

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NATIONAL SCHOOL

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

September 2023 Monthly Newsletter

NEW! Child Nutrition Program Integrity Final Rule

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service published a final rule on program integrity to ensure that child nutrition programs are properly operated and managed to protect federal funds and taxpayer dollars. The final rule impacts regulations for the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program, Summer Food Service Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program. Click the headline for more information.

Important Information about Health Coverage among Child Nutrition Program Participants

USDA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have provided resources and important reminders for Child Nutrition Program participants with Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage in the wake of the end of the Federal public health emergency (PHE). Click the headline for more information.

Healthy Meals Incentives Grants and Recognition Awards Announced

The USDA and Action for Healthy Kids are collaborating to offer the Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards that spotlight school's innovative practices and efforts in improving the nutritional quality of their school meals. Interested in applying? Attend this informational webinar on September 21, 2023, from 2-3 p.m. – **Register here!** Also, 18 school districts and charters received up to \$150,000 in Healthy Meals Incentives grants. Click the headline for complete information about the grants.

Attachment B Uploads due October 31, 2023

CEs must complete the Attachment B Upload module in TX-UNPS no later than October 31, 2023. CEs must upload their application, application instructions, and template

notification letters to the Attachment B Upload module.

CEs that operate standard counting and claiming, including universal free meals, Provision 2 in the base year, and Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) with day students must complete the Attachment B Upload module in TX-UNPS. CEs will answer a question and upload the template school meal application, application instructions, and template eligibility notification letters used by your district.

FSMC Contract Timelines

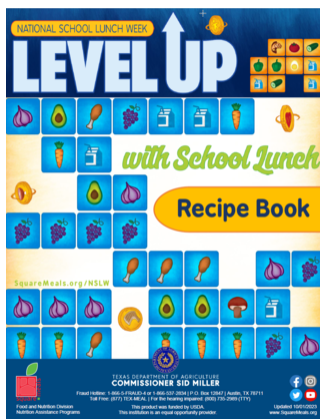
September 1, 2023: RFP and renewal process opened

December 1, 2023: All new contracts (RFP) must be submitted to TDA for approval to publish.

February 1, 2024: Renewal documents must be submitted to TDA for approval.

April 1, 2024: New contract selections must be submitted to TDA for approval to award/execute.

June 21, 2024: New contracts and renewals must be signed/executed and submitted to TDA.



Get Ready for 2023

National School Lunch Week

October 9-13, students across Texas will have the opportunity to level up during National School Lunch Week 2023. It's not too late to participate, visit [SquareMeals.org](https://www.SquareMeals.org) for available digital items to use during your celebrations and don't forget to fill out [our survey](#) to share your plans with TDA!

Celebrate National School Lunch Week with the "Bite Seen Around Texas" Taste Testing!

Help your students level up during National School Lunch Week (NSLW) by taste testing a vegetable and fruit recipe featuring Texas sweet potatoes and **October's Harvest of the Month** produce item: Gala apples! Visit [SquareMeals.Org/NSLW](https://www.SquareMeals.org/NSLW) for the recipe and our planning guide on how to conduct a taste testing event. Be sure to promote it on social media using #NSLWBiteSeenAroundTX #NSLW23!



It's Farm Fresh Challenge Time!

Calling all NSLP and CACFP operators! October is coming and so is the Farm Fresh Challenge. Don't miss out on this fantastic

opportunity to showcase your dedication to serving Texas products and

engaging your students in garden-based learning. Pledge now to bring homegrown and healthy foods to your students and earn well-deserved recognition for your efforts. **Pledges are open until September 13.**



Available Now - 2023-2024 Menu Calendar Templates!

Get ready for the 2023-2024 school year with menu calendar templates. This year's theme is "Twelve Wonders of Texas", and each month features a must-see Texas location or event! So, check out great places

in Texas using these Menu Calendar Templates throughout the school year. Click the headline for the templates.

More Students Can Enjoy Free Breakfast in Texas!

The Texas legislature provided funding to cover the breakfast fee normally charged to students for reduced-price breakfasts served from September 1, 2023, through the 2024-2025 school year. Visit www.SquareMeals.org/ReducedBreakfasts for more information and resources, and check out this [marketing toolkit](#) created by No Kid Hungry!

Check Out These Resources!

Explore these resources from Team Nutrition and the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN)!

Serving Up MyPlate:

A Yummy Curriculum. Check out this collection of classroom materials that highlight the importance of all five food groups by integrating nutrition education into math, science, language arts, and health!

Crediting Tip Sheets: The crediting tip sheets for fruits, milk, and meat/meat alternatives are now available in Spanish!

Virtual Train-the-Trainer: Attention School Nutrition Directors and District Trainers – Spots still available! Register for these virtual sessions and receive information to provide training in your home district.

New! School Lunch Menu E-Poster

USDA's Team Nutrition is excited to announce the release of the new School Lunch Menu E-Poster. This resource is designed for school nutrition programs to display daily lunch menu options and remind students to eat a variety of foods while building a reimbursable meal. The fillable pdf file can be used for electronic message boards, webpages, and social media or can be printed and displayed in sign holders. To view and/or download, please [click here](#) .

NEW! USDA Back to School Media Toolkit

Policy Updates

Self-Certification Option to Increase Micro-Purchase Threshold

Beginning SY23-24, approved CEs participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) may self-certify a micro-purchase threshold of up to \$49,999.99. CEs may complete the self-certification process August 1st - October 31st of each year by submitting the SmartSheet form posted [here](#). All information is required during submission and will be verified during an Administrative Review. If the submitted information is not accurate, a finding will be issued, and fiscal action will apply. Upon approval, the CE must update applicable procurement procedures.

Pre-Award Civil Rights Compliance Review Form Revised

A revised Pre-Award Civil Rights Compliance Review Form has been posted and released. This was a minor update to reflect language in FNS Instruction 113-1 about Civil Rights compliance reviews within the two years prior to program application. The revised form can be accessed from the TDA website as follows:

School Nutrition Programs in the [School Nutrition Programs Forms table](#)

Summer Meal Programs in the [SFSP Forms table](#)

Child and Adult Care Food Program in the [CACFP Forms table](#)

Multiple ARM Sections Updated

Guidance changes and clarifications were made to the following:

- Section 4, Eligibility Determination
- Section 6, Verification of Eligibility
- Section 17, Procurement
- Section 17a, Procurement Procedures
- Section 19, Meal Pricing
- Section 20, Counting & Claiming

In addition, typos that do not affect the guidance were corrected in the following:

- Section 3, Civil Rights & Confidentiality
- Section 8, Lunch Meals
- Section 11, Summer Meals
- Section 16a, Contract Management

Additionally, on August 21, an updated Section 19 of the ARM (as well as a new complete ARM) was released on SquareMeals. When previously released on

August 4, a glitch occurred during the conversion of the Word content to PDF, leading to the omission of some content. Section 19 was the only section affected.

The Update Guide sections located at the beginning of each ARM section provide more information about the topics addressed in each release.

[Click here](#) to go to the ARM. Please replace any previous versions of the above sections that you may have saved.

SY24 Verification Reporting Resources Available

Prepare for SY23-24 Verification by accessing Verification Reporting Resources on **[SquareMeals.org](#)**. Resources include the following:

- SY24 Verification Reporting Timeline
- SY24 Verification Reminders
- SY24 Verification Reporting Tips
- Verification Reporting - Common Errors
- SY24 CE List of Approved Sample Size Methods
- SY24 Sample Size Calculator

USDA Foods Updates

TX-UNPS Ordering Round Update

Many schools have noticed several changes to their entitlement balances shown in the Weekly Commodity Bulletin. This is for two reasons:

1) As communicated earlier TDA has applied the new rate of assistance which resulted in less entitlement vs what was projected in the March ordering round. Schools will see that their initial entitlement balance has lowered due to this change.

2) TDA has updated all processing surveys in TX-UNPS to reflect what was charged against ordering for the School Year 24. Due to the significant carryover balance with processors, schools received a portion of their requests from the State Account. This means that you will see an increase in your processing reserved.

At this time, TDA has ordered all Processing Diversions for the state of Texas using analysis of usage vs demand from the schools and processors. TX-UNPS is now open for an additional opportunity to realize entitlement value through Direct Delivery (Brown Box) into your region's state contracted warehouse. Please transfer your remaining entitlement balances from Processing Reserved so that you may utilize the current open surveys to request additional Direct Delivery USDA commodities.



Surplus USDA Foods at State Contracted Warehouses (as of August 2023)

[Click here for list of surplus](#)

USDA NSLP Update SY 2023-2024

For all participating DoD Fresh Program School Districts, Private Schools, Charter Schools, and Residential Child Care Institutions: Locally grown produce is highlighted in green and updated weekly in the FFAVORS ordering catalog. Please remember when placing orders to help support Homegrown and Healthy and the Texas Farm Fresh Challenge.

Non-Pilot Group – It's not too late to participate to receive seasonal items: Watermelons, Pears, Apples, Oranges, and Grapefruits. Available delivery periods coincide with the servicing TDA Contracted Warehouse, for Regular, Direct Delivery (formerly called Brown Box cases). Please send email directly to commodityoperations@texasagriculture.gov for assistance with OPT in and help with survey requests.

Non-Pilot Group - Ensure that the SY 23-24 TX-UNPS Contract Packet "Contact Information" is up to date: Food Service Director, Ordering Contact, Billing Contact. The modify link is located to the left of each field to make easy updates.

Important Information for the New School Year

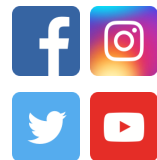
Click the headline to view information regarding SY 2023-2024 TX-UNPS Contract Packets; the Farm to School Survey; the DoD Fresh Program; SY2022-2023 Weekly Commodity Bulletin; and more.

SY24 Warehouse Renewals and Delivery Rate Schedules Posted on Squaremeals

The latest USDA Foods warehouse renewals and approved delivery rate schedules are available for all FDP regions. Click on the headline for more information. The USDA Foods NSLP warehouse renewal agreements and delivery rate/private storage fee schedules for School Year 2023-2024 are posted in www.squaremeals.org. To access, [please click on this link](#). The information can be found under the Warehouse Information section for each FDP region (below the Regional Map). The rate schedules include the Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment. Click the headline for more information.



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER
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Texas Department of Agriculture | P.O. Box 12847, Austin, TX 78711

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