



June Partner Agency Newsletter

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Capacity Building Survey TA Calls

The Network Standards & Capacity Team will send out an annual, required Capacity Building Survey to our network of partners within the next few weeks. We will be hosting two separate opportunities for partners to attend a virtual Capacity Building Survey Technical Assistance meeting to learn more. We will take questions ahead of the meeting at the agencies inbox (agencies@centraltexasfoodbank.org).

We will discuss the intent of the upcoming survey and what we plan to do with the information. Please attend our 10:00am or 2:30pm session next Friday 6/30

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9476502534?pwd=OUFWbDZFc1RwdEE4cGNkd1FPaDZJdz09>

Meeting ID: [947 650 2534](#)

Passcode: 9Zb6h2

On The Horizon

The Network Service and Capacity team is excited to announce some exciting changes and events on the horizon here at works at CTFB. From policy improvements to new training sessions and networking events, we are eager to reveal what to expect moving forward.

Partner Agency Conference

After listening to your feedback, we are bringing back our Partner Agency Conference in August 2023! This networking event will be an opportunity not only to discuss strategies with other network partners but be a chance to learn new information about the state of hunger-relief, in an interactive and fun setting.

Confirmed Conference Date & Location

Friday August 11th

Norris Conference Center (2525 W Anderson Ln. #365, Austin, TX 78757)

Registration and Light Breakfast will be 7:30 AM- 8:00 AM

We will provide more details as we get closer to our gathering. Looking forward to connect with you all in-person soon!

Annual Site Visits

While the Network Service Standard and Capacity Team conducts site visits year-round, for many of our partner agencies, it's almost that time of the year for their annual site visit! This year and moving forward Relationship Managers will be reaching out to schedule site visits if possible during your pantry distribution time. This will allow us to see your operation on full display, share network best practices and discuss potential findings in real time.

As a reminder, the annual site monitor visit serves as an opportunity for CTFB to evaluate the practices of our partner agencies as it relates to intake, food safety, record retention, and other policy guidelines. These visits must be conducted in order to remain compliant with not only the CTFB's policies but also with the Texas Department of Agriculture and Feeding America guidelines. During our visit, we also take the opportunity to thank your dedicated volunteers and hear feedback from community members. We are excited to come out and see you all once again!

Service Insights Initiative: Important Updates

Central Texas Food Bank is excited to continue our Service Insights network-wide initiative to track individual neighbor data across programs in order to capture the reach of our network, identify gaps in need, and make strategic decisions about where and how we offer

services.

Three key components of the initiative include:

- Electronically collecting standardized client intake data across our network;
- Sharing client data across the network; and
- Maintaining client confidentiality.

There are two ways to participate in Service Insights:

- Use the Oasis Insight platform for intake
- Send individualized neighbor data to CTFB each month

For more information or to get started on your personalized plan to participate, please reach out to research@centraltexasfoodbank.org.

More to come from us soon!



Agency Dock Protocols

Friendly reminder that as you come to the agency dock to pick up your order or to do shop-for, please remember you must wear closed toe shoes for your safety. We also want to remind you that the dock can become busy at times and to efficiently get each agency in and out, please only show up to your appointment at your allotted time. If you are uncertain of your time, please call the agency hotline and we can help. Thank you!

Please Return CHEP Blue Pallets

The Food Bank is asking for Partner Agencies to return all CHEP Blue Pallets that you have received. Pallets can be brought back with CTFB drivers at regional drop offs or dropped off at the Food Bank.



Healthier Texas Summit

October 5-6, 2023 AT&T Hotel and Conference Center in Austin, Texas

It's Time Texas and The University of Texas System are hosting the seventh annual community and population health conference: The Healthier Texas Summit. With over 40

sessions available to attend, Texas' thought leaders and health champions will gather over the two days to share innovative ideas and effective practices that will empower action for systemic change. It's Time Texas is a nonprofit empowering Texans to live healthier lives and build healthier communities.

Content at the 2023 Healthier Texas Summit will focus on:

- Effective Health Communication
- Harnessing Data
- Creating Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Through Cross-sector Collaboration
- Advancing Quality Primary Care through Innovative Strategies

Register Today! Visit healthiertexassummit.org to learn more.

Important Reminders

Food Safety during the Summer

Each year, USDA TEFAP flour, grain, and pasta products must be refrigerated during the months of May through September.

Join our Facebook group

CTFB has a Facebook group for our partners! In this group, we post reminders, donations announcements, answer questions and so much more. The group is intended for our partner agencies to network with one another and have conversation on how to better serve our neighbors. Join [here](#) as well as answer all of the membership questions to be accepted.

Rural Summer Meal Service for Children

Summer is quickly approaching, and the CTFB Children's team is excited to help you serve more children this summer! TDA has approved a non-congregate, rural waiver that will allow you to serve children in creative way (grab and go, door to door delivery, drive-thru etc.) throughout the summer! If you are interested, please complete this brief survey: <https://centraltexasfoodbank.wufoo.com/forms/q5gaj2z1k37ku1/>

If you have any additional questions, please contact our Children's Program Manager via

email at bfleming@centraltexasfoodbank.org.

Thank you.

Spotlights



STAFF SPOTLIGHT



(Left to Right; Kara Hedlund, Valerie Guerra, Temmi Merlis, Ann Do, and Sophia Copeland. Photo Creds: Andrew Ingrassia, Internal Distribution Manager)

The Central Texas Food Bank has welcomed Temmi Merlis as the new Network Standards and Capacity Manager!

Temmi Merlis (She/Her) originally hails from Bergen County, New Jersey and is a Licensed Master Social Worker in Texas and New York. She has been at CTFB for under a month, but has a passion for combating hunger, creating community, and helping people feel seen, heard and valued. She joined the Food Bank because she strongly believes that food equity is part of social justice, and that everyone has the right to access nutritious food and other necessary resources. Temmi is interested in building connections, learning from and with partners and fomenting ongoing positive change as she grows in her new role. She is looking forward to meeting the partners and working hand in hand to make a

difference.

Kara Hedlund recently celebrated 7 years at CTFB this June! Born in England, raised in Copperas Cove, she went to high school in New Hampshire, but came back to Texas as quickly as possible. Before she made her way to food banking, her previous careers included At-Risk Youth employment programming at Goodwill, Environmental Compliance at TCEQ, and Property Management. She states "Our partner agency network, volunteers and my colleagues restore my faith in humanity daily. I am constantly inspired by the compassion and dedication of the people doing the "good work" with CTFB." Kara has held several roles at CTFB within our Programs team and led the team formally known as Agency Relations during the pandemic. She loves of all things nature, and cherishes time at home with 1 year old daughter Freyja and husband Keven - plus 3 rescued fur babies & one dragon.

Sophia Copeland was born and raised in San Antonio; graduated from Texas Tech University with Bachelor's in Natural Resource Management and a Master's Degree in Public Administration. She worked for the Texas House of Representatives as a policy staffer. She took her talents to CTFB in April 2022 to do more hands on work with those in her community. Her favorite part of her job is advocating for the pantries in her portfolio and finding solutions to problems they have been facing. She loves seeing each pantry's unique operation and learning about the history of their organization. On the NSC team, Sophia is known as the "policy person", with her background in policy work, she is adamant about ensuring partners are in compliance and partners are aware of CTFB, state, and federal program policies and procedures. She is excited for our upcoming Partner Agency Conference and look forward to connecting our pantries with more resources and solutions.

Valerie Guerra is a proud native Austinite who loves working for an organization that gives back to the neighborhoods and communities that provided for her and saw her grow. Valerie has been working for the CTFB for 5.5 years and has been with the Network Standards and Capacity team for 1.5 years. Prior to transitioning into the NSC team, she was a part of the Social Services department working directly with clients to help them apply for benefits. She states "As I took a deep dive into their lives, I realized how essential nutritious food is for individuals and families. Without it, everything in their life becomes a struggle; life becomes hard to manage." She enjoys creating and maintaining relationships with our partner agencies in order to provide nutritious food to our communities. Valerie states "I love talking and getting to know each of you and admire

the work you all do to keep fighting the fight against hunger.”

Ann Do moved to Austin from Columbus, Ohio in April 2022 (started the same day as Sophia!) to further her career in combating food insecurity. She previously worked at an agency that partnered with the Mid-Ohio Food Collective as well as an AmeriCorps VISTA at the Ohio Association of Food Banks. Her favorite part of her work has been building relationships with Partner Agencies and seeing them grow their capacity in nourishing their community. Food banking is such a unique field and she states that “every day you learn something new, that change is constant and we must adapt to those changes to serve others and thrive.” She enjoys seeing people with different stories and backgrounds come together to help their neighbors. Another part of Ann’s role on the team is to facilitate and create agency communications network wide. She is looking forward to onboarding new partners and creating new relationships in our service area.

Contact the Team

512.684.2503 | agencies@centraltexasfoodbank.org

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