

# QUICK REFERENCE FOR CONTRACTING ENTITIES

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH  
AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS





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# HOW TO USE THIS REFERENCE



This reference provides an overview of how to participate in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (“the programs”) as a **contracting entity** (CE) in Texas. This is not a comprehensive guide; CEs must follow all regulations, program rules, policies, and guidance. For additional information, contact the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA):



Calling (877) TEX MEAL (839-6325)



Emailing [SquareMeals@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:SquareMeals@TexasAgriculture.gov)



Visiting TDA’s website [SquareMeals.org](https://www.squaremeals.org)

**Contracting Entity** –an eligible organization that signs a contract (referred to as the permanent agreement) with the TDA that outlines an operator’s responsibilities.





# WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH AND SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS?



## NSLP NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federal assisted meal program that provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to more than 30 million children each school day. The program was established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, signed into law by President Harry Truman in 1946 to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children through the provision of nutritious meals, educate children on the relationship between proper eating and good health, and provide learning experiences that will improve and promote children's nutritional habits.

Both the NSLP and SBP ("the programs") are administered by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) through agreements with contracting entities (CEs). Participating CEs receive federal reimbursement for each qualified breakfast, lunch, or snack they serve to eligible participants.

## SBP SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federal assisted meal program operating in public and non-profit private schools and residential child care institutions. The SBP started in 1966 as a pilot project and was made a permanent entitlement program by Congress in 1975 to provide wholesome breakfasts each school day morning to improve the health and nutritional well-being of students.



SBP  
SCHOOL  
BREAKFAST  
PROGRAM



NSLP  
NATIONAL  
SCHOOL  
LUNCH  
PROGRAM







Children in households with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level or those receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits qualify for free meals. Those with family incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line qualify for reduced-price meals.

Individual children may qualify if the child in the household is a foster child under the legal responsibility of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or a court. Individual children may also qualify if the child is a student enrolled in Head Start, is homeless or a runaway, or is a member of a migrant family.

If a household does not qualify at the beginning of a school year, any change in employment status or participation in one of the programs listed above may cause all children or some children in the household to be eligible for free or reduced-price meals. If that occurs, a household may submit a new application based on the change of circumstances.

## WHO DO THE PROGRAMS SERVE?

The programs provide supplemental reimbursement for nutritious meals or snacks served to eligible children at public, charter, and nonprofit private schools as well as **residential child care** institutions.

Low-income children may qualify for the programs if household income is within the Federal Income Eligibility Guidelines, which are based on federal poverty guidelines.

**Residential child care** - The care, custody, supervision, assessment, training, education, or treatment of an unrelated child or children up to the age of 18 years for 24 hours a day that occurs in a place other than the child's own home. Residential child care also includes child-placing agencies.



**Did you know?** Schools participating in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program are eligible to apply for the **Seamless Summer Option**.

Seamless Summer operates under NSLP requirements, making it easier for schools to feed children during the traditional summer vacation periods and, for year-round schools, long school vacation periods.

Once approved by TDA, the school serves meals free of charge to children, including teenagers through age 18, under the school meal program rules.

Meals are reimbursed at the free rates for school lunches, school breakfasts, and afterschool snacks.





# APPLYING TO BECOME A CONTRACTING ENTITY



All public, charter and nonprofit private schools, as well as residential child care institutions, can participate in either the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Program (“the programs”). Each organization must annually complete a program application to become or remain a contracting entity (CE) and inform **households** by letter describing the program and providing contact information, providing program applications prior to or during the first week of school, disseminating information about the program through the media, and developing a system of communication that simultaneously prevents overt identification of participants.

To apply for program participation, organizations should contact the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) or their region’s **education service center (ESC)** for more information.

**Household** - A household is defined as a group of related or unrelated individuals who are not residents of an institution or boarding house but who are living as one economic unit. This means they generally reside in the same house and share expenses such as rent, utilities and food.

**Education service centers (ESCs)** - Regionally based service centers that provide the NSLP organizations with training and technical assistance. TDA maintains a contract with ESCs to provide these support services at no cost to the NSLP organizations. *See the resources section at the end of this reference for more information about how to find an ESC.*



## HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN ORGANIZATION IS ELIGIBLE

### Your Organization may be eligible for the programs if:

- Your organization administers one or more public or charter schools and has been issued a 6 digit county/district number by the Texas Education Agency.
- Your nonprofit organization administers one or more private schools of high school grade or under, recognized as part of the educational system in Texas.
- Your public or private nonprofit administers one or more residential child care institutions, which operate principally for the care of children. If private your organization must be licensed to provide residential child care services.

### You are not eligible if your organization operates:

- Residential summer camps (may be eligible to participate in the Summer Food Service Program).
- Job Corps Centers funded by the Department of Labor.
- Private foster homes.





To determine organization eligibility, go to [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the *Getting Started with SNP* tab.

Complete the pre-eligibility form and submit to the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). The organization will receive an email from TDA in 3-5 business days with information regarding the next steps for becoming a NSLP operator.

#### The email will include the following:

- FND-101 Certification of Authority of External Users — Organization administrators must complete this form to gain access to the Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (**TX-UNPS**). Administrators use the web-based system to complete the program application.
- Details on the training that must be completed before an application is approved.

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



## HOW TO APPLY

Organizations that wish to participate in either program must submit an application in the Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (**TX-UNPS**) and receive Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) approval before they can participate in the program. They will also be required to submit supporting documentation to TDA using one of the three methods below:



Upload the documentation in TX-UNPS



Fax to (888) 223-8645



Email to [NSLP-SBP.BOps@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:NSLP-SBP.BOps@TexasAgriculture.gov)

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.

For more information on program deadlines, visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the Resources tab. Once there, download the “Program Year Calendar.”





## WHAT'S NEXT?

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) will review the organization's submitted application along with required documentation. The organization's status will then be updated in the Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (TX-UNPS) with one of the following designations:

- **Approval** - The organization's application has been recommended for approval and will receive an approval through TX-UNPS.
- **Returned** - The organization's application has been reviewed but is either incomplete or incorrect.
- **Submitted** - The organization's 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 self-withdraw its application. To request a withdrawal, an email should be sent to **[NSLP-SBP.BOps@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:NSLP-SBP.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.

## ACTIONS AFTER APPROVAL/ APPLICATION MAINTENANCE

Contracting entities (CEs) must ensure any operational changes made affecting operation are reported to the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) timely and any needed updates are made in the Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (TX-UNPS).

Once a CE is initially approved to participate in a program, they are required to submit a renewal application every year. Renewal applications are submitted via TX-UNPS and are due by July 1st annually.

CEs are encouraged to reach out to their regional Education Service Center (ESC) for training and technical assistance.



APPROVED





# OPERATING AS A NSLP AND/OR SBP CONTRACTING ENTITY



## SERVING MEALS/SNACKS

The National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs play a critical role in the healthy development and long-term health and educational outcomes for low-income children. Meals served as part of either program must meet federal nutrition standards to qualify for reimbursement. Contracting entities plan their menus to meet these nutritional standards.

The Texas Department of Agriculture issues guidelines to schools, which then create a menu based on those guidelines.



## NSLP NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

NSLP requires each meal to include: fruits and vegetables, grains, meat and meat alternates, and milk. Meal pattern requirements at-a-glance are available at [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) on the *Resources* tab.

For additional information, contact the nearest **Education Service Center (ESC)**.

## SBP SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

SBP requires each meal to include: fruits or vegetables, grains or meat and meat alternates, and milk. Meal pattern requirements at-a-glance are available at [SquareMeals.org/SBP](https://SquareMeals.org/SBP) on the *Resources* tab. For additional information, contact the nearest **Education Service Center (ESC)**.

**Both programs** also have specific nutritional guidelines around sodium, saturated and trans fats, and calorie requirements Center (ESC).

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



## MEAL SERVICE OPTIONS

A contracting entity (CE) may procure a food service contractor to support the CE in its food service operation. However, in all cases and with all contracts, **the CE is still responsible for ensuring that the program is operated effectively and in compliance with all applicable regulations.**

**There are three types of food service contracts:**

- **Consultant** - A consultant may be procured to **temporarily** provide support to a CE in areas where the CE lacks the necessary resources, skills, and/or abilities. Through the services of the consultant, the CE is able to gain the necessary resources, skills, and/or abilities to operate an effective and compliant program.

A consultant **can** assist a CE's staff to develop strategies or skills to operate a successful and effective program.

A consultant **cannot** be procured to operate or manage the program. A consultant contract also **cannot** result in the purchase of duplicative services. If the CE has already procured the same services through another contract, the costs of the duplicative services are an unallowable cost to the nonprofit school food service account.

- **Food Service Management Company (FSMC)** - An FSMC is a commercial enterprise or nonprofit organization that may be procured to assist the CE in managing and operating the program, i.e., to operate the program on behalf of the CE.
- **Vended Meal** - A contractor or merchandiser may be procured to provide the CE with complete meals, meal components, raw materials, and information necessary for the CE to produce food production records for the meal service.

For more information about these types of contracts and the rules and regulations involved, go to [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the NSLP Administration & Forms tab or [SquareMeals.org/SBP](https://SquareMeals.org/SBP) and click on the SBP Administration & Forms tab to locate the Administrator's Reference Manual.

## USDA FOODS

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) requires the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide a minimum level of **USDA Foods** to each state for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This level of USDA Foods support is referred to as the state's entitlement.

Each state's entitlement for the NSLP is separated into two food groups: Group A and Group B. Group A foods are surplus foods that are generally available seasonally. Group A foods include perishable foods such as fruits, vegetables, poultry, fish and meat. Group B foods are generally include dairy products, cereals, grains, peanut products, and vegetable oil products. Additionally, bonus USDA Foods are donated to schools periodically, but only as they become available through agricultural surpluses.

Overall USDA Foods entitlements by state are determined based on the estimated number of lunches served between July 1 and June 30 of each year in schools participating in the NSLP. The Texas Department of Agriculture uses a "60/40" formula to then allocate entitlement to CEs. The formula is based 60% on the number of persons in a county who have incomes at or below the official poverty line, and 40% on the number of unemployed persons.

**USDA Foods** - Foods that the federal government has the legal authority to purchase and distribute in order to support farm prices.





## FILING A CLAIM

In order to be reimbursed for meals served under a program, a contracting entity (CE) must file a claim in the Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (TX-UNPS) each month meals are served.

Both the application packet and site application must be in an approved status and correct information entered for each site in TX-UNPS in order to file a claim.

Claims cannot be filed until after the last meal of the month is served. The deadline to submit a claim is 60 calendar days from the end of the claim month. The claim will reflect an 'accepted' status if it is submitted timely and has passed all edit checks. If the claim status is pending, the claim has not yet been submitted.

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) recommends filing your claim as soon after the end of the month as possible in case of any issues occur preventing the claim from being submitted.

If you cannot click on the month you need to claim or a site is not listed or in a 'not eligible' status, please verify the site application(s) is approved and/or has the month listed as a month of operation. Errors received when entering the site's claim data, such as number of operating days and meals served, must be reconciled in the site application. Any revisions needed to the site application must be submitted and approved before the site claim can be entered.

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

Claims questions can be directed to the claim hotline at 800-264-5732 or [BCT.Bops@Texasagriculture.gov](mailto:BCT.Bops@Texasagriculture.gov).



### CES HAVE OPTIONS WHEN ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAMS TO STREAMLINE FILING CLAIMS:

**Individual Eligibility** – Using household eligibility guidelines, as outlined in the “Who is Served in the Programs?” section earlier in this document, CEs track each individual student’s meals and are reimbursed accordingly. This is the most used manner of administering a program.

**Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)** – A non-pricing meal service option in low-income areas. CEP allows schools and districts where 40 percent or more students are eligible for the NSLP to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Instead, schools that adopt CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on the percentage of students categorically eligible for free meals based on their participation in other specific means-tested programs, such as the SNAP and TANF.

**Provision 2** – Requires that the school serve meals to participating children at no charge but reduces application burdens to once every four years and simplifies meal counting and claiming procedures by allowing a school to receive meal reimbursement based on claiming percentages. Additional four-year extensions to Provision 2 are possible when certain conditions are met.

Please keep direct deposit information up-to-date in TX-UNPS. Public and charters school must also update their direct deposit information with the Texas Education Agency (TEA).



## APPLYING FOR A WAIVER

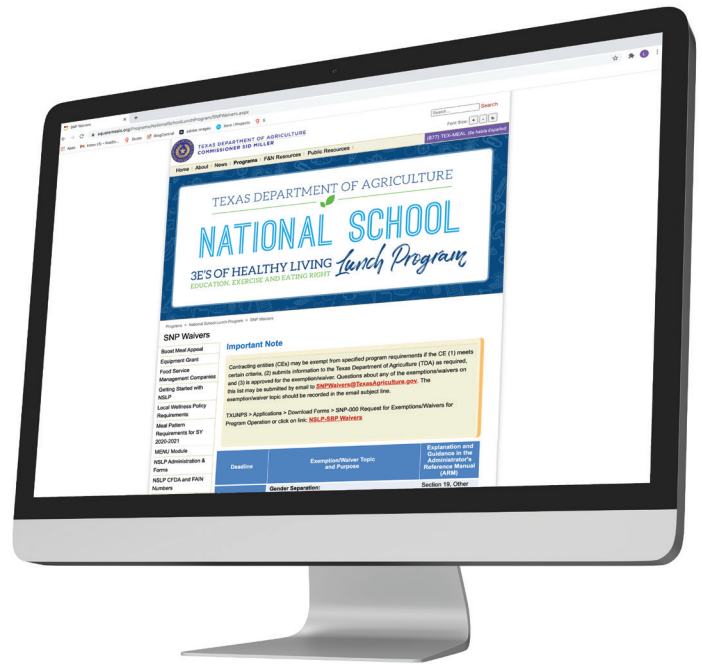
Both programs include specific **waivers** that exempt contracting entities (CEs) from a variety of specified state and federal program requirements.

To determine eligibility, a CE must:

- 1.) Meet certain criteria,
- 2.) Submit information to the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) as required, and
- 3.) Be approved for the exemption/waiver.

To see a list of available waivers, visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://squaremeals.org/NSLP) and click on the **SNPWaivers** tab.

Questions about any of the exemptions/waivers listed may be submitted by email to [SNPWaivers@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:SNPWaivers@TexasAgriculture.gov). The exemption/waiver topic should be recorded in the email subject line.



**Waivers** - Exemptions from program requirements that may be approved under certain conditions, such as when approval of a waiver would result in a more effective and efficient administration of a program or during an emergency that prevents normal operation of a program.





## GETTING REVIEWED

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) conducts compliance reviews to promote integrity and compliance for contracting entities (CEs) operating the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs (“the programs”).

**TDA conducts the following three reviews for CEs operating the programs:**

- Administrative Review (AR)
- Procurement Review (PR)
- Administrative Financial Review (AFR)

For new CEs, TDA conducts at least one of the three reviews within the first or second year of operation.

## PREPARING FOR A REVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires TDA to conduct an AR, PR, and/or AFR on every contracting entity (CE) operating one of the programs. These reviews are conducted at least once during a four-year review cycle. CEs contracting with a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) are reviewed more frequently — every three years.

TDA may also conduct compliance reviews in cases such as complaints are received, or noncompliance is found in other reviews.

## KEEPING UP WITH KEY PROGRAM CHANGES

All current program information is maintained on the Texas Department of Agriculture’s (TDA’s) website **[SquareMeals.org](https://www.squaremeals.org)**.

In addition, TDA sends a monthly e-newsletter, *NSLP Biweekly*, to all NSLP organizations. The *NSLP Newsletter* contains critical updates from TDA regarding policy changes, clarifications, resources, and trainings. **In order 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.**

## REVIEW

**The following information provides an overview of what a CE can expect during each type of review.**



### ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (AR)

The AR is the most comprehensive compliance review process and includes off-site and on-site evaluations.

The AR is divided into three parts. During the off-site portion, the AR Specialist gathers information and documents from the CE. The off-site process begins 8-12 weeks prior to the date of the on-site review.

During the second portion of the review, the on-site review, the AR Specialist is either physically or virtually on-site at the CE to gather information and observe operations.

The post-review process allows the CE to respond to corrective action resulting from the AR. For CEs without any findings, the No Findings Certificate and letter are sent to the CE.



## PROGRAM AREAS INCLUDED IN THE AR



### AR - Critical Areas Of Review

**Performance Standard One** – Each student was provided the proper meal benefits and that meals were properly counted and claimed for reimbursement.

**Performance Standard Two** – Meals served to students were prepared, offered, and served according to the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements for the appropriate age/grade groups.

### AR - General Areas of Review

The AR also includes an assessment of a CE's compliance with program regulations such as those related to civil rights, on-site monitoring, Local Wellness Policy, and food safety.

### AR - Resource Management

The Resource Management portion of the AR assesses the CE's oversight of areas such as revenue from non-program foods and indirect costs. CEs are required to complete a *Resource Management Summary* and submit it at least four (4) weeks prior to the on-site review.

### AR - Other Federal Programs (Critical and General Areas)

The AR will also review any additional federal school nutrition programs a CE participates in such as the Afterschool Snack Program or Seamless Summer Option.



## PROCUREMENT REVIEW

The PR reviews how the CE manages any purchases eligible for reimbursements from a federal nutrition program. In addition to reviewing purchasing contracts, cooperative purchasing activities and Buy American compliance, the PR analyzes the CE's written processes for procurement.

Unless indicated otherwise, PRs will be conducted off-site as a desk review.



## ADMINISTRATIVE FINANCIAL REVIEW

The AFR is a comprehensive review of the CE's financial management system. The review assesses the CE's maintenance of a nonprofit operation with program integrity, the tracking of income and costs, and other financial areas specific to the programs. Also, a successful AFR will indicate the CE has its written financial procedures, policies, and process in a written form easily accessible by staff.



# 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 administrators, state employees, and 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 is based on whether the CE has a User Access Manager (UAM) assigned. If the entity does not have a UAM assigned, then a Certification of Authority for External Users (FND-101) form is submitted to TDA for processing prior to completion of the application. To determine if your entity has a UAM, please refer to the list at [SquareMeals.org/UAM](https://squaremeals.org/UAM). TX-UNPS is located at <https://txunps1.TexasAgriculture.gov>

### How to Navigate

Program 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 their account will be deactivated. If a user's account is deactivated, the UAM will need to establish the user account again or a new FND-101 form must be submitted to TDA to request access.



### Password Reset

Users may utilize the "Forgot Your Password" feature as needed. The feature can be found on the homepage of the Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (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](mailto: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 regionally based service centers that provide Contracting Entities (CEs) training and technical assistance. The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) maintains a contract with ESCs to provide these support services at no cost to the NSLP CEs.

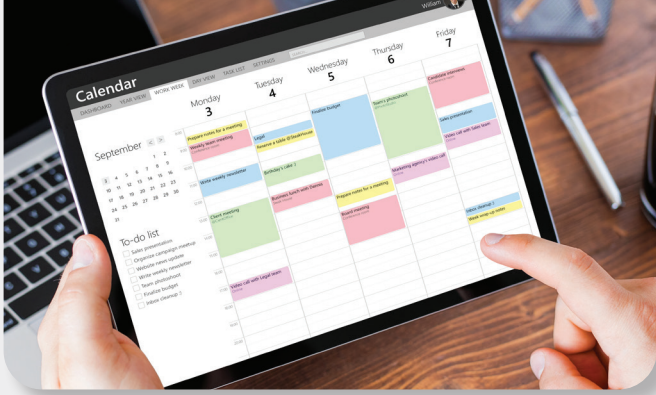
### ESC Services

The following are just a few examples of topics on which ESCs can provide training and technical assistance to a program CE:

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

### Contacting the Nearest ESC

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](https://squaremeals.org). Go to [SquareMeals.org/About](https://squaremeals.org/About) and click on the *Education Service Centers* tab. Follow the directions to find the a county's ESC and how to contact them.



## PROGRAM YEAR CALENDAR

The **Program Year Calendar** provides key dates and reminders for CEs related to school nutrition program operation for each month, including action items and due dates.

Visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the Resources tab. Once there, download the "Program Year Calendar."



## NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH WEEK

President John F. Kennedy created National School Lunch Week (NSLW) in 1962 to promote the importance of a healthy school lunch in a child's life and the impact it has inside and outside of the classroom. During this annual weeklong celebration in October, National School Lunch Program contracting entities and students across Texas celebrate in their cafeterias, schools and districts with special menus, events, student activities and more. To see this year's theme and available resources, visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the *National School Lunch Week* tab.

## SCHOOL BREAKFAST WEEK

School Breakfast Week was launched in 1989 to raise awareness about the availability of the School Breakfast Program (SBP) to all children. During this annual weeklong celebration in March, SBP contracting entities and students across Texas celebrate in their cafeterias, schools and districts with special menus, events, student activities and more. To see this year's theme and available resources, visit [SquareMeals.org/SBP](https://SquareMeals.org/SBP) and click on the *School Breakfast Week* tab.

## SCHOOL LUNCH HERO DAY

School Lunch Hero Day a special day of celebration to recognize school nutrition professionals and the difference they make every day! Between preparing healthy meals for Texas students, adhering to strict nutrition standards, navigating student food allergies, and offering service with a smile, school nutrition professionals are true heroes. School Lunch Hero Day, which is held in May each year, provides the perfect opportunity to recognize the hardworking professionals in your school cafeterias. For more information, visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the *School Lunch Hero Day* tab.

## MEAL APPEAL

Meal Appeal resources give menu planners the tools and ideas to create healthy meals that look appealing, taste great, and comply with federal requirements. This resource provides tools to move ahead of the curve and offer a variety of foods as well as introduce new foods that children are sure to enjoy. For more information, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has collected best practices and planning items at [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) under the *Resources* tab!

## TEXAS FARM FRESH INITIATIVE

TDA's Texas Farm Fresh initiative connects Texans of all ages with locally grown food and agricultural education. Local Farm Fresh initiatives also benefit Texas farmers and ranchers by connecting child care and adult care centers with local producers. Texas child care centers can access the Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA's) support and resources needed to develop farm-to-child care activities, including the Farm Fresh Network, local purchasing information, and sample menus. Explore the possibilities at [SquareMeals.org/TexasFarmFresh](https://SquareMeals.org/TexasFarmFresh) appropriate party.





## POLICY GUIDANCE

Rules and regulations related to serving as a program contracting entity (CE) in Texas are documented in manuals maintained by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) referred to as “handbooks.” Access the handbooks by going to [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and clicking on the *NSLP Administration & Forms* tab or [SquareMeals.org/SBP](https://SquareMeals.org/SBP) and clicking on the *SBP Administration & Forms* tab.

## MENU MODULE

MENU Module is a web-based menu planning software offered at no cost to contracting entities (CEs) participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs in Texas. It helps CEs in three areas:

- **Saving Time** - Build menu cycles using preloaded ingredients and recipes. Track meal pattern compliance as menu changes are made.
- **Saving Money** - Use forecasting tools to improve projected counts and reduce leftovers. Calculate cost per serving to stay within budget.
- **Streamline Administrative Review Process** - Automate documents needed for your administrative review including production forms, recipe reports, nutrient analyses, and professional standards documentation.

The software also comes with *School Café*, a web-based mobile app where parents and students can rate menu items, view allergen and nutrition information, and much more!

For more information, visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the *MENU Module* tab!

## TEXAS ELMS

The Texas ELMS software system, formerly known as DCDV (Direct Certification/Direct Verification), is available to assist contracting entities (CEs) in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs. Texas ELMS is the Texas Eligibility List Management System and it streamlines the process of matching enrollment records with the students in households receiving assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or some types of Medicaid. These students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals based on their household’s participation in the programs. For more information, visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the *Texas ELMS* tab.





## TRAININGS

In addition to trainings offered by Education Service Centers (ESCs), National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program training can be obtained through:

### Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) Conferences

- Annual conferences held by TDA are offered at no charge to program contracting entities (CEs). The point of contact listed in the Texas Unified Nutrition Program System (TX-UNPS) application (the NSLP or SBP CE Administrator) will be emailed conference details.

### Online Trainings

- Online trainings are available on [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) under the *Training* tab.



## AVOIDING COMMON ERRORS

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) analyzes aggregate data related to common findings from the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs administrative reviews (ARs) and publishes this data so that program contracting entities (CEs) can apply lessons learned.

Please review TDA's *Detailed Results for Reviews with Findings* to implement processes to prevent these errors. Visit [SquareMeals.org/NSLP](https://SquareMeals.org/NSLP) and click on the *National School Lunch Program 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/About](https://SquareMeals.org/About) and click on the *Contact Food and Nutrition* tab to find the appropriate party.



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**Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;**



**Fax: (202) 690-7442; or**



**Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)**

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Food and Nutrition Division  
Nutrition Assistance Programs



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