



Equity First: Addressing Food Insecurity at the Community Level

September 10, 2025

Today's Chat Agenda

- Updates: Community Oncology Alliance (COA) and COA's Patient Advocacy Network (CPAN)
- **Shiela Plasencia, Director of Practice Support**
 - The link between food insecurity and health equity.
 - The role of community oncology and grassroots advocacy.
 - What Equity-First solutions look like.
 - What can we do today?



Shiela Plasencia
Director of Practice Support
Community Oncology Alliance



Rose Gerber, MS
Director of Patient Advocacy & Education
Community Oncology Alliance

Hunger Exists in our Communities

**1 in 3
cancer patients
face
food insecurity**



- This is a local problem with a national reach.

What is Food Insecurity?

01

Lack of consistent access to nutritious food.

02

Not just about hunger – includes quality, choice, stability.

03

Rooted in systemic inequities.

Food Insecurity = Health Equity



Impacts treatment outcomes and recovery.

Disproportionate impact on low-income, rural, BIPOC communities.

Where Community Oncology Fits In-

Trusted,
accessible
point of care.

Opportunity
to screen for
food needs.

Direct link to
community
resources.

What's Working in Communities?

On-site food pantries.

“Food Prescription” programs.

Transportation support.

Local nonprofit collaborations.

Equity First Means Upstream Action-



Address root causes: poverty, transportation, racism.

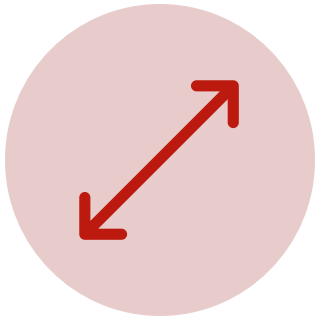


Center patient voices.

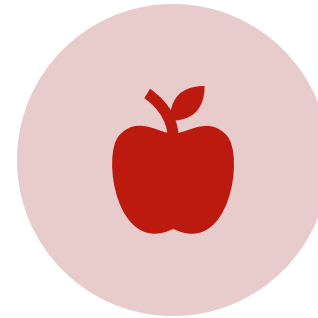


Move beyond short-term fixes.

What Can Advocacy Do?



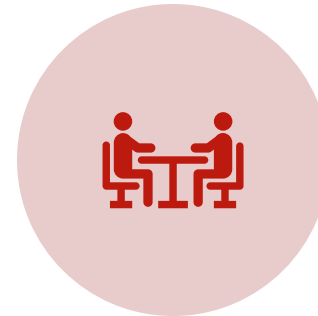
Expand SNAP for cancer patients.



Reimburse nutrition services.



Fund routine food security screening.



Normalize discussing food needs in care.

How You Can Help Today

Talk

Talk openly about food insecurity.

Support

Support community food programs.

Advocate

Advocate for systemic change.

Share

Share stories to inspire others.

Food is Medicine



“YOU CAN’T FIGHT CANCER ON
AN EMPTY STOMACH.”



FOOD ACCESS IS
FOUNDATIONAL TO HEALTH
EQUITY.

Reminder

Ways to Stay Engaged and Educated with CPAN

1. **Participate** in our Monthly CPAN Advocacy Chats: Educational Conversations on Cancer Advocacy & Policy
2. **Signup** for the CPAN newsletter
3. **Visit** our website to learn more and take action
4. **Share** Your Story
5. **Follow us** on social media



coaAdvocacy.org

Thank You Shiela and our Listeners!
Our next CPAN Advocacy Chat
Wednesday, October 8, at 12:00 pm ET

**Cancer Care Hijacked: How PBMs are Blocking
Patients Access to Medication**



Christine Pfaff
Director of Clinical Initiatives
Community Oncology Alliance