

CACFP Workgroup Member Information

Term: October 2025 - July 2027

- **Amy Peterson** is a Lead Regulatory Compliance Administrator with KinderCare Learning Companies. As a multi-state sponsor and on-site monitor, she has extensive knowledge of how policies and procedures directly impact day-to-day operations in centers. She hopes to improve her organization's relationship with other sponsors and explore ways to reduce and streamline paperwork requirements in centers.
- **Deneeka Brown** is an experienced early childhood leader and the Owner/Director of Kids Arena Academy in Houston, Texas. She is passionate about improving the quality of care and education through staff development, family engagement, and organizational culture. Deneeka also enjoys serving on state and community workgroups that strengthen collaboration and advocacy across the childcare field. As the founder of Thrive Together, she empowers childcare professionals to lead with purpose, balance, and growth.
- **Juan Salinas** is the Director of Child Nutrition at Alice ISD. He has operated CACFP for 5 years and loves what the program does for Texas's communities. With over 10 years of experience in K-12 Child Nutrition, working with management companies, charter schools, and both high and low-income districts, he brings a strong understanding of diverse program needs and a commitment to expanding the visibility and impact of the CACFP program. One area he hopes to improve is overall knowledge and enthusiasm towards the program.
- **June Bryant** is the Executive Director for Southwest Human Development Services. She has extensive experience in the child nutrition field, including serving as a Program Manager overseeing CACFP and SFSP operations for a military base childcare program. She also worked as a Senior CACFP Grant Specialist with the Texas Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Division, where she managed grant administration and ensured compliance. Today, she proudly continues to support providers and promote quality nutrition programs for children and families.
- **Karlandrea Bennett** is the Founder and Executive Director of FreshQue Foundation, a Dallas-based nonprofit founded in 2018. She has been operating as an at-risk sponsor ever since, working with various sites, including ISDs and centers throughout Texas, since the 2021-2022 program year. Her personal experience as an at-risk child gives her deep empathy and understanding of why the CACFP matters: *These aren't just meals, but opportunities to change lives.* She is dedicated to ensuring every child receives the nutritious meals they need to succeed. By participating in this workgroup, she aims to gain a deeper understanding of CACFP requirements, documentation procedures, and compliance standards, ensuring her operations run with accuracy. She is also eager to connect with experienced

providers who can share practical tips, real-world solutions, and best practices that aren't always found in the manuals.

- **Krystal Escobar** is the Grants and Compliance Supervisor for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Edinburg Rio Grande Valley. One of her strengths that can contribute to improving CACFP in Texas is attention to detail and focus on how information is presented. She believes that the way something is communicated can make a big difference in understanding, so she strives to clarify and provide examples when needed. Through participating in this workgroup, she hopes to build more confidence in managing the CACFP program. This grant plays a crucial role in ensuring Texan kids are fed and cared for in our afterschool program, and she wants to continue learning and improving in this area.
- **Maryon Wright** is the Child Hunger Program Manager at The East Texas Food Bank. She has operated the CACFP for four and a half years, and the East Texas Food Bank has been part of the program for approximately 14 years, since 2007. One of her key strengths is creating practical solutions to make the program more efficient and effective, while maintaining compliance at the forefront. She would really like to help strengthen communication and collaboration between TDA and CEs. She believes more reliable and open feedback can make it much easier for everyone to stay in compliance and feel supported along the way.
- **Meredith Rokas** is the Director of Purchasing Child Nutrition for East Central ISD in the San Antonio/Bexar County Area. She is a systemic thinker who has been in the world of education and its special programs for 30 years. She can offer a strategic perspective on how to implement a given program schoolwide through intentional nutritional enrichment, with the support of a superintendent, school board, and stakeholders. By participating in this workgroup, she hopes to create reasonable attendance practices for a CACFP-At Risk program that are run solely by a school district; create more clarity and transparent guidance where differences truly exist between a CACFP At-Risk school district-run program vs childcare/3rd party program; and explore more menu options that can be implemented with minimal waste, high participation, not overtasking staff members; and learn more about staffing options and patterns.
- **Pamela Alvarez** is the Director of Programs and Co-Founder of Valley Haven Inc. Emergency Children's Shelter. By participating in this workgroup, she would like to help improve any CACFP forms that would help providers with day-to-day operations. She understands the real-life challenges providers may face and, therefore, she is solution-focused and passionate about helping to find practical, workable solutions while keeping compliance and kids' nutrition and well-being at the forefront.
- **Ricardo A. Espinosa** is the Executive Director of the Professional Child Care Provider Association (PCCPA). He brings experience in both program administration and sponsor-level implementation across diverse communities in Texas. His strength is in translating complex CACFP policies into clear, actionable guidance for sites and providers, ensuring both compliance and practical application. This perspective

helps bridge the gap between policy intent and everyday operations, supporting consistency and program integrity statewide. He hopes to collaborate with TDA to enhance clarity around CACFP guidance so that all sponsors and contracting entities can operate with a shared understanding of approved standards. By working together to ensure that federal and state expectations are communicated consistently, he believes the CACFP program can strengthen alignment, improve efficiency, and support all participants in meeting TDA and USDA goals effectively.

- **Sarai Ferreira** is a Child Nutrition Specialist at the Education Service Center Region 11. She brings over nine years of experience in CACFP operations, administration, and program support, including six years working with a non-profit sponsor and three years with the Education Service Center. Her sociology background provides her with valuable insights into the needs of the children and families she serves. She is passionate about helping centers and schools operate effective and efficient programs. Through this workgroup, she hopes to strengthen her knowledge of statewide strategies and innovative approaches to CACFP implementation, thereby continuing to support in providing healthy, nutritious meals to Texas's most vulnerable populations.
- **Sharon Ray** is the President of NutriService, Inc. She has been a sponsor since 1987, working with home daycare providers, child and adult daycare centers, and at-risk sites. She has served on the boards of the Texas CACFP Sponsors Association and the National CACFP Sponsors Association, as well as various CACFP committees. This is her second time serving on this committee. Her primary strength is understanding operational challenges at the site level and reconciling them with managerial challenges at the administrative level. She hopes to bring focus to the appeals process for terminating a child care center and help sponsors and TDA work through the processes.
- **Stephanie Johnson** is the Development Coordinator for Community Action Corporation of South Texas (CACOST). She strongly believes in collaboration. With the same mission in mind, she hopes to work together to build stronger connections with one another and ease the process of meeting program standards. She hopes to work together to streamline expectations for smaller programs vs. larger programs.
- **Victor Salazar** is the President of the Texas CACFP Sponsor Association, operating CACFP for 15 years. His primary strength is bridging state policy and sponsor reality. As well as listening and advocating for other sponsors' voices, so that it can help shape how CACFP works in Texas. He hopes to work more closely with TDA to align expectations for administrative reviews, better understand TDA and USDA requirements for sponsors, and help shape more practical and targeted training.