



BUILDING A HEALTHIER TEXAS

ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

TURN THE TABLES ON FOOD INSECURITY AND OBESITY IN TEXAS

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Information about the Healthy Community Network -
<https://squaremeals.org/Public-Resources/Healthy-Community-Network>

Healthy Community Network - Spring 2023 Bulletin

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administers federal nutrition programs serving every community in Texas. TDA's program partners include schools, food banks, childcare centers, and other nonprofit organizations. In this Healthy Community Network Bulletin, you will find information you can use to ensure your community maximizes these programs' potential.



Howdy neighbor and fellow elected official! Last year was one for the record books as the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) administered more than \$4 billion in federal nutrition grants. Our partners at food banks, schools, childcare centers, and other local organizations use these funds to provide healthy meals and nutritious foods sourced from our great American agriculture industry. We are working to fight hunger while supporting local economies in Texas. This Healthy Community Network Bulletin was developed specifically for local leaders like you. The bulletin provides current information you can use to ensure your community maximizes these programs' potential. Thank you for all you do and remember ... Texas Agriculture matters.

TEFAP Expansion

TDA has been awarded a federal grant called Build Back Better Reach and Resiliency. TDA has begun partnering with schools, organizations, and food banks in rural, high need areas. TDA is reaching out to you to help expand the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) to Texas families in your community.

TEFAP is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition assistance program administered in Texas by TDA. Through TEFAP, food banks receive USDA-donated food they can distribute themselves or through their partners at food pantries, soup kitchens, and housing authorities. The organizations supply the food to participants through prepared meals that are served on-site and food packages that may be consumed at home.

Please assist TDA in promoting TEFAP to local shops, organizations, and community members in your area.

Digital materials can be used for newsletters and posted on websites. Physical resources can be ordered at no cost and handed out in your community. All resources can be found by visiting, [SquareMeals.org/TEFAPResources](https://www.squaremeals.org/TEFAPResources).

Thank you for your dedication to promoting and expanding the Emergency Food Assistance Program and ensuring Texans have access to healthy meals.



Summer Meals

Summer brings the opportunity to continue feeding Texas children. TDA's summer media campaign will call attention to our tools for finding sites serving meals during the summer. Service times and requirements for receiving meals will be included in the communications. This year, USDA has offered districts across the nation the option to provide non-congregate meals in high-need rural areas. Children 18 and under and enrolled disabled students up to 21 years old are eligible for free meals, with no proof of parental income necessary.

In advance of federal regulation changes at the end of 2024, TDA is using the discretion provided to States in the Appropriations Act and subsequent guidance from USDA to create a Non-Congregate Feeding Pilot Program for Summer 2023 in rural areas where no congregate service is currently. This pilot program will allow a limited number of Contracting Entities to provide non-congregate service in Summer 2023, which will in turn allow TDA to gather data on non-congregate feeding that USDA will use to develop new regulation. The infrastructure and lessons learned from this pilot will give TDA the knowledge to implement a permanent program in Summer 2024 and beyond.

As a local elected official, you play an important role in increasing awareness of the Summer Meal Programs. Follow these steps to help families find a healthy summer meal:

1. Beginning **June 1**, share these three meal-site-locator tools:

- Dial **211** to speak to a live operator
- Visit www.SummerFood.org for an interactive site-locator map
- Text FOOD or COMIDA to **304-304**

2. Order or download no-cost promotional materials at Summerfood.org/Outreachttools. Share the summer meals materials directly with your community partners or through local media.

3. Attend a special event. Speak with a local school district about upcoming events and promotional celebrations to raise awareness of summer meal sites in your community.

4. Organizations interested in learning about the program can find information on our [website](#).

Farm Fresh Network

One of the goals at TDA is to increase the participation of farmers and ranchers across the state in the Farm Fresh Network (FFN). The FFN connects producers with National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) participants. These partnerships provide benefits for all parties involved, including increased revenue for producers and reliable local produce sources for Child Nutrition providers.

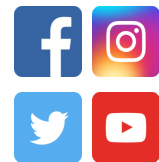
How can you help?

As an elected official, you can reach out to producers in your area to let them know about this opportunity. TDA has a simple form on SquareMeals.org for interested farmers and rancher to fill out. Upon approval, producers will be sent an email and a welcome kit. The welcome kit contains a folder with a welcome letter, Farm Fresh information and cards, and a member hat.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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