



**Project Open Hand**  
meals with love

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Project Open Hand Becomes First Organization in  
the Bay Area to Achieve FIMC Accreditation**

Last week, Project Open Hand became the first Bay Area organization to earn accreditation from the Food Is Medicine Coalition (FIMC), a national coalition representing the original creators of the life-saving, medically-tailored meal intervention.

"We congratulate Project Open Hand on this remarkable achievement," said Alissa Wassung, Executive Director of FIMC. "Their accreditation demonstrates leadership and commitment to advancing the food is medicine movement and ensuring equitable access to lifesaving interventions for those who need them most."

Project Open Hand, a staple of the Bay Area nonprofit food community since 1985, serves nearly a million meals each year to people living with severe, complex, or chronic illnesses like HIV/AIDS, cancer, and heart disease. The medically tailored meals (MTM), specifically formulated by Project Open Hand's team of in-house registered dietitians, serve as an evidence-based medical intervention to improve the long-term well-being of its clients.

Today, Project Open Hand has emerged as a leader in the Food is Medicine movement, advancing public policy that supports access to food and nutrition services as well as providing life-saving nutrition to thousands of people in the Bay Area every day.

Steadily gaining traction in the public for the last few decades, the "Food is Medicine" movement has gained recognition among government agencies, insurance providers, and private companies as a cost-effective healthcare solution to help patients recover from illness, grow stronger, and lead healthier lives.

A cost-modeling study published in 2022 in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* found that the national implementation of medically tailored meals could net \$13.6 billion in savings annually for healthcare insurers. These outcomes are only possible with nutritious food, community connection and a client-centered approach – all of which the FIMC Accreditation standard quantifies and provides to the field as a guidebook for meeting community need.

The FIMC Accreditation Standards provide verified credibility for the MTM interventions that an agency provides and how the organization operates.

A national coalition, FIMC represents nonprofits who created the MTM intervention nearly 40 years ago in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Today, the coalition represents organizations across the country who provide MTMs and medically tailored groceries, nutrition therapy, counseling, and education to people living with severe and chronic illnesses. FIMC advances equitable access to these life-saving interventions through policy change, research, and best practices.

In addition to rigorous accreditation standards, the label allows for an agency like Project Open Hand to distinguish the quality of their food, services, and care. It signals to the community, policy makers, healthcare partners, and most importantly, clients a level of service that can be trusted.

“Trust is a critical ingredient in all we do,” says Project Open Hand CEO Paul Hepfer. “For the last forty years, our clients, volunteers, and stakeholders have trusted us not only to serve meals with love, but to do so with the highest quality of food and service in mind. This accreditation is a recognition of this hard work, and a way to signal to our community that this will continue to be our priority.”

The FIMC accreditation standards were developed through a collaborative process involving nationwide partner agency staff with decades of experience in MTM service, along with leaders in standards development. This rigorous process resulted in standards that ensure all FIMC-Accredited agencies provide the same level of high-quality service, tailored to meet the diverse nutritional needs of their clients.

Project Open Hand becomes the eighth organization nationally to receive the accreditation.

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### ***About Project Open Hand***

*Since 1985, Project Open Hand has provided meals with love to older adults, adults with disabilities, and those living with complex, chronic health conditions like HIV/AIDS, cancer, and heart disease. Each year, Project Open Hand serves nearly a million meals to clients across San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties. To learn more, visit [www.openhand.org](http://www.openhand.org).*

### ***About the Food is Medicine Coalition***

*The Food is Medicine Coalition (FIMC) is a national coalition of nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing medically tailored meals, groceries, and nutrition support to individuals living with severe and chronic illnesses. FIMC advances equitable access to these life-saving interventions through policy change, research, and best practices. Visit [fimcoalition.org](http://fimcoalition.org) for more information. Visit [www.fimcoalition.org](http://www.fimcoalition.org) for more information.*

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