), Surgical Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Gyn Oncology, Neuro-Oncology, and ENT (ear, nose, and throat). In addition, supportive cancer programs—Palliative Care, Cancer Survivorship, Cardio-Oncology, and Cancer Genetics.



SINCE THE LAUNCH OF SCREENING...

1239 POSITIVE SCREENINGS

(Both in active treatment and patients not on treatment but are undergoing surveillance for cancer recurrence) have screened positive for food insecurity at Massey.

**458 ACTIVE
CANCER
PATIENTS**

Of those individuals, 458 are on active cancer patients. “Active cancer treatment” is defined at the time of screening as patients who are receiving chemotherapy or immunotherapy, undergoing radiation therapy, or taking oral chemotherapy. It also includes patients who have cancer surgery scheduled within 90 days before or after screening positive for food insecurity.

79.4% OF ALL PATIENTS HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY FIM

The Food is Medicine program has reached of the 1239 patients with food need, representing 79.4% of all active cancer patients who screened positive for food insecurity.

The Patients We Serve

Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of VCU Health, serves patients regardless of insurance status or ability to pay, reflecting its mission as a safety-net institution.

Service Area: Richmond

59.5% Black, 59.9% female, and 23% of residents live below the poverty line.

Massey Pilot Data

A 2023 survey revealed nearly 40% of patients in active treatment at Massey reported some level of food insecurity

Patients Touched by Food is Medicine

These figures are drawn from the Food is Medicine Registry Demographic Survey in REDCap

46.2%

Single

Almost half (46.2%) of respondents identify as single, and an additional 28.2% are widowed or divorced, suggesting many face the challenges of managing illness without spousal or household support.

77.5%

Unemployed

Furthermore, 77.5% of participants reported they are not currently employed. Only 16.4% have health insurance through an employer or spouse, indicating limited access to stable employment benefits.

67.2%

Black

The racial composition of the program mirrors broader regional disparities. Two-thirds (67.2%) of participants identify as Black, while 27.5% identify as White, and smaller percentages as Asian, American Indian/Pacific Islander/Alaskan Native, or other race. Only 5.5% identify as Hispanic/Latino. These figures underscore how inequities disproportionately affect communities of color.

49.3%

Enrolled in Medicare

The majority of patients served through the Food is Medicine program rely on public insurance programs. Nearly half of participants (49.3%) are enrolled in Medicare and over one-third (35.9%) in Medicaid, with only 15.5% covered through private insurance. Others rely on VCU Charity Care (2.8%), Tricare (2.8%), or are uninsured (0.7%). These data reflect the critical role of the safety net in ensuring cancer patients can access care.

Continued...

The Patients We Serve

13%

Care for two or more people

Household composition further reflects social and economic vulnerability. While many participants live in small households (39.3% with two people, 30.8% alone), about one-quarter are caring for children, with 11% supporting one child and over 13% caring for two or more.

47.9%

Receive SNAP benefits

Nearly half (47.9%) of respondents receive SNAP benefits, yet the prevalence of food insecurity remains strikingly high.

60%

Report Hunger

Nearly 60% reported going hungry at times, and 78.4% reported eating only a few kinds of foods due to limited resources, reflecting poor dietary diversity.

70%

Worry about food

Over 70% reported worrying about not having enough food or eating less than they felt they should due to financial constraints.



If you are an active cancer patient getting your care at VCU Massey

Please visit the **Food Resource Center** located on the Ground Floor (G) of the Adult Outpatient Pavillion.

You may be eligible for:

- **Produce vouchers** to local farmers markets
- **Food pantry referrals**
- **On-site nutrition education** and cooking demonstrations
- **Free food boxes***

* Limited quantities apply. Please visit the Food Resource Center for further details.

Visit MasseyFoodRx.com to learn about our community partnerships and more!



McKesson Foundation

FEED MORE



True Impact

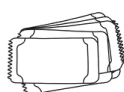
Our Services

Our findings reveal the overlapping burdens of poverty, unemployment, racial inequities, and food insecurity—factors that significantly intensify the challenges of managing cancer care. The services we provide are designed to directly address these barriers and help ease the burden for patients and their families.



Food Boxes

Emergency
canned goods
to last 2-3 days



Produce Vouchers

\$5 vouchers to
purchase fresh
vegetables



Unite Us Referral

Patients
referred to
local food
pantries



Cooking Demo & Nutrition Education

Four-part series,
offered every
other month

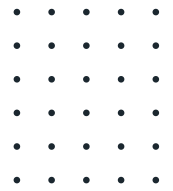
Nutrition Education & Cooking Demonstrations

Patient feedback underscores the program's effectiveness. Across nine cooking class cohorts (totaling 36 classes), participants consistently reported gaining new knowledge, confidence in preparing nutritious meals, and appreciation for supportive, interactive instruction. Patients especially valued the opportunity to try new foods, bring home ingredients, and receive practical education tailored to their needs. Many expressed a strong desire for more classes, longer sessions, and expanded offerings—evidence of the demand and the program's impact.



Continued...

True Impact



The McKesson Foundation grant has had a transformative impact on Massey's most vulnerable patients. Cancer treatment already imposes a **significant financial and emotional burden**; for many, the added challenge of not knowing where their next meal will come from compounds stress and undermines treatment outcomes. With McKesson's support, the Food is Medicine program has successfully improved access to nutritious foods and empowered patients through education and support.

"Food is Medicine...is a much more vital medication than anything else because none of the other stuff would matter if I didn't have something to eat."

– Melissa Earley
Massey Active Cancer Patient

Patient Experience

Melissa Earley's story illustrates this impact. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2023, Melissa endured surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation while navigating loss of income and food insecurity. Through Food is Medicine, she received emergency food boxes, produce vouchers, and nutrition education. For her and others, the program is more than a source of groceries—it is a lifeline that allows patients to focus on healing rather than hunger. As Melissa shares:

"My body doesn't crave the chemo...my body doesn't crave the radiation, my body doesn't crave any of the pills I take. But my body craves food. Food is Medicine is like the perfect name because it's true. It's a much more vital medication than anything else because none of the other stuff would matter if I didn't have something to eat."

Her testimony has been recorded on video and is available at:

<https://www.masseycancercenter.org/news/initiative-helps-cancer-patients-focus-on-health-not-hunger>.

Future Directions

2025-2026

As we enter Year 3, Food is Medicine remains focused on long-term sustainability by strengthening partnerships with established community organizations that provide trusted, scalable services to address food insecurity.

In parallel, we will continue to advance high-quality, evidence-based research to evaluate program impact, identify best practices, and generate findings that can inform policy change and support the broader integration of Food is Medicine approaches into cancer care.



State of the Art Kitchen to Improve Food is Medicine Cooking Demonstration

A dedicated, state-of-the-art teaching kitchen is currently being built at the Blanton House Cancer Retreat Center (CRC) to expand opportunities for hands-on nutrition education and patient engagement. In partnership with the CRC, the new space will support live cooking demonstrations and provide cancer survivors with a unique, personalized learning experience through chef-led instruction. This environment will allow participants to observe cooking techniques, build confidence in preparing nutritious meals, and receive individualized guidance tailored to their health needs and treatment journey. The dedicated kitchen represents a significant investment in enhancing the patient experience and advancing sustainable, evidence-based Food is Medicine programming for the cancer community.



Pioneering In Cancer Care, Food is Medicine Research

The impact of food insecurity among cancer patients remains poorly understood, highlighting a critical need for research to inform clinical care and health policy. At Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, a multidisciplinary team of investigators with expertise in population science, big data analytics, and epidemiology are addressing this gap through the Cancer Prevention Outcomes Research Lab. Current research examines the prevalence and consequences of food insecurity among cancer patients, its relationship with Medicaid coverage and healthcare costs, and the effectiveness of Food is Medicine interventions to generate evidence that advances health equity and informs the future of cancer care.

Thank you to our community partners who make this work possible!



Our Mission:

In Cancer Care, Food is Medicine aims to be a national role model, dedicated to pioneering evidence-based research, advancing nutrition education, and promoting health and wellness to address food insecurity among cancer patients.

To learn more, please visit MasseyFoodRx.com

Contact Us:



Email Address:
MasseyFoodRx@vcu.edu



Resource Center Address:
1001 E. Leigh Street
Room G-006
Richmond, VA 23298

