

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



NATIONAL SCHOOL

3E'S OF HEALTHY LIVING
EDUCATION, EXERCISE AND EATING RIGHT

Lunch Program

March 15, 2021

Embedded attachments with this issue

Refer to the COVID Page for Updates

Your Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) newsletter has returned, but [SquareMeals.org/CVNSLP](https://www.squaremeals.org/CVNSLP) will still be your source for all COVID-19-related regulatory information. The most current information regarding program operations that has been modified due to COVID-19 will continue to be found on our Coronavirus page to ensure that TDA shares updates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in a way that is timely and consistent.

Policy Updates

Income Eligibility Guidelines Released

This notice announces the Department's annual adjustments to the Income Eligibility Guidelines to be used in determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk for the period from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022. These guidelines are used by schools, institutions, and facilities participating in the National School Lunch Program (and Commodity School Program), School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program for Children, Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program.



Federal Register Notice Link

NOTE: The income eligibility guideline located on SquareMeals [here](#) have been updated. Individual program forms containing this information will be updated soon.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.

Revision Notice – USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service recently updated its Civil Rights webpage resulting in changes to the internal hyperlinks within the Nondiscrimination Statement (NDS) as well as the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form. As a result, the full NDS must be updated to reflect the correct website hyperlinks. No other changes have been made to the NDS. If you have not done so already, please update the electronic versions of the NDS with the English and/or Spanish versions. Any printed materials that include the full NDS should be updated prior to the next revision or scheduled printing. Additional information, including downloadable WORD file with the NDS, is available on [TDA's website](#).

Texas Farm Fresh Initiative

Registration Now Open for the 2021 Spring Farm Fresh Challenge

All program operators are invited to participate in a special spring Farm Fresh Challenge during April 2021. Operators that meet the Eat Local. Teach Local. and Be Social parameters can get access to new resources and earn recognition for bringing local foods to meals for kids. Whether you are operating digitally or in person this spring, please visit Squaremeals.org/FarmFreshChallenge to learn more about how to participate in the Spring Farm Fresh Challenge.



[Register here](#)

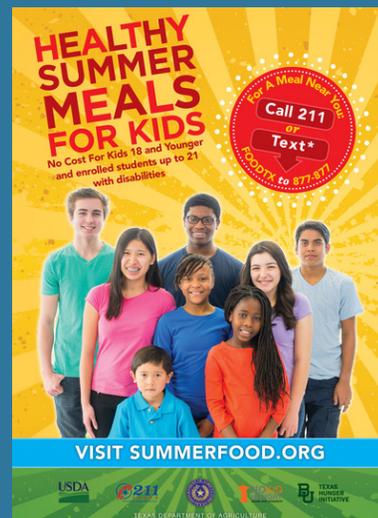
Share Your Story to be Featured in Farm Fresh Video Series

The TDA Farm Fresh Initiative is seeking school districts and Texas food producers to feature in a video about local purchasing for school meals. The purpose of the video is to demonstrate how producers can strengthen their relationships with child nutrition departments in ways that are beneficial to both the producer and child nutrition. If your district regularly works with a local producer and you would like to share your story with a statewide audience, or if you would like to learn more about this opportunity, please contact FarmFresh@TexasAgriculture.gov by March 15, 2021. For examples of similar projects, watch TDA's *We Made it Happen* videos from [Balch Springs Middle School](#) and [Henderson ISD](#).

Resources

Summer Materials are on the Way!

Federally funded Summer Meal Programs help ensure children can enjoy a healthy summer and return to school in the fall ready to thrive. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is sending posters and information cards to every school food authority (SFA) in Texas to assist them in fulfilling a National School Lunch Program requirement to notify students and their families about the availability of these summer meals. **Federal regulations require the SFA to make this notification even if it does not serve summer meals.** [This bulk shipment will be addressed to the child nutrition director \(CND\) and include three posters for each school and one information card for each](#)



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materials to each school. The posters must be displayed on campus and the information cards must be distributed to each student immediately upon the shipment's arrival, regardless of whether students are learning at school or at home.

*** Please note this is an automatic shipment and no materials need to be ordered.**

The estimated arrival date will vary among SFAs. CNDs should look for deliveries soon. Once the bulk shipment arrives, the CND is asked to open all boxes and distribute the materials to schools.

For more information and resources, please contact your Education Service Center (ESC) or visit SummerFood.org. Your Child Nutrition Director has also received a similar notification.

Thank you for your partnership in this effort and please double-check your order before contacting the ESC or TDA to report missing materials.

NSLP/SBP Program Year Calendar

The Program Year Calendar located on SquareMeals provides key dates and reminders for school nutrition Contracting Entities related to school nutrition program operation for each month, including action items and due dates. The calendar may be downloaded by clicking [here](#). Additional tools and resources that help you stay organized and on time may be available through your local [Education Service Center](#).

Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant Program

The application period for the Spring 2021 Whole Kids Foundation Garden Grant Program is now open through **March 31, 2021**. The grant program provides \$3,000 to support a new or existing edible educational garden. To be eligible for the grant program, you must be a K-12 school district or charter organization or a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that serves children in the K-12 grade range. To learn more about this opportunity and eligibility requirements, visit the garden [grant webpage](#).

Texting Tool to Find No Cost Meals for Children

Schools and local organizations across Texas are providing no cost meals to children and teens ages 18 and younger and enrolled students up to 21 years old with disabilities. Families can text **FoodTX** or **Comida** to 877-877 to find sites near them that are providing no cost grab and go meals. Families should contact the school or organization sponsoring the site to learn about meal distribution days and times.

Food Buying Guide Mobile App - New Feature Alert!

A new feature is available on the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG) Mobile App. The Mobile App now allows users to customize the Serving Size per Meal Contribution for fruits and vegetables using a drop-down menu to auto-calculate the amount to purchase based on the selected serving size. This feature was recently released on the FBG Interactive Web-based Tool.

You can download the FREE Food Buying Guide Mobile App on the Apple Store or Google Play today!

Training Reminder

Visit [TDA's online training page](#) for the latest updates in web based trainings accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Ways to Get Involved!

Health Ambassadors for a Ready Texas (HART)

Applications are now open for HART!

The Texas Department of Agriculture is seeking student leaders passionate about healthy eating and Texas Agriculture to apply to their Health Ambassadors for a Ready Texas (HART) initiative. Students enrolled in 9th, 10th or 11th grade in a school participating in the National School Lunch Program are eligible to apply. HART applications and more information available at SquareMeals.com/HART. Deadline to apply is **April 9th**.



You Art What You Eat Student Art Contest

TDA's *You Art What You Eat* statewide student art contest is going on now! Students must submit their artwork by April 2, 2021! Kick off the art contest in your school by including an art assignment in lesson plans or encouraging students to participate individually. The theme of the 2021 art contest is ***Feed Your Creativity with a Healthy School Meal***. Students will use their creativity to illustrate what healthy school meals look like to them while incorporating TDA's imagination inspired theme.

[Click here](#) for a special message about the art contest from Commissioner Sid Miller. Share this video with teachers and post on your school's social media to encourage students to enter today!

For more information about the contest, how to submit, or to download materials visit SquareMeals.org/artcontest. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and please join TDA in encouraging students to focus their artistic talents on healthy school meals by entering the *You Art What You Eat* statewide student art contest.

2021/2022 CACFP Input Workgroup – Applications Now Open

Applications for the 2021/2022 CACFP Input Group are now open. Every other month, Input Workgroup members meet virtually to gather input and discuss the current challenges and opportunities for CACFP in Texas. The input and feedback from these meetings help guide TDA as we work to provide the resources and trainings CACFP CE's need to successfully operate the CACFP in Texas. Since its inception, the collaboration between Input Workgroup members and TDA has yielded many tangible results, not least of which is increased understanding between TDA and CACFP sponsors. If selected, Workgroup Members should be prepared to represent the perspective of their CACFP colleagues with TDA.

You can find additional information and the Input Workgroup application for membership at SquareMeals.org/CACFPWorkgroup. The application for membership is also available in the Applications section of the Texas Unified Nutrition Programs System (TX-UNPS) under Download Forms (CACFP-106). Applications are due **Friday, April 23, 2021**. Membership selection is based on criteria such as sponsorship size, location, sponsor type, and response to the application questions. TDA's goal is to ensure that the group represents a broad and diverse range of CACFP sponsors and perspectives.



COMMISSIONER SID MILLER
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