QUICK REFERENCE
FOR
CONTRACTING ENTITIES
SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

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HOW TO USE **THIS REFERENCE**

This reference provides an overview of how to participate in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) as a **contracting entity (CE)** in Texas. This is not a comprehensive guide; CEs must follow all regulations, program rules, policies, and guidance. If you need additional information, contact the Texas Department of Agriculture.

Calling (877) TEX MEAL (839-6325)

Emailing **SquareMeals@TexasAgriculture.gov**

Visiting TDA's website **SquareMeals.org**

Contracting Entity –an organization that signs a contract with TDA to operate a federal nutrition program administered by the agency.

SUMMER FOOD SERVICE **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) is a federally funded child nutrition program administered in Texas by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). SFSP was created to ensure that children in low-income areas could receive nutritious meals and snacks during the summer months when they do not have access to school lunch or school breakfast. The program reimburses contracting entities (CEs) for each summer meal served to eligible children. All reimbursable meals are at no cost and must meet meal pattern requirements.

SFSP PARTICIPATION

Approved SFSP meal **sites** provide meals at no cost to children and teens 18 years old and younger and enrolled students up to 21 with disabilities. Participating families do not have to apply, register, or provide identification at **open SFSP meal sites**. However, there may be registration requirements associated with camps or other organized programs that provide meals at **closed enrolled SFSP meal sites**.

Sponsor - A public or private nonprofit entity that enters into an agreement with TDA to assume responsibility for the administration of SFSP at one or more participating sites. Sponsors are referred to as contracting entities (CEs) in Texas.

Site - An accessible location with a provider serving SFSP meals to children; ideally in an accessible location where children naturally congregate in the summer. Sites operate under an approved SFSP sponsor; each site must meet eligibility criteria.

Open Sites - Open to all children based on area eligibility. The site is in an area where school or census data indicates at least 50% of the children living there are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

Closed Enrolled Sites - Sites with documentation showing 50% or more of the site's enrolled children are from households that meet the federal income eligibility guidelines. These sites may also use area eligibility data (school or census data) that indicates at least 50% of the children living in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

APPLYING TO BECOME A **SFSP CONTRACTING ENTITY**

Organizations must meet certain eligibility criteria before applying to become an SFSP CE. CEs sign an agreement with TDA that details the contractual responsibilities of their role as a SFSP operator. Upon approval, the organization is referred to as a CE.

Organizations should contact TDA or their local **Education Service Center (ESC)** for additional application information.

See the resources section at the end of this reference for more information about **TX-UNPS**.

Education Service Centers (ESCs) - Regional service centers that provide SFSP sponsors with training and technical assistance at the local level. TDA maintains a contract with ESCs to provide these support services at no cost to the sponsors. *See the resources section at the end of this reference for more information about how to find an ESC.*

DECIDING IF AN ORGANIZATION IS RIGHT FOR SFSP

To determine eligibility for becoming an SFSP CE, organization administrators must submit a completed intake form located at **SquareMeals.org/Summer (available January 15 through April 15).**

The organization will receive an email from TDA in 3-5 business days with information regarding next steps. The email will include the following:

- FND-135 User Access manager Form - Organization administrators must complete this form to gain access to the **Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (TX-UNPS)**. TDA uses the web-based system to complete the program application.
- Details on the training that must be completed before an application is approved.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Prospective SFSP sponsors must submit an application in **TX-UNPS** and receive TDA approval before they can operate the program. They are also required to submit supporting documentation using one of the methods below:

- Upload the documentation in TX-UNPS
- Fax to (888) 223-8645
- Email to **SFSP.Bops@TexasAgriculture.gov**

TDA requires new SFSP CEs to take the ESC or web-based training. For training information visit **SquareMeals.org/Summer** and click the *Training* tab.

TDA will review submitted applications within 15 calendar days. If there are questions, errors, or missing information, TDA staff will note the issue in **TX-UNPS** and it should be addressed by the applying organization.

See the resources section at the end of this reference for more information about **TX-UNPS**.

VISIT PRIOR TO APPROVAL

TDA conducts a Visit Prior to Approval (VPA) to assess an applicant's viability, capability, and accountability to operate SFSP. The VPA is required for each new applicant that did not participate in SFSP the prior year and creates a report of the organization's ability to operate the program.

If all program requirements are met, TDA will schedule a VPA. The VPA occurs at the end of the application process. TDA will request records for the VPA; expect TDA to be onsite at least 4 hours while conducting the VPA, which includes interviews with management and staff. During the VPA, TDA will perform the following assessments:

- Review and verification of the organization's application, management plan, budget, financial documentation, and other records.
- Observe site operations, as applicable.
- Determine the date the organization is eligible to file its first claim.
- Assess the adequacy of financial and staff resources.
- Determine compliance with civil rights requirements.

After the VPA, TDA sends notification if the application is approved.

NEXT STEPS

TDA will review the organization's submitted application along with all required documentation. The organization's status will then be updated in TX-UNPS with one of the following designations:

- Approval - The application has been recommended for approval and will receive an approval through TX-UNPS.
- Returned - The application has been reviewed but is either incomplete or incorrect.
- Submitted - The application has been submitted to TDA for review.
- Withdrawal - The organization is not prepared to operate the program and will be given an opportunity to withdraw its application. To request a withdrawal, an email should be sent to **SFSP.Bops@TexasAgriculture.gov**. The organization may reapply at a later date.
- Denial - If an organization's application is denied, TDA will notify the organization in writing of the specific reason for denial. If an organization's application is denied, the organization may reapply at a later date.

APPLICATION MAINTENANCE AFTER APPROVAL

Organizations must ensure any operational changes are reported to TDA in a timely manner and needed updates are made in their TX-UNPS application. Actual operations must match what has been submitted as true and correct to TDA. To change or update an application after approval the organization must submit an amendment in TX- UNPS. TDA will review amendments within seven (7) TDA business days.

Once an organization becomes an SFSP CE, it is required to submit a renewal application every year (TX-UNPS renewal applications open each year on January 15). SFSP application deadlines are posted on **SquareMeals.org**.

CEs are encouraged to reach out to their local ESC for training and technical assistance.

OPERATING AS AN SFSP **CONTRACTING ENTITY**

SERVING MEALS/SNACKS

In addition to reducing food insecurity for children, summer meals should show children how to build a healthy plate and establish lifelong nutritious eating habits. To be reimbursable under SFSP rules, meals served must meet certain meal pattern requirements. These meal pattern requirements help the menu planner provide well-balanced, healthy meals that meet the needs of children.

Meal pattern requirements are available at **SquareMeals.org/Summer** on the *Meal Pattern* tab. For additional information, contact your **Education Service Center (ESC)**.

See the resources section at the end of this reference for more information about how to find an ESC.

MEAL PROMOTION

TDA's summer meals promotion campaign includes distribution of printed materials, digital marketing, and local awareness strategies aimed at community partners. TDA promotion encourages families to use one of the following to find a meal site:

- Call 2-1-1 to speak to a live operator to find a meal site
- Text "Food" or "Comida" to 304-304 to find a meal site
- Visit SummerFood.org to view an interactive live map of all the current meal sites

TDA offers printed promotional resources at no cost to CEs to increase awareness about the availability of summer meals. TDA also offers a variety of downloadable materials, including social media images, web banners, posters and more. Go to **SquareMeals.org/Summer** and click on the *Resources* tab for promotional materials.

FILING A CLAIM

To be reimbursed for SFSP meals, a CE must file a claim in TX-UNPS each month meals are served.

CEs must have an application in approved status and **correct information entered for each site in TX-UNPS** to file a claim. Strict timelines govern when claims can be filed after the last meal of the month is served.

TDA recommends that CEs file claims as soon as possible after the end of the month.

Processing of claims occurs on Tuesdays and Thursdays and takes approximately 5-7 business days before payment is issued.

Check the SFSP updates in TX-UNPS on the welcome page for up-to-date information on claiming deadlines.

Email claim and payment questions to **BCT.Bops@Texasagriculture.gov**.

TIP! Please keep your organization's direct deposit information up to date in TX-UNPS.

KEEPING UP WITH KEY PROGRAM CHANGES

All current SFSP information is maintained on TDA's website **Squaremeals.org.**

In addition, TDA sends a monthly e-newsletter, *SFSP In the Loop*, to all SFSP sponsors. The *SFSP In the Loop* contains critical updates from TDA regarding policy changes, clarifications, resources, and trainings.

To receive the monthly newsletters, CEs should keep their contact information (email address) in TX-UNPS updated. Past newsletters will be available for 3 months on SquareMeals.org.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS (AR)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires TDA to conduct periodic administrative reviews (ARs). ARs ensure CEs comply with all program rules and regulations and provide an opportunity for technical assistance to improve program operations. Reviews occur at least once every three years. During an AR, CEs can expect TDA staff to review all required records and observe meal service at selected sites.

REVIEW NOTIFICATION

The CE will receive a letter approximately one month prior to the review stating when the review will occur, who will conduct the review, and any documentation that is required to be submitted to TDA prior to the review.

PRIOR TO THE REVIEW

TDA will ask the CE for documentation and it must be uploaded to TX-UNPS.

OFF SITE REVIEW

TDA reviews documents submitted by CE.

ON SITE REVIEW

May be virtual or onsite depending on current events; TDA reviewers will notify the CE of the method to be used.

Entrance conference – occurs before the review to discuss the review process

The review – this portion includes providing documentation and addressing the CE's questions.

Exit conference - upon completion of the AR, TDA staff will review the Preliminary Findings Report and any program noncompliance, discuss any outstanding questions, and offer technical assistance to the SFSP CE as needed.

RESULTS OF REVIEW LETTER

Official notice including the AR findings (if any), adverse actions (if any), and information about the next action needed. The letter also includes information about corrective action documents (CAD).

CORRECTIVE ACTION DOCUMENTS (CAD)

The corrective actions are plans developed by the CE to fully and permanently correct the findings identified during the AR.

The CE's written CAD response is submitted via TX-UNPS. CAD responses submitted are reviewed and will either be approved as is, approved pending additional information from the CE to be provided, or not approved.

Notification will be sent to the CE once the AR is closed, and no further action is needed.

RESOURCES

TX-UNPS

Accessing TX-UNPS

The Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (TX-UNPS) is a single, integrated, web-based application that serves all nutrition programs and provides contracting entities (CEs) with efficient and immediate access to applications, claims, and related nutrition program functions.

User access is required to use TX-UNPS. Obtaining access to TX-UNPS can be achieved by contacting the User Access Manager (UAM) within your organization. If your entity has not assigned a UAM, fill out the *Security Authority for User Access Manager* (FND-135) form to appoint someone from your organization. To determine if a UAM has already been designated, CEs should refer to the list at **SquareMeals.org/UAM**. TX-UNPS is located at **https://txunps1.TexasAgriculture.gov**

How to Navigate

The SFSP CEs will utilize three main menus in TX-UNPS:

- Applications
- Claims
- Compliance (includes review information)

Important! Users must log in to TX-UNPS every 90 days or else their account will be deactivated.

Password Reset

Users may utilize the "Forgot Your Password" feature as needed. The feature can be found on the homepage of **TX-UNPS**.

Users of the system will be locked out of TX-UNPS after 5 failed login attempts. Once a lock-out has occurred, users can wait 15 minutes and attempt their password again. If the user continues to have difficulty, it would be best to request a new password using the "Forgot Your Password" feature of TX-UNPS, by calling: (877) TEX MEAL (839-6325), or by emailing **SquareMeals@TexasAgriculture.gov**. Entities with a UAM can also request for their UAM to reset their password as needed.

EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS

Education Service Centers (ESCs) are regional service centers that provide SFSP sponsors training and technical assistance. TDA maintains a contract with ESCs to provide these support services at no cost to the SFSP sponsors.

ESC SERVICES

The following are a few examples of topics ESCs can provide training and technical assistance:

- Recordkeeping
- Claim filing
- Application assistance
- Eligibility
- Meal pattern requirements
- Meal planning
- Meal appeal and acceptability

HOW DO I FIND MY ESC LOCATION?

There are 20 ESCs located across Texas; each location is assigned a region number. Contact information for each ESC region is available on **SquareMeals.org**. Hover over the *About* tab and click on the *Technical Assistance and Support* tab. A list of counties can be found, as well as a map with ESC contact information.

TRAININGS

In addition to trainings offered by ESCs, the following training resources related to SFSP are available:

TDA Conferences

Conferences held by TDA are offered at no charge to the SFSP sponsors. The point of contact listed in the TX-UNPS application (the SFSP CE Administrator) will receive conference details.

Online Trainings

All SFSP CEs must take the Annual SFSP Training as part of their application process.

Online trainings are available on **SquareMeals.org/Summer** via the *Training* tab, then click the *SFSP* tab.

Visit ICN for Civil Rights Training for all CEs.

ESCs offer a variety of training opportunities to assist program operations. Contact your local ESC for more information.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Rules and regulations related to serving as an SFSP sponsor in Texas are documented in manuals maintained by TDA referred to as ''handbooks.'' Access the handbooks by going to **SquareMeals.org/Summer** and clicking on the *Policy/Handbooks* tab.

FOOD SAFETY

All CEs are required to ensure their sites maintain proper sanitation and health standards in conformance with all applicable State and local laws and regulations. For more information visit **SquareMeals.org/Summer** and click on the *Food Safety* tab.

TEXAS FARM FRESH INITIATIVE

TDA's Texas Farm Fresh initiative connects Texans of all ages with locally grown food and agricultural education. Farm Fresh initiatives also benefit Texas farmers and ranchers by connecting meal sites with local producers. Texas meal sites can access TDA's support and resources needed to develop farm-to-summer site activities, including the Farm Fresh Network, local purchasing information, and sample menus. Explore the possibilities at **SquareMeals.org/ TexasFarmFresh** appropriate party.

AVOIDING COMMON ERRORS

TDA analyzes aggregate data related to common findings from the SFSP ARs and publishes this data so that the SFSP sponsors can apply lessons learned.

Please review TDA's *Detailed Results for Reviews with Findings* to implement processes to prevent errors. Visit **SquareMeals.org/Summer** and click on the *Compliance* tab.

TDA POINTS OF CONTACT

To contact the Texas department of Agriculture (TDA) regarding questions about program applications, program operations, flexibilities/ waivers, or financial issues, visit **SquareMeals.org**, hover over the *About* tab and click on the *Contact Food and Nutrition* tab to find the appropriate contact.

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Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**

   U.S. Department of Agriculture

   Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil

   Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW

   Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. **fax:**
   (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. **email:**
   program.intake@usda.gov

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COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

Fraud Hotline: 1-866-5-FRAUD-4 or 1-866-537-2834 | P.O. Box 12847 | Austin, TX 78711
Toll Free: (877) TEX-MEAL | For the hearing impaired: (800) 735-2989 (TTY)

Food and Nutrition Division
Summer Meal Programs

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