CACFP Input Workgroup

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.
May 21, 2021
Meeting Notes

Welcome/Roll Call

Members: Blake Stanford, Dana Bigham, DeLynn Garza, Gylma Garza, Ricardo Espinosa, Sehr Qazi, Tiffiney Freeman, Victor Salazar

TDA Staff: Catherine Wright Steele, Gwendolyn McDade, David Dierksen, Kelli Wise, Helenka L. Ostrum, Beth Thorson, Christina Little-Manley, Jon Huss, Teresa Cornett, Brooke Smith

Agenda**

1. **Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) Updates**

    a. **Policy Updates:** TDA highlighted the latest guidance from USDA regarding the collection of race and ethnicity data in the CACFP. The new guidance states that visual observation and identification is no longer an allowable practice in obtaining race and ethnicity data from CACFP and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) participants. The preferred method is self-identification and self-reporting. USDA noted that this policy change will raise challenges and TDA is in communication with USDA regarding best practices for implementing this new guidance. TDA stated that CEs that face challenges in data collection due to this new policy should document their attempts to collect the data. One member noted that they provide an opportunity to disclose race/ethnicity data on enrollment forms including an "N/A" option that allows participants to decline to give an answer. (CACFP 11-2021, SFSP 07-2021, *Collection of Race and Ethnicity Data by Visual Observation and Identification – Policy Recession*, May 17, 2021)

    One member asked about the USDA nationwide waiver allowing family day homes to be treated as Tier 1 effective July 1 through June 2022. TDA noted that this is addressed in the soon to be released COVID-19 CACFP FAQs available on SquareMeals.org.

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b. Application Updates:

i. **CACFP Compensation Protocol (previously called CACFP Taxable Program Income Protocol):** The CACFP Compensation Protocol, previously called the CACFP Taxable Income Protocol, was renamed to clarify that the document includes information on overarching compensation policy and is not limited to salaries and wages. For example, compensation policy includes an organization's employee benefits. In this revised Protocol, you may notice that for this year, in some regions of the state, salaries decreased. This is based on federal data that TDA incorporates into this Protocol document for guidance. In response to a member question, TDA noted that if an organization has employees throughout the state, the compensation should be based on where that employee resides.

ii. **CACFP TX-UNPS Budget Detail:** As noted during a previous workgroup meeting, the CACFP Budget Detail in TX-UNPS has not been working correctly. The issue has been corrected and a message is posted on the TX-UNPS CACFP bulletin board page that you see when you log into TX-UNPS. TDA is advising all CEs to review their budget and, if changes are needed, submit a revised budget for review. Note that the budget must reflect current operations; if it does not, the budget must be updated and approved by TDA.

c. Training Updates: CACFP LIVE offerings will continue through Summer 2021 on the second Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. Look for topics including meal count and attendance, application renewal, and effective administration and operations of CACFP. Interested CEs should register on their local ESC website.

d. Website Updates: As discussed during previous Input Workgroup meetings, TDA made several enhancements to the SquareMeals.org website and COVID-19 related webpages based on feedback received from the COVID-19 Response Subcommittee. TDA sought additional feedback from the entire Workgroup membership including input on how members felt about those changes and whether there were any other changes that they would like to see. Members provided feedback that the webpages were more streamlined making it easier to find content. Members were also asked about how frequently they use SquareMeals.org. Replies ranged from once a day to once a week.

2. Member Suggested Topics

a. **TX-UNPS Budget Tool:** Addressed during Application Updates. See summary above.

b. **Impact of recent SY 2021/2022 waivers on CACFP:** TDA highlighted that Summer 2021 and School Year 2021/2022 FAQs were recently posted to SquareMeals.org. TDA announced that a Community Call was scheduled for Thursday, May 27th and asked members to provide feedback on specific topics TDA should address. Members were encouraged to attend the call. Updated CACFP FAQs have been posted to the website that reflect the latest batch of nationwide waivers released by USDA.

3. Subcommittee/Ad hoc Groups

a. **Procurement Guidance:** This subcommittee has focused on three primary items and hopes to wrap up discussions during their last meeting scheduled for late May. The first items being examined is to make sure that the CACFP handbooks align with Federal policy particularly relating to any federal flexibilities that may be available to smaller CEs and sites related to procurement requirements. The subcommittee is drafting a recommendation paper to raise the major purchase limit to $150,000 from $50,000. Finally, the group is developing a meaningful and easily implementable definition of what it means to aggregate costs.

b. **COVID-19 Response:** At its final meeting, the subcommittee reviewed the new waiver timelines and discussed what waivers were currently used by the CEs and what challenge they anticipated once the waivers expire. It was noted that across the state, sites are operating very differently. Some sites would not be operational without the non-congregate waiver, but others were back in person and not using that waiver. Subcommittee members emphasized that staff training would be necessary once waivers expire. They said new staff have only operated under COVID-19 conditions and returning staff would likely need a refresher on normal CACFP operations to unlearn some of the COVID-19 rules. TDA stated that the CACFP Live Trainings that have been highlighted earlier during this meeting, will be a great resource and encouraged members to attend, as many topics will be covered in that forum. Subcommittee members also identified a need for a CACFP at-risk training; specifically, a training that reviews required forms for schools and childcare centers, and how to complete or modify a site application.

TDA noted that it is working through the feedback from the subcommittee to see how we can better streamline training and provide better resources for all CACFP CEs. TDA stated that it will keep this as a critical topic for the Input Workgroup going forward and plans to continue these conversations at the group level, and not just leave it at a training subcommittee.

Training will be kept at the forefront and TDA welcomes feedback from members. Currently, TDA is preparing for our conference next year in May. Some of the statements made by this group have provided a foundation for ideas for the conference. There are major training needs for all CACFP CEs and all our programs, but especially for CACFP because there is so many to reach across the state. TDA emphasized that it greatly appreciates their detailed feedback because it helps TDA focus resources more effectively.

4. 2021/2021 CACFP Input Workgroup Wrap-Up

a. **Key Accomplishments:** TDA thanked the Input Workgroup members for their participation during this challenging year and noted the important and valuable input and feedback provided through this group. Each year, TDA summarizes key accomplishments to help track what happened and to allow the next group to pick up where the last group left off. TDA will finalize that document later in June to be posted on SquareMeals.org. TDA highlighted several of the accomplishments. Specifically, TDA, following through on input from the 2019/2020 Input Workgroup streamlined the document review process and shared that progress over the past year. Also, as COVID-19 has impacted operations across the state, this group's feedback has been impactful in several ways including helping TDA improve its communications. Specifically, the group's constructive feedback resulted in tangible improvements to SquareMeals.org. Finally, based on feedback from members, membership terms were increased from one-year to two-year terms to improved continuity.

b. **Input from the Group:** TDA requested feedback from current members on ideas for how to improve or make better use of our Input Workgroup meetings. One member stated how much they have learned through the group and noted the important connections they have made as a result. Specifically, the member noted that the subcommittees were a great mechanism to provide feedback and to have more in-depth, target conversations. Another member said that in addition to soliciting agenda topics from members, that it would be helpful to notify the members prior to the meeting if TDA was seeking input on specific topics. This would allow members to be more prepared. Members also agreed that the new video conference format has made us feel more connected as a group.

5. 2021/2022 CACFP Input Workgroup Applications

TDA noted that as we move from one to two-year terms, members who have completed their first year are welcome to continue with the second year. TDA stated that it will be reaching out to confirm with those members their intent to continue. For members who already served two years, if they reapplied, their applications would be evaluated along with the other applications to ensure broad representation in the group from across the state.

6. Closing Comments

TDA thanked Input Workgroup members for their participation in the meeting. For those members not returning for another year, TDA expressed its appreciation for their participation over the past year (or two). TDA encourage all members to continue to reach out with any feedback or input.

Next Meeting: TDB

**TDA requested suggested agenda topics from the Input Workgroup members on April 8 and 28, 2021.

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