

Home-delivered meals aim to reduce risks and hospital readmissions

Background: Beginning January 1, 2019, Amerigroup District of Columbia, Inc. teamed up with local nonprofit Food & Friends to deliver specialized meals to high-risk patients in the District. By providing home-delivered meals to consumers who may not otherwise have access to healthy food options, the program is designed to lower hospital readmission rates and reduce risks related to nutrition, food insecurity and social isolation.

“At Amerigroup, we understand that a person’s overall health is impacted by a wide variety of physical, mental and emotional components, and it’s imperative that all of these aspects be addressed in order to enhance the health care of our members,” said Dr. Linda Elam, MPH, Amerigroup D.C. Medicaid plan president. “By partnering with Food & Friends, we’re able to offer an innovative approach to improving whole-body health that increases access to nutritional food and cultivates a happier, healthier community.”

Pilot program

The pilot program, which was recently launched, has already served over 30 members in the District. We have identified three patient types as potentially benefitting from the meal deliveries: 1) recently discharged patients affected by nutrition, food insecurity and social isolation; 2) women with high-risk pregnancies (including gestational diabetes); and 3) patients with a high risk of readmission due to multiple co-existing conditions.

“Research increasingly shows what we’ve seen for years — that medically tailored home-delivered meals improve health outcomes and reduce health care costs,” said Carrie Stoltzfus, MPH, executive director of Food & Friends. “We believe that strategic partnerships between insurance providers and on-the-ground community organizations like ourselves offer unique health benefits. We’re excited to partner with Amerigroup to improve the lives of those with serious health issues in our area.”

About Food & Friends

Food & Friends has 30 years of experience preparing and delivering specialized meals to individuals with serious and chronic illnesses. As part of the program, recipients can also request meals for caretakers and dependents in the household, ensuring the entire family is supported during the treatment and recovery process.

“Food & Friends has worked to support members of our community by addressing complex health problems through home-delivered meals and nutrition counseling for over three decades. This program serves a particularly high-need population within our community and is a natural continuation of Food & Friends’ mission,” said Stoltzfus.

Established in 1988, Food & Friends is a non-profit organization based in the District that provides nutritionally tailored, home-delivered meals to people facing a life-challenging health crisis. Food & Friends believes that food heals, and each year, they prepare and deliver nearly 1 million meals across 5,300 square miles to their neighbors at no charge. They help their clients feel better, connect them to their community and empower them to manage their illnesses. Over 8,500 volunteers touch more than 3,000 lives annually. Food & Friends is driven by a simple premise — Anyone can get sick, and everyone can help. Visit the Food & Friends website at <https://foodandfriends.org>.

As the program continues to grow, Amerigroup and Food & Friends are monitoring outcomes closely and have high expectations for significantly improved outcomes. From those currently participating, the feedback so far has been resoundingly positive.

An increasing number of health plans are addressing social determinants of health, including food insecurity, to improve health outcomes and reduce health care costs. Similar partnerships have been instituted elsewhere in the country with encouraging results.

If you have questions about this communication, contact your local Provider Relations representative or call Provider Services at 1-800-454-3730.