

# Prescription for Health 2019 Outcome Report



## PRESCRIPTION *for* HEALTH

Prescription for Health was generously funded by Saint Joseph Mercy Health System in 2019 with additional financial support from multiple partners. Washtenaw County Health Department coordinates the program. Prescription for Health connects the **medical system** and the **food sector** by creating a relationship between clinic staff, their patients, and local farmers markets. Health care providers write “prescriptions” for their patients to eat more fruits and vegetables. These prescriptions can be “filled” at local farmers markets, where participants work with a Community Health Worker to set health goals.

Participants received up to **\$100** in tokens to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets, as well as nutrition education and support.

During 2019, **441** patients from 13 different health clinics and agencies serving low-income individuals participated. A total of **\$33,412** was spent on fruits, vegetables, and fruit/vegetable plants/seeds, improving participants’ access to healthy foods and supporting the local food system.

### **Special thanks to our partners:**

*Aid in Milan, Faith in Action, Hope Clinic, IHA Milan Medical Center, Michigan Medicine Chelsea Health Center, Michigan Medicine Regional Alliance for Healthy Schools, Michigan Medicine Ypsilanti Health Center, Packard Health, St. Joseph Mercy Academic Internal Medicine Clinic, St. Joseph Mercy Academic OB/Gyn Center, St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea Diabetes Education, St. Joseph Mercy Neighborhood Family Health Center, UNIFIED – HIV Health and Beyond, Chelsea Farmers Market, Growing Hope’s Ypsilanti Farmers Markets, Nemeth Greenhouse & Farms, Pittsfield Township Farmers Market, St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor Farmers Market, Zilke Vegetable Farm and Zilke Farm Kitchen, and Food Gatherers.*

*“I think it’s a wonderful program, and it’s run by great people! You learn a lot about healthy eating.” – 2019 Program Participant*

### **Key Findings:**

- Participant consumption of fruits and vegetables **increased by nearly 1 cup per day** from pre- to post-program (n=268; mean=0.9; p<.001)
- Participants reported a **decrease in consumption of unhealthy foods** (i.e. chips, sweets, soda, or fast food) with the average changing from “3-4 times per day” pre-program to “1-2 times per day” post-program (n=268; p<.001)
- Participants reported an **increase in self-reported health**, with the average changing from “fair” pre-program to “good” post-program (n=268; p<.001)
- 90% of participants reported that the program **helped them manage a health condition** (n=250)
- 78% of participants (n=271) reported **knowing that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits could be used** at the farmers market post-program, compared with 64% pre-program (n=436)
- 100% of participants surveyed said that the **Community Health Workers supported them** in eating healthier (n=50)

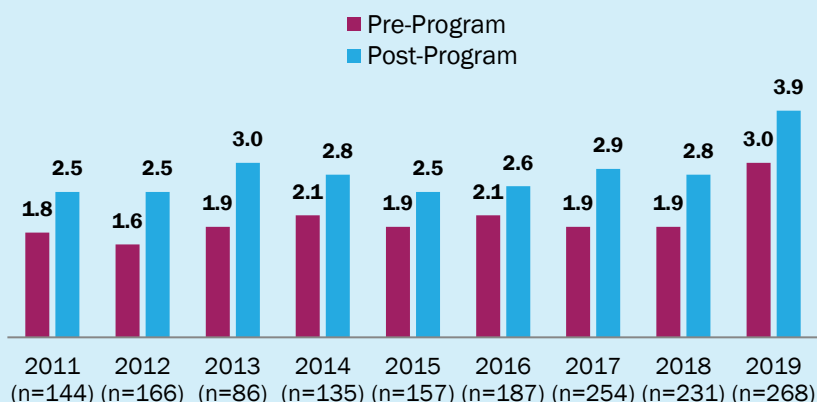
### **Demographics:**

- 68% identified as female
- 50% identified as white, 28% as black or African American, 10% as Middle Eastern or North African, 7% as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin, 5% as Asian, 1% as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 13% as Multi-racial or other
- Average age: 43 years; age range: 1 year – 94 years
- 50% reported having at least one child living in their household
- 58% reported that they had previously participated in the Prescription for Health program

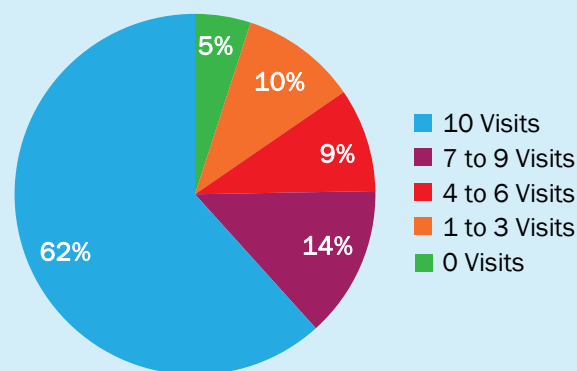
### **High Risk for Food Insecurity:**

- 42% had a yearly income of less than \$15,000
- 53% reported that they or others in their home had cut the size of meals, skipped meals, and/or bought fewer healthy foods within the past year because of a lack of money for food
- 43% reported using SNAP benefits

**Change in Fruit & Vegetable Intake**  
*self-reported cups per day, pre- and post-program*  
*statistically significant each year (p<.001)*



**Completed Visits among Enrollees (n=441)\***



\*Each fresh food box pick-up for Milan enrollees counted as 2 visits.

**How the Program Worked:**

Clinic staff referred patients to the program based on food access difficulties, chronic disease risk, and interest. To enroll, patients attended a group enrollment session where they engaged in a discussion about the link between health, chronic disease, and food choices; set specific goals for healthy eating and living; and received a "prescription" for fruits and vegetables. Patients "filled" their prescriptions at participating local farmers markets and farm stands.

When participants came to the Prescription for Health (PFH) table at the farmers markets, Community Health Workers (CHWs) reviewed the participants' goals and assisted them in setting a weekly goal. After the educational support, the patient received \$10 in tokens to spend on produce. Up to \$100, or up to ten visits, was allocated for each participant.

PFH extended through December via the indoor winter farmers markets in Ypsilanti and Chelsea and a monthly fresh food box distribution in November and December (\$20 worth of produce per box) in Milan.

Since 2013, CHWs have been formally integrated into the program to provide more peer social support, decrease barriers, and reduce costs. They assisted with enrollment and goal setting; called patients to offer support and reminders; provided referrals to other healthy eating resources, such as SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks; and administered post-program surveys.

**Post-Program Survey Results:**

Post-program survey results were obtained from 64% of program enrollees. Almost all of those enrolled visited the market at least once (95%), and 76% used seven or more of their allotted visits. The percentage of those enrolled who used all ten of their visits increased by 12% compared to last year's program. The most common barrier reported to token redemption was a scheduling conflict with the hours or days of operation.

**Prescription for Health Economic Impact:**

Participants spent a total of \$18,543 in PFH tokens at Growing Hope's Ypsilanti Farmers Markets (45% of all food access program dollars spent and 10% of total sales June-December), \$8,750 at the Chelsea Farmers Market (55% of all food access program dollars spent and 4% of total sales June-December), \$4,063 at the Pittsfield Township Farmers Market (78% of all food access program dollars spent June-October), \$1,205 at farm stand partners in Milan, and \$851 at the St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor Farmers Market (5% of total sales in 2019). Additionally, PFH provided \$1,840 worth of produce through fresh food boxes.



For more information, please visit:  
[www.washtenaw.org/prescriptionforhealth](http://www.washtenaw.org/prescriptionforhealth)

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