

CACFP WORKGROUP MINUTES

01/15/2025

Paperwork Necessary for a Sponsor Operation vs. Site Operation

Discussed Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) expectations for the Contract Entities' (CE) role in overseeing the program and sites. Essentially, TDA expects CEs to:

- Maintain compliance at various sites.
- Keep accurate records: This includes diligently maintaining all program records (enrollment eligibility, meal counts, production records, etc.) to support the monthly claimed numbers.
- Facilitate monitoring: Ensure that on-site monitoring is conducted effectively. This includes providing access to records, technical assistance when needed, and training.
- Address non-compliance: If monitors identify issues at sponsored sites, they must address those non-compliance issues.

In short, CEs are TDA's representatives who are responsible for accurate record-keeping, effective monitoring, and ensuring the program's overall compliance at program sites.

TDA is actively reviewing and updating handbooks to ensure they don't impose unnecessary burdens on providers regarding the requirements for daycare homes versus childcare centers. The goal is to create one unified handbook with clear distinctions for different site types (childcare centers vs. daycare homes). TDA is also aware that meal production records need improvement to make them easier for sites to manage and emphasized that the necessary changes will take time.

Transition from At-Risk to Childcare

TDA discussed a summary of the requirements for adding a daycare to an existing site application, focusing on key actions and requirements:

- **Update Site Application:**
 - **Add Daycare Meals:** The application must be updated to include information about the daycare meals it will provide.
 - **Add Licensing Information:** Include the daycare licensing details, as it must be licensed by DFPS (Department of Family and Protective Services).
- **DFPS Comparison:** Once the application is submitted, the licensing information will be compared with DFPS records to ensure compliance (capacity, expiration dates, etc.)
- **Eligibility Requirements:** Besides the items mentioned below, the site application will be reviewed per normal application procedures to ensure the application is complete and correct.

- **NDL Check:** The site must pass the National Disqualified List (NDL) check, meaning no one associated with the site can be on the list.
- **Title 20 Eligibility (25% Rule):** At least 25% of the enrolled children or licensed capacity (whichever is lower) must be eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
- **Combining Programs:** If the site also offers "at-risk" programs, both at-risk and childcare can be included in the *same* site application.

In short, the site application must be updated to include the daycare and ensure it meets specific licensing, background check, and income eligibility requirements to be approved.

TDA would also like to remind the group that the maximum number of meals that can be claimed for a child under the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP): A child can receive a maximum of two meals and one snack per day under CACFP. While some centers offer "at-risk" meals, children receiving a full day of meals at a regular center (breakfast, snack, lunch) cannot also claim additional "at-risk" meals and snacks at the same location. This is a specific regulation, and the two populations - general center kids and "at-risk" kids - are considered separate for the purpose of meal claims.

Offsite Monitoring Waiver Discussion

A complex waiver form has been developed and will soon be accessible online via Square Meals. The form requires open-ended answers and a monitoring plan, which must be submitted alongside the form itself in a separate Word document. The process involves submission, review, and either approval or denial. The release is pending a Square Meals update which was delayed due to backend issues. Once the update is complete, the form will be posted. Announcements will be in the CACFP Policy handbook, the newsletter, and the forms page.

Implementation of CACFP requirements.

- Clarify Handbook Requirements: TDA addressed the group's concerns about the handbook, confirming that a significant overhaul is underway to improve clarity, especially regarding site documentation requirements. This update is a priority and it is hoped to produce visible results by the next quarterly meeting, with a partial release expected within a few months.
- Develop Targeted Training: TDA emphasized that Education Service Centers (ESCs) are contractually obligated to visit each program twice per year. These visits are opportunities for tailored training and addressing specific concerns, as each program may implement processes differently. Entities should proactively contact their ESCs to schedule these visits and discuss program-specific needs and questions. TDA has a monthly ESC collaborative meeting to discuss common issues and re-emphasize guidance, but specific issues are best addressed directly with the ESC. If an ESC hasn't visited within the first four months of the contract, it is highly encouraged that

TDA is notified so that TDA can ensure visits are happening and tailored support is provided. The visit feedback loop also informs broader training adjustments.

- **Streamline Review Tools:** This update focused on streamlining the review process for different types of entities (sponsors of unaffiliated sites, affiliated sites, and daycare homes) by tailoring the document request packages (DRP) and the Administrative Review (AR) Records checklist. Specifically, the changes for Program Year 25 (PY25) include:
 - Personalized DRPs: The initial engagement letter now includes DRPs that are tailored to the specific type of entity being reviewed (e.g., sponsor of unaffiliated sites).
 - Filtered AR Records Checklists: The AR Records checklist has been updated to filter and display only the documents applicable to the specific entity type (e.g., if reviewing a sponsor of unaffiliated sites, the checklist will only show documents relevant to them, excluding items pertaining to daycare homes or independent centers).
- The aim is to make the review process more efficient and less confusing by ensuring that reviewers only see the documentation relevant to their specific case.

Training Needs

- **CACFP At Risk:** TDA discussed available training programs, specifically the CACFP 101 class. TDA highlighted the importance of translating written materials into practical training. Over the past two years, TDA has broken down the original 3-hour CACFP 101 class into separate, more focused sessions covering key areas like applications, meal counting, eligibility, procurement, financials, and special diets. This training covers all the basics, but TDA is always open to suggestions on how to improve the content, especially considering the different needs of various centers and audiences. TDA encouraged the group to share what more TDA can offer and clarify the different audience needs.
- **MegaCon Discussion:** This year's MegaCon will be different due to procurement and facility constraints. It will be held at the AT&T Conference Center from May 21-23 and will be smaller than usual. Initially, the plan was to move all CACFP content to the National CACFP Association Conference, but concerns arose that not all relevant parties would attend. To address this, the content from the National Conference will be replicated at MegaCon. Registration for MegaCon may be limited. TDA seeks input on communication strategies and any other considerations to ensure attendees are aware that the same content is offered at both events, preventing disappointment from attending both.

Survey Discussion

One consistent finding was that many participants in our program, the CES, were unable to attend training sessions due to a lack of time. TDA requested further feedback on the survey to determine if there are any suggested specific times for training so TDA can adjust the training schedule accordingly.

FY 2025 Update - Monthly Community Calls Canceled

TDA explained the decision to retire the monthly community calls due to declining participation and the lack of interactive engagement. The call was initially established during COVID due to constant changes, but those have since leveled out. The decision to retire the call is based on its observed usage and the difference in ongoing changes compared to the school calls that continue to have high participation and high interaction. The information delivery will continue to be handled through newsletters, the website, and the handbook. TDA will also schedule calls as needed when there are significant updates to share. TDA seeks feedback from this group on any other alternative communication methods to ensure information remains accessible and that the community feels supported.

Open Discussion - Is TDA opting in by April 30th to receive funds for ECEs for local foods?

TDA discussed challenges with USDA funding rounds for ECEs for local foods. TDA is currently unable to access round two funding because round one funds haven't been fully spent. The first round had difficult and rushed parameters, some of which were later relaxed in round two. TDA is now focused on ensuring all allocated round one money is actually spent. TDA plans to involve this group in future discussions about future expenditure and funding strategies.