

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE HANDBOOK

FOR A NON-CONGREGATE MAILED PROGRAM



Baylor University®
COLLABORATIVE ON HUNGER AND POVERTY

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HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

This resource guide is designed to help you decide whether a mailed non-congregate summer meal program is a good fit for your community, and if so, to help you with program set up and operation.

This guide can be used to help school districts, state agencies, and local organizations as they consider and plan for offering a mailed meal box, non-congregate summer food service. This is not a comprehensive guide, and all Contracting Entities (CEs) must follow all regulations, program rules, policies and guidance put forth by their state.

For additional information, please contact the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty.

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ABOUT THE BAYLOR COLLABORATIVE ON HUNGER AND POVERTY

The Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty

Founded in 2009, the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty uses a three-pronged approach that incorporates **Research**, **Policy**, and **Practice** to *cultivate scalable solutions to end hunger*. The Baylor Collaborative believes no one sector can end hunger alone, and multisectoral collaboration is crucial to realizing a world without hunger.

Through projects such as Hunger Free Community Coalitions, the Hunger Data Lab, the Hunger Outreach Programs Empowerment (HOPE) team's federal nutrition outreach, as well as the groundbreaking Meals-to-You demonstration project, the Collaborative's work has contributed to an increase in summer meal site participation and in the number of children receiving school breakfast in Texas. Additionally, the Collaborative has established a new summer meal intervention, modeled after Meals-to-You, for rural America that has recently been adopted by the U.S. Congress for nationwide implementation. The Collaborative's projects, developed through over fifteen years of **Practice** at the local, state, and national levels, has resulted in successful, scalable strategies that improve food security.

Cultivating scalable solutions to end hunger also requires training local, state, and national stakeholders on best practices for collective impact and ways to create and implement innovative, data-driven solutions. Toward that end, the Collaborative partners with Baylor's Truett Seminary Master's degree in Theology, Ecology, and Food Justice. Additionally, the Collaborative launched an Education and Training Center (ETC) to provide training and credentialing opportunities to help stakeholders ranging from local volunteers to corporate executives to innovate and advocate for new programs, policies, and solutions to end hunger.

While the Baylor Collaborative's field personnel work with individual leaders to identify localized issues and develop replicable solutions, its **Researchers** employ rigorous study design to assess program quality, and its Public Affairs and Strategic Partnerships teams translate this work into **Policy** that is effective. This approach bridges the gap between service providers and policymakers to merge localized solutions with verified best practices. By leveraging this collective impact model, the Baylor Collaborative brings all sectors to the table and makes unprecedented solutions possible.

Meals-to-You

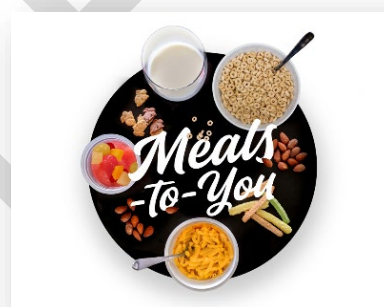
In 2023, the Baylor Collaborative completed its fifth and final year of the Meals-to-You project. Meals-to-You was a joint demonstration project with the United States Department of Agriculture and the Baylor Collaborative in which children in rural America without access to a traditional summer meal site received shelf-stable, nutritious food delivered to their homes during the summer break. Each eligible child's weekly meal box contained individual, shelf-stable meal

components for 5 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 5 snacks. The meal components met or exceeded all FNS Summer Food Service Program meal patterns and nutritional guidelines. The program also accommodated requested modifications due to food intolerances as well as religious and cultural preferences.

Over five years, this program served more than 2.5 million meals to nearly 31,000 children in school districts across Texas, Alaska, Utah, and New Mexico. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the program quickly scaled up to expand access, more than 270,000 children received nearly 40 million meals across 43 states and Puerto Rico between April and September 2020.

Evaluations by the Urban Institute have shown that the Meals-to-You program was as effective in reducing food insecurity over the summer months as the National School Lunch Program. The success of the Meals-to-You program contributed to new federal legislation in late 2022 that allows families in rural America now to have access to summer meals through home delivery programs like Meals-to-You and other convenient options.

The Baylor Collaborative looks forward to sharing the knowledge gained and lessons learned from five years of operating the Meals-to-You program as you begin operating your own mailed non-congregate meal box program during the summer months.



I. WHAT IS A MAILED MEAL BOX, NON-CONGREGATE SUMMER PROGRAM?

A. FILLING A GAP

A mailed meal box, non-congregate summer food program seeks to eliminate barriers, such as transportation and distance, rural households face in summer months when needing to access summer meals. Rather than requiring children to travel to a congregate meal site, or even to a grab-and-go location, the mailed meal box model delivers meals directly to eligible children's home addresses or PO Boxes during the summer break. Households with children who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals can enroll in a mailed meal box program and, if verified, can receive meal boxes mailed directly to their home or PO Box.

B. IS THIS PROGRAM RIGHT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

To determine whether a mailed meal box program is right for your community, consider the following questions:

1. Do you meet the federal and state guidelines for non-congregate eligibility?
2. Do households in your community need summer meals but face barriers accessing traditional congregate models?
3. Do you have staff availability to operate the program through the summer?
4. Do households in your community have the ability to receive packages through a mail or parcel carrier direct to home or to a post office box?

If you answered yes to these questions, a mailed meal non-congregate program may be a great fit for your community! The remainder of this guide can be used to learn more about how to prepare for and operate this type of program, and we provide suggested effective strategies to help you run a successful program from start to finish.

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