



Food Literacy

Food literacy and nutrition education have declined in recent years. Food literacy is a critical component of long-term nutrition security.

- In 2025, the Federal Government's One Big Beautiful Bill Act **cut the SNAP-Ed program nationwide**. This program funded nutrition educators through UMass Extension to teach classes in most of Somerville's K-8 schools.
- **As of the 2025-26 school year, Somerville Public Schools' (SPS's) garden and food literacy programming is limited.** In previous years, SPS received food education grants and had more garden and food-focused education in their curriculum. More recently, schools lack the staff capacity to apply for and manage grants. Students still have basic health education, but SPS cannot fill the gap left by SNAP-Ed.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE FOOD LITERACY:

- Elevate information about the **federal elimination of SNAP-Ed** and how SPS will be impacted starting in the '26-27 school year.
- Collaborate with the **Somerville Public Library** to integrate relevant food and nutrition topics into public programming.
- Advocate for the **reinstatement of the SPS Wellness Policy Committee** and use the Policy to guide and strengthen food literacy and health initiatives.

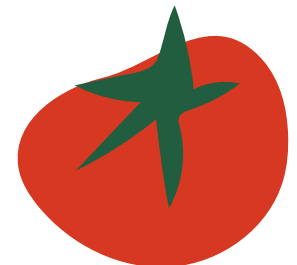


Photo credit: Brigid Pigott

The Somerville Library offers many food-related programs. Some examples from 2026's event calendar:

- **Gardening Workshop with Green City Growers:** Sep 12, Oct 3, and Oct 24; Central Library
- **Cooking Demo: One Pot BBQ Chicken Mac and Cheese with Heidi, Dietician:** Oct 5, Virtual
- **Demystifying Tea Blending with Mo, Herbalist:** Oct 22, Central Library
- **Fall Mocktails Workshop:** Nov 1, Central Library

**Want to learn more?
Find the full
assessment here:**





Library patrons attending and participating in gardening workshops with farmers from Green City Growers.

Photo credit: Kerry O'Donnell, Somerville Public Library



Healthcare Initiatives

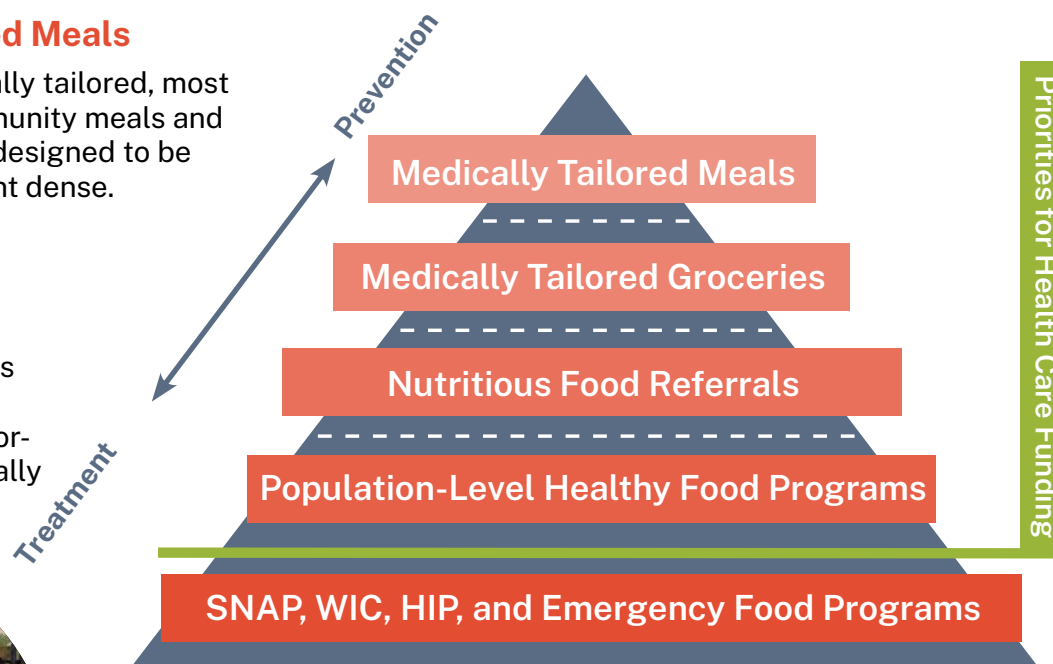
Somerville Has Many Programs that Fit into the **Food is Medicine Framework**

Medically Tailored Meals

Although not medically tailored, most of Somerville's community meals and prepared meals are designed to be balanced and nutrient dense.

Medically Tailored Groceries

All of Somerville's pantries offer some level of food choice, providing the opportunity to support a medically tailored grocery list.



Food and Nutrition Security Programs

Somerville's network of service providers works together to connect residents to SNAP, WIC, HIP, and other food programs.



Nutritious Food Referrals

Two local programs offer opportunities for produce prescription. Shoppers can use a SNAP match at all farmers markets to get more healthy food for less. The City-subsidized Mobile Farmers Market offers fresh produce at affordable prices and accepts all types of nutrition benefits.

Photo credit: Carlos Ly for Union Square Main Streets

Population-Level Healthy Food Policies and Programs

The City and community organizations **work to remove barriers to equitable food access** by supporting transportation to food and health needs and by improving the food landscape through mobile programming like the Mobile Farmers Market, the Free School Markets, and pantry delivery programs.

Massachusetts is a leader in the Food is Medicine space with a strong coalition and funding opportunities for food programs in the Medicaid 1115 Waiver Health-Related Social Needs programming.



- CHA is Somerville's largest healthcare provider and **offers several food-related incentives, benefits, and educational programs**. However, there is room to improve coordination between these initiatives and local food assistance programs.
- Funders, policymakers, and professionals are increasingly interested in **connecting food access and healthcare system outcomes** under the Food is Medicine framework.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO INTEGRATE FOOD ACCESS INTO HEALTHCARE:

- Strengthen the collaboration between **the City, the school district, and Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA)** to provide a coordinated package of food resources and benefits for Somerville constituents and patients.
- Ensure social service providers are **aware of the incentives available through Tufts Health Together with CHA** and other ACOs.
- Pursue grants that align with the **Food is Medicine** framework.
- Support **increased Health-Related Social Need funding** in the upcoming Medicaid 1115 waiver to open up more programming for residents and additional contracting opportunities for community organizations.

Want to learn more?
Find the full
assessment here:

