

Improving community health, one affordable, healthy meal at a time

Lack of access to fresh, healthy foods puts people at increased risk for a variety of health issues, including [developing a chronic disease](#).¹ One in four workers in the United States reported experiencing food insecurity within the last year, according to data from the latest [Vitality in America](#)² research, which was commissioned by [The Cigna Group](#).³ Poor nutrition has been linked to [billions of dollars of health care costs](#) in the United States each year.⁴

As part of an ongoing effort to [promote proper nutrition and increase food security](#),⁵ [Cigna Healthcare](#)^{SM6} and meal kit provider [HelloFresh](#)⁷ have [joined forces](#)⁸ to provide free meal kits to communities in need through joint support of HelloFresh's [Meals with Meaning](#) program⁹ and to offer exclusive discounts for nutritious HelloFresh meal kits to as many as 12 million people through their employers.

The Cigna Healthcare Newsroom sat down with **Kelsey Frandsen**, manager of sustainability and social impact at HelloFresh, to discuss food insecurity and how this new partnership with Cigna Healthcare will help make a difference for people and communities.

How big is the problem of food insecurity in the United States?

Approximately 44 million people across the United States were food insecure in 2022, which is the most recent data available from the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#).¹⁰ The year before that, that number was [almost 34 million](#),¹¹ so food insecurity is a significantly growing problem. Research from [Feeding America](#) found approximately 49 million people needed help from charitable food assistance programs in 2022.¹²

Late last year, HelloFresh commissioned a [survey](#),¹³ which found that a sweeping 32% of American adults have experienced food insecurity at some point in their lifetime and that 72% of people think that the economy is creating a bigger crisis for food insecurity, with the cost of food being the most common barrier to eating nutritious meals.

What are the impacts of food insecurity on people's health and well-being?

Food insecurity is strongly linked to both physical and emotional health. When people don't have access to enough nutritious food, it can begin a cycle of declining health that is difficult to overcome. Food insecurity has been associated with [high blood pressure, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes](#),¹⁴ and even [obesity](#).¹⁵ There is also the emotional distress that can result from not knowing where your next meal is coming from, which can be a major detriment to mental health.

What do you see as the key drivers of food insecurity, and how does HelloFresh work to address them?

Again, cost and affordability comprise the primary barrier to healthy eating. In our [commissioned research](#),¹⁶ 74% of Americans surveyed said that low-cost and budget-friendly ingredients are important for preparing meals in their homes.

This is why HelloFresh is on a mission to support a healthier lifestyle by forever changing the way people eat – on the individual and community level. HelloFresh works every day with corporate partners like Cigna Healthcare, as well as with local nonprofit organizations, government officials, logistics professionals, and even customers to fight food insecurity in communities across the United States.

Through our Meals with Meaning program, HelloFresh provides over 40,000 free meal kits – which include wholesome, easy-to-follow, and customizable recipes – every single week to people facing food insecurity in Atlanta, Dallas and Fort Worth, Newark, New York City, and Phoenix. We work closely with nonprofit partners in these cities to ensure that our meal kits and recipes can be adapted to the unique needs and cultures of each community.

HelloFresh also pays it forward on the individual level through our [LimeAid grant program](#),¹⁷ which provides 12 weeks of free HelloFresh meals to families and people facing humanitarian crises, natural disasters, and other severe states of food insecurity.

How do you see the HelloFresh and Cigna Healthcare partnership addressing food insecurity and promoting healthy eating habits among people and underserved communities?

First, our unique collaboration offers discounted access to HelloFresh's wholesome, affordable meals to many Cigna Healthcare employer clients. These employers can then offer HelloFresh meals to their employees via discounted meal kit subscriptions, e-gift cards, or one-time box deliveries to the employees' homes with no subscription required.

And, for every HelloFresh plan that a Cigna Healthcare employer purchases for an employee, HelloFresh will contribute additional meals into our Meals with Meaning program. So together, we can combat food insecurity and fulfill our mutual mission to advance healthy lifestyles in local communities.

How does HelloFresh ensure the Meals with Meaning program reaches those who are most underserved and impacted by food insecurity, and that the food is culturally appropriate?

HelloFresh has built collaborative strategic partnerships with food banks and other charitable and nonprofit organizations in several local communities to distribute our meal kits to people in need. Our culinary team works very hard to create recipes for wholesome meals that not only utilize simple ingredients, but also reflect the various cultures of the people who live in the communities we serve. We offer recipes based on various cuisines from around the world. All our recipes are offered in English and in Spanish, and can be easily customized by meal kit recipients based on their tastes and preferences.

How does HelloFresh measure how effectively they address food insecurity?

We measure our programs' effectiveness by the number of people we serve. Outside of our partnership programs – like the one we have with Cigna Healthcare – we have delivered over 7 million meals through the Meals with Meaning program. In 2023 alone, we supported over 200 food-insecure families through the LimeAid program. We are proud of these results and will continue our efforts to make nutritious food more accessible to people in need.

Cigna Healthcare is proud to be working with HelloFresh to advance food security and equity for the people and communities we serve. To learn more about HelloFresh's programs to create a more equitable food system to foster healthy communities and how you can get involved, visit their [Social Impact page](#).¹⁸

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¹ USDA ERS, Adults in Households with More Severe Food Insecurity Are More Likely to Have a Chronic Disease. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2017/october/adults-in-households-with-more-severe-food-insecurity-are-more-likely-to-have-a-chronic-disease>

² The Cigna Group, Vitality in America 2023. <https://newsroom.thecignagroup.com/vitality-in-america-2023-general-population-findings>

³ <https://www.thecignagroup.com>

⁴ Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Poor diets linked to \$50 billion in U.S. health care costs. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/poor-diets-health-care-costs>

⁵ Cigna Healthcare Newsroom, Cigna Healthcare's focus on nutrition and food access to boost population health. <https://newsroom.cigna.com/nutrition-and-food-access-to-boost-population-health>

⁶ <https://www.cigna.com>

⁷ <https://www.hellofresh.com>

⁸ Cigna Healthcare Newsroom, Cigna Healthcare and HelloFresh Team Up To Expand Access to Affordable, Healthy Meal Choices - Feb 13, 2024. <https://newsroom.cigna.com/2024-02-13-Cigna-Healthcare-and-HelloFresh-Team-Up-To-Expand-Access-to-Affordable,-Healthy-Meal-Choices>

⁹ HelloFresh, Social Impact. <https://www.hellofresh.com/pages/sustainability/beyond-the-box>

¹⁰ USDA ERS, Key Statistics & Graphics. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/key-statistics-graphics>

¹¹ USDA ERS, Household Food Security in the United States in 2021. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=104655>

¹² Feeding America, Charitable Food Assistance Participation. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/research/charitable-food-assistance-participation>

¹³ YouGov and HelloFresh, Hunger Matters in the U.S. Report. https://assets.ctfassets.net/irplh84t0tdt/3wiHcoOBOjKbj2K1evZ5k3/e72294d59e38cd10adf eb0d00da5ffeb/Hunger_Matters_in_the_U.S._Fact_Sheet.pdf

¹⁴ USDA, Food Insecurity, Chronic Disease, and Health Among Working-Age Adults. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84467/err-235.pdf?v=2086.8>

¹⁵ National Library of Medicine, Food insecurity as a risk factor for obesity: A review. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9549066>

¹⁶ YouGov and HelloFresh, Hunger Matters in the U.S. Report. https://assets.ctfassets.net/irplh84t0tdt/3wiHcoOBOjKbj2K1evZ5k3/e72294d59e38cd10adf eb0d00da5ffeb/Hunger_Matters_in_the_U.S._Fact_Sheet.pdf

¹⁷ The Fresh Times, LimeAid: How HelloFresh is Paying it Forward This #GivingTuesday. <https://blog.hellofresh.com/limeaid-how-hellofresh-is-paying-it-forward-this-givingtuesday>

¹⁸ HelloFresh, Social Impact. <https://www.hellofresh.com/pages/sustainability/beyond-the-box>