QUICK REFERENCE
FOR
CONTRACTING ENTITIES
CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM
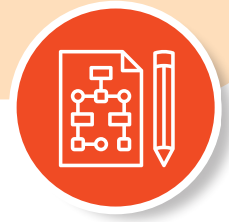
TABLE OF CONTENTS

HOW TO USE THIS REFERENCE

This reference provides an overview of how to participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) 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**

Visiting TDA's website **SquareMeals.org**

Contracting Entity – an eligible organization that signs a contract (referred to as the permanent agreement) with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) that outlines an operator's responsibilities.

WHAT IS THE CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federally funded nutrition program administered for Texas by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). The CACFP reimburses contracting entities (CEs) such as **sponsors** and **sites** for part of the cost associated with serving approved meals and snacks to children and adults in Texas.

The goal of the CACFP is to improve and maintain the health and nutrition of children and adults, promote development of good eating habits, and integrate nutritious food service with organized child and adult day care.

Sponsor - a public or private nonprofit or a private for-profit organization that enters into an agreement with TDA to assume responsibility for the administration of the CACFP at one or more participating sites.

Site – a local provider of care and meals that may be required to be under a sponsor. A site sponsored by an organization that enters into an agreement with TDA is referred to as a **sponsored site,** and a site that enters directly into its own agreement with TDA is referred to as an **independent site.**

WHO IS SERVED IN THE CACFP?

The CACFP provides supplemental reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks served to eligible children and adults at **adult day care centers**, **child care centers**, **day care homes**, **at-risk afterschool care centers**, **outside-school-hours care centers**, and **emergency shelters**.

Adult Day Care - public or private nonprofit or any for-profit adult day care sites that provide structured, comprehensive services to nonresidential adults. They enable elderly and disabled adults to remain in their own home or in the home of a family member, guardian, or other care giver, and avoid premature institutionalization. Population served: Functionally impaired adults ages 18 and over and/or adults ages 60 and older.

Child Care Centers - eligible public or private nonprofit or any for-profit child care centers, Head Start programs, and other institutions that are licensed or approved to provide nonresidential day care services.
Population served: Children 12 years of age and under; children of migrant workers through age 15; mentally/physically disabled persons at any age if the majority of enrollees are age 18 or under.

Day Care Home - a child care program for children, operated in a private home, and licensed to provide care. Operators must work with a CACFP sponsor who accepts all administrative and financial responsibility for operating the program in the homes they sponsor.
The sponsor maintains program records, submits monthly reimbursement claims, receives monthly meal reimbursements from TDA, and then passes them to the sponsored homes.
Population served: Children 12 years of age and under; children of migrant workers through age 15; mentally/physically disabled persons at any age if the majority of enrollees are age 18 or under.

At-Risk Afterschool Care - afterschool programs that provide organized, regularly scheduled education or enrichment activities and serve a meal or snack to children in low-income areas where at least 50 percent or more of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. At-Risk Afterschool Care centers provide a safe place for those who would not otherwise have child-care.
Population served: Children 18 years of age and under at the beginning of the current school year, or mentally/physically disabled persons of any age.

Outside School Hours Care Center - a public or private nonprofit center, or a for-profit center, that is licensed or approved to provide organized nonresidential child care services to children during hours outside of school.
Population served: Children 12 years of age and under; children of migrant workers through age 15; mentally/physically disabled persons at any age if the majority of enrollees are age 18 or under.

Emergency Shelter – a public or private nonprofit center that provides temporary shelter and food services to homeless children. Population served: Children 18 years of age and under.

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM	Adult Day Care	Child Care Center	Day Care Home	At-Risk Afterschool Care Center	Outside-School-Hours Care Center	Emergency Shelter
Who is served?	Adults	Children				
TX-UNPS Classification	Child Care Center		Day Care Home	Child Care Center		
Can be an independent site	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Can be sponsored site	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Formal enrollment requirement	✓	✓	✓	✗ Roster, attendance sheet, etc.		
Income eligibility requirement[1]	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Geographic eligibility[2]	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Has its own hanbook	✓	✓	✓	✓	Discussed in the Child Care Center an At-Risk Handbooks	

[1]participant/family income collected to determine specific meal reimbursement rate;
[2]must be located in particular geographic area

APPLYING TO BECOME A CACFP CONTRACTING ENTITY

Organizations interested in participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) must meet certain eligibility criteria to become a contracting entity (CE). Once the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) determines the organization is eligible to participate in the CACFP, the organization's administrators will sign a contract (referred to as the permanent agreement) with TDA that outlines their responsibilities as a CACFP CE.

CACFP organizations may be public or private nonprofit, or private for-profit, as well as an Indian tribe, military installation, government agency, or educational institution. To apply for CACFP participation, organizations should contact TDA or their region's **education service center (ESC)** for information on detailed eligibility requirements.

Education service centers (ESCs) are regionally based service centers that provide Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsors with 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 CACFP sponsors. *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 MAY BE REVIEWED FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

To initiate the review process, go to **SquareMeals.org/CACFP** and click on the *Get Started* tab. Complete the intake form and submit to TDA.

The organization will receive an email from TDA in 3-5 business days with information regarding the next steps for becoming a CACFP operator.

The email will include the following:

O Information and details on how to submit a Financial Viability Packet*

* Some exclusions to the assessment may apply based upon the organization and program participation type.

HOW TO APPLY

Following the intake process, organizations that wish to participate in the CACFP must submit an application in TX-UNPS and receive TDA approval of the **TX-UNPS** application before they can participate in CACFP. They will also be required to submit supporting documentation to TDA using one of the three methods below:

Upload the documentation in TX-UNPS

Email to CACFP.Bops@TexasAgriculture.gov

TDA will review submitted applications within 15 calendar days. If there are questions, errors, or missing information, TDA staff will contact the organization.

VISIT PRIOR TO APPROVAL

The Visit Prior to Approval (VPA) is conducted to assess an applicant's viability, capability, and accountability to operate the CACFP. TDA is required to conduct the VPA for each applicant and will create a report of the organization's ability to operate the program.

The VPA occurs at the end of the application process. Within 30 days after an application status is marked "Complete," TDA will contact the organization to schedule a VPA and request records to be made available for the visit; expect TDA to be on-site at least 4 hours while conducting the VPA. During the VPA, TDA will review records, observe site operations, and conduct interviews with management and staff to complete the following:

O Review and verification of the organization's application, management plan, budget, financial documentation, and other records

O Observe site operations, as applicable

O Determine date the organization is eligible to file its first claim

O Assess the adequacy of financial and staff resources

O Determine compliance with civil right requirements

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

CACFP.Bops@TexasAgriculture.gov

ACTIONS AFTER APPROVAL/ APPLICATION MAINTENANCE

Organizations must ensure any operational changes they make are reported to TDA and that the needed updates are made in their TX-UNPS application; operations should always match what has been submitted as true and correct to TDA. If administrators need to make changes/updates to the application after approval, they will need to submit an amendment in TX-UNPS. TDA will review amendments within 7 TDA business days.

Once a CE is initially approved to participate in the CACFP, they are required to submit a renewal application every year (TX-UNPS renewal applications open July 1 annually and must be submitted by September 30 if an organization wishes to continue to participate in CACFP.).

WHAT'S NEXT?

The organization will receive a copy of the initial VPA report, and the original report will be reviewed internally by TDA. Once the VPA report is reviewed by TDA, the application status will be updated in TX-UNPS with one of the following designations:

O Approval - The organization's application has been recommended for approval and will receive an approval through TX-UNPS.

O 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 **CACFP.Bops@texasagricutlure.gov**. The organization may reapply at a later date.

O Denial - If an organization's application is denied, TDA will notify the organization, in writing, of the specific reason for denial. The organization has the right to appeal the denial of its application. If an organization's application is denied, the organization may reapply at a later date.

ESC 90–DAY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE VISIT

The Education Service Center (ESC) will schedule a Technical Assistance visit within 90 days of approval for new CEs from the date the Permanent Agreement is signed by the TDA Food and Nutrition Division. See the resources section at the end of this reference for more information about how to find a ESC.

OPERATING AS CACFP CONTRACTING ENTITY

SERVING CACFP MEALS

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meals are the foundation for a healthy eating pattern for children and adults. Meals served as part of CACFP must meet federal nutrition standards and include vegetables and fruits, grains, meat and meat alternates, and milk.

Meal pattern requirements at-a-glance are available at **SquareMeals.org/CACFP** on the CACF*P Meal Patterns* tab. For additional information, contact the nearest **Education Service Center (ESC).**

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

FILING A CLAIM

To be reimbursed for meals served under the CACFP, a CE must file a claim in TX-UNPS each month meals are served.

To file a claim as a CE, the organization must have an application in approved status and **correct information entered for each site in TX-UNPS**. Claims cannot be filed until after the last meal of the month is served. After the last meal of the month is served, the organization has exactly 60 calendar days to submit the claim.

> Please keep direct deposit information up to date in TX-UNPS.

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

Check the CACFP updates in TX-UNPS on the welcome page for up-to-date information on claiming deadlines.

In case of emergency, paper claims are available on SquareMeals.org that can be scanned and emailed to **BCT.BOps@TexasAgriculture.gov**, faxed to (888) 232-2759, or mailed to TDA Food and Nutrition, P.O. Box 12847, Austin, TX 78711-2847. Claim deadlines still apply and must be postmarked by the deadline. Other questions can be directed to the claim hotline at (800) 264-5732.

KEEPING UP WITH KEY PROGRAM CHANGES

All current CACFP information is maintained on TDA's website Squarmeals.org.

In addition, TDA sends a monthly **e-newsletter**, *CACFP Insight*, to all CACFP sponsors. The CACFP Insight 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.

GETTING REVIEWED

All CACFP CEs receive an administrative review (AR), conducted by TDA staff, to provide technical assistance to improve program operations and to ensure CEs are compliant with all rules and regulations. Reviews will occur at least once every three years. During an AR, CEs can expect TDA staff to review all records CEs are required to maintain and observe meal service at select sites. Reviews are conducted to determine a CE's compliance with the program requirements as detailed in:
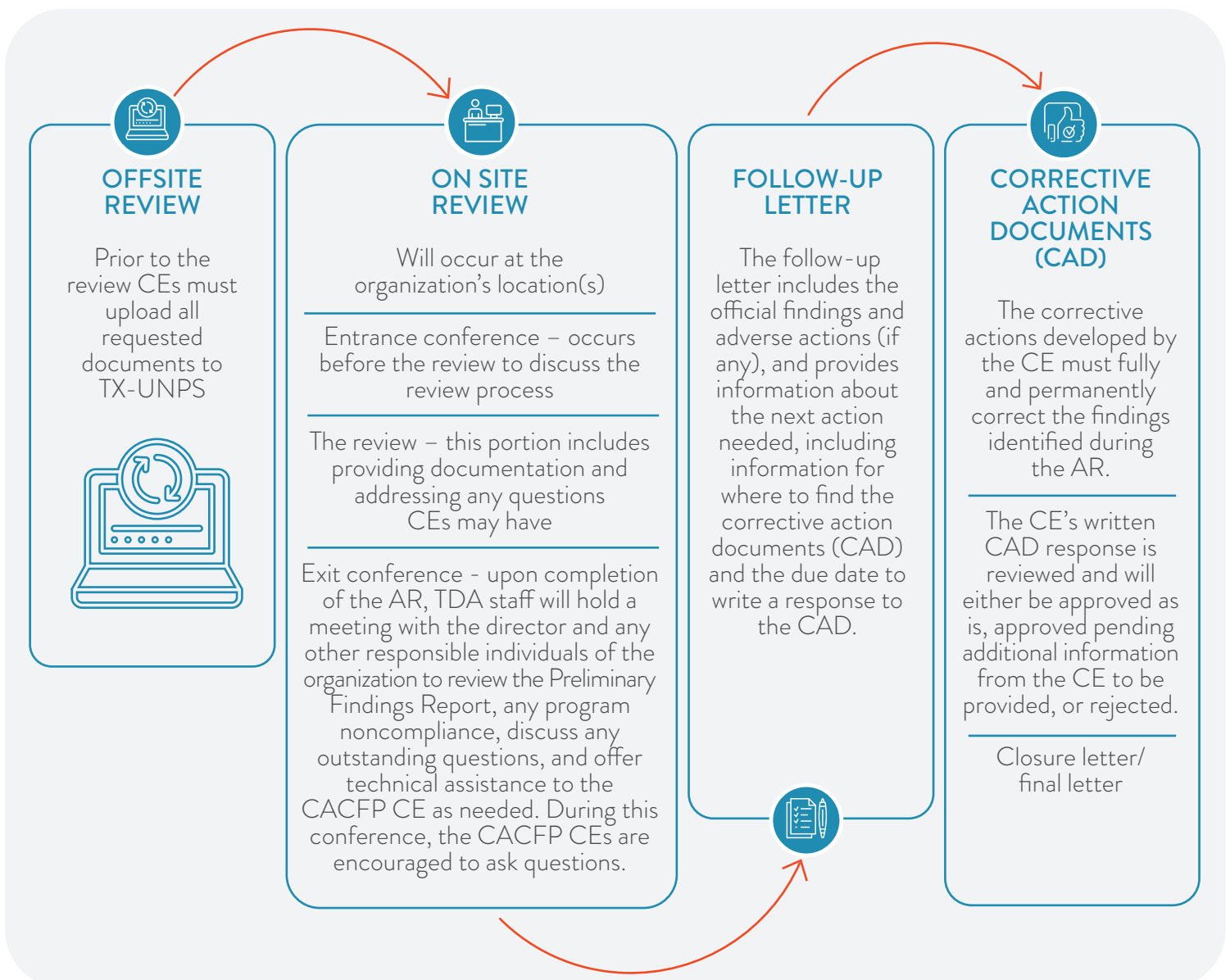
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service and TDA Food and Nutrition CACFP handbooks

- FNS Instruction 796-2, Financial Management – Child and Adult Care Food Program

- The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

- The CE's Permanent Agreement and amendments (when applicable)

Additionally, during a review, CE compliance with its application and management plan as submitted to TDA is also determined.

Review Notification - The CE will receive a review notification letter approximately one month prior to the review with a date for the review, information about who will conduct the review, and any documentation that is required to be submitted to TDA prior to the review.

OFFSITE REVIEW

Prior to the review CEs must upload all requested documents to TX-UNPS

ON SITE REVIEW

Will occur at the organization's location(s)

Entrance conference – occurs before the review to discuss the review process

The review – this portion includes providing documentation and addressing any questions CEs may have

Exit conference - upon completion of the AR, TDA staff will hold a meeting with the director and any other responsible individuals of the organization to review the Preliminary Findings Report, any program noncompliance, discuss any outstanding questions, and offer technical assistance to the CACFP CE as needed. During this conference, the CACFP CEs are encouraged to ask questions.

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

The follow-up letter includes the official findings and adverse actions (if any), and provides information about the next action needed, including information for where to find the corrective action documents (CAD) and the due date to write a response to the CAD.

CORRECTIVE ACTION DOCUMENTS (CAD)

The corrective actions developed by the CE must fully and permanently correct the findings identified during the AR.

The CE's written CAD response is reviewed and will either be approved as is, approved pending additional information from the CE to be provided, or rejected.

Closure letter/ final letter

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. TX-UNPS can be accessed through any preferred browser as long as the browser version is current and up to date.

User access is required to use TX-UNPS. This is requested using the FND-101 form sent prior to completion of the application. TX-UNPS is located at **Txunps1.TexasAgriculture.gov**.

How to Navigate

- Applications
- Claims
- Compliance (includes review information)

Password Reset

Users may utilize the "forgot password" feature as needed. The feature can be found on the homepage of **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 request a new password using the 'forgot password' feature of TX-UNPS, by calling (877) TEX MEAL (839-6325), or by emailing **SquareMeals@TexasAgriculture.gov**.

EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS

Education Service Centers (ESCs) are regionally based service centers that provide Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sponsors **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 CACFP sponsors.

ESC services

The following are just a few examples of topics on which ESCs can provide training and technical assistance to a CACFP 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.** Go to **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.

Important! Users must log in to TX-UNPS every 90 days or their account will be deactivated. If a user's account is deactivated, a new FND-101 form must be submitted to TDA to request access.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Rules and regulations related to serving as a CACFP sponsor in Texas are documented in manuals maintained by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) referred to as "handbooks." Access the handbooks on **SquareMeals.org/CACFP** under the *CACFP Policy & Handbook* tab.

BOOST MEAL APPEAL

Boost 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 site 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, TDA has collected best practices and planning items at **SquareMeals.org/BoostMealAppeal**!

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 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**.

TRAININGS

In addition to trainings offered by Education Service Centers (ESCs), CACFP training can be obtained through:

USDA Training

○ CORE Training provided by USDA. Visit the USDA Website for more information

TDA Conferences

○ Annual conferences held by TDA are offered at no charge to the CACFP sponsors. The point of contact listed in the TX-UNPS application (the CACFP CE Administrator) will be emailed conference details.

Online Trainings

○ Online trainings are available on **SquareMeals.org/FandNResources** under the *Training* tab.

TDA POINTS OF CONTACT

To contact TDA regarding questions about program applications, program operations, flexibilities/ waivers, or financial issues, visit **SquareMeals.org/About** and click on the *Contact Food and Nutrition* tab to find the appropriate party.

Avoiding Common Errors

TDA analyzes aggregate data related to common findings from the CACFP administrative reviews (ARs) and publishes this data so that the CACFP sponsors can apply lessons learned.

Please review TDA's assessment of common errors made by the CACFP sponsors to implement processes to prevent these errors. Go to **SquareMeals.org/FandNResources** and click on the *Program Integrity* tab to view "Avoiding the Pitfalls."