



NOURISHING HEALTHY STARTS

Improving the Value of Healthcare Through Food and Nutrition



## Food Is Medicine

People are more likely to develop chronic health conditions when they do not have access to enough food and nutrition. Food insecurity is also expensive, accounting for \$1 billion in avoidable healthcare costs in Missouri.<sup>1</sup>

**Food insecurity during pregnancy has significant long-term impacts.**

### MOMS & BABIES

### HEALTHCARE



Food insecurity during pregnancy can cause infants to be born at low birthweight.



Low-birthweight deliveries cost about \$44,000 more than healthy births.<sup>3</sup>



Babies born underweight are at greater risk for serious health challenges.



Low-birthweight infants are more likely to visit the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), which costs \$76,000 on average per stay.<sup>4</sup>



Without access to proper nutrition, anxiety and depression can occur during pregnancy.



Untreated anxiety and depression cost \$17,000 for each impacted mother.<sup>2</sup>

## Fresh Rx Menu of Services

### DEMONSTRATING THAT FOOD IS MEDICINE

Fresh Rx addresses food insecurity and other social determinants of health for women enrolled in Medicaid during pregnancy through 60 days after giving birth.

#### Fresh & Local Food

Weekly meal kit deliveries for the entire family with protein, dairy, grain, fruits & vegetables

#### Nutrition & Cooking Skills

- Nutrition education & counseling
- Recipes & videos
- Kitchen supplies

#### Supportive Services

- Case management
- Care coordination
- Community referrals
- Safety net enrollment

<sup>1</sup> Feeding America. *The Healthcare Costs of Food Insecurity*. (2016).

<sup>2</sup> Mathematica. *Societal Costs of Untreated Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders in the United States*. (2019).

<sup>3</sup> Beam, et al. *Estimates of healthcare spending for preterm and low-birthweight infants in a commercially insured population: 2008–2016*. (2020). *Journal of Perinatology*. doi: 10.1038/s41372-020-0635-z.

<sup>4</sup> March of Dimes. *Special Care Nursery Admissions*. (2011)

## Fresh Rx Pilot Results

A 24-month pilot study with 75 babies delivered in the St. Louis region has shown that providing access to adequate nutrition during pregnancy can **improve health outcomes** and **save healthcare costs**.



### Improved Food Security

Food security increased by 44 percentage points.



### Better Health & Wellbeing for Moms

Depressive symptoms decreased by 14 percentage points.



### Healthy Babies Delivered

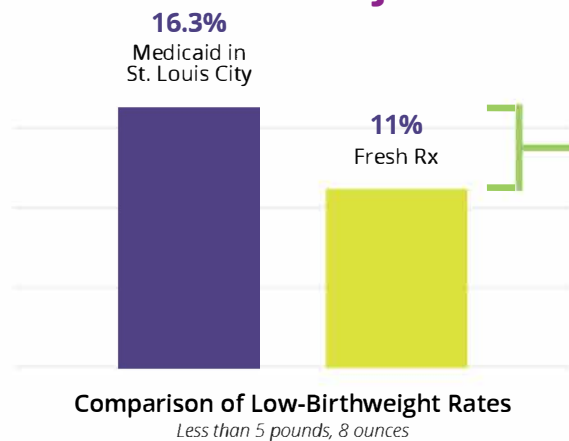
Fresh Rx's low-birthweight rate is 5.3 percentage points lower than Medicaid in St. Louis City.<sup>5</sup>



### Cost Savings

Preventing low-birthweight deliveries has already **saved \$189,000 in healthcare costs** during the Fresh Rx pilot.<sup>6</sup>

## Projected Medicaid Cost Savings



### \$5.3 Million Annually

In St. Louis City alone, if Medicaid enrolled pregnant women in Fresh Rx, an additional 118 babies would be born at a healthy weight. **Missouri Medicaid would save approximately \$5.3 million annually.**<sup>6</sup>

## Putting Fresh Rx to the Test

Operation Food Search is partnering with all Medicaid health plans and the Social Policy Institute at Washington University in St. Louis to launch a randomized control trial of the Fresh Rx program to determine how Medicaid can promote food security and better birth outcomes for all Missouri families.

<sup>5</sup> Medicaid comparison data is for St. Louis City in 2018 and was used due to similarity of Fresh Rx participant demographics.

<sup>6</sup> Cost savings estimates are based on comparing birth outcomes of Fresh Rx participants to those of Medicaid recipients in St. Louis City. Estimates use private insurance median costs from Beam, et al.