



The Better Living for Texans Program



BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — SNAP.

The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

The Situation



In Texas

- 33% of adults are obese
- 33% of youth are either overweight or obese
- Less than ½ of Texans meet physical activity recommendations
- Most Texans are not eating enough fruits and vegetables
- 16% of households have incomes that are at or below 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL)
- 1 in 6 Texas families experience food insecurity

Response



The BLT program began in the fall of 1994 as a cooperative endeavor among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).

Better Living for Texans Program

Better Living for Texans (BLT) is part of the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) – *SNAP: Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program*

As part of the FNS mission,

“We work with partners to provide food and nutrition education to people in need in a way that inspires public confidence and supports American agriculture.”

Source: 2020 SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance, page 5
Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program Education (SNAP-Ed)



**BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS**
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Reimbursable Grant (Contract)

- BLT is funded by Texas HHSC
- Texas HHSC reimburses 100% for all costs with a 10% match hour requirement on the part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Services
- The Time and Effort of participating County Extension Agents, County Support Staff, Teachers, and Volunteers is used to help meet the match hour requirement

Better Living for Texans Program

Vision

Creating opportunities, changing lives

Mission

We provide research and evidence-based nutrition, health and wellness knowledge to empower individuals, families, and communities to make positive changes for healthier lives

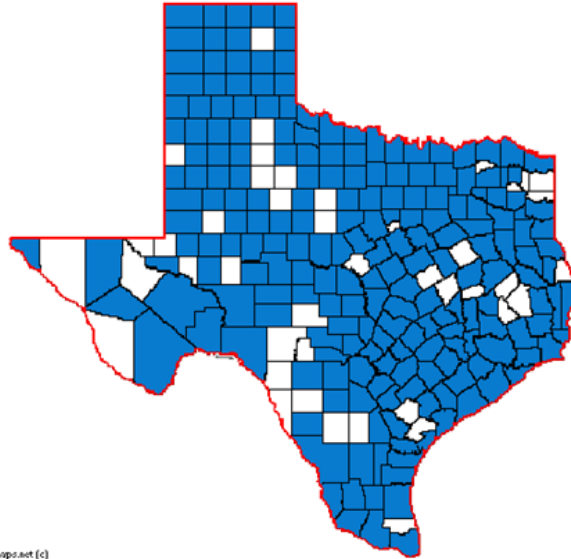
BLT website: <https://blt.tamu.edu/>



**BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS**
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Better Living for Texans Counties

BLT programs are offered in more than 210 counties across Texas.



Source: dlymops.net (c)



BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Determining County BLT Levels

- County BLT levels are based on the number of SNAP recipients reported by Texas HHSC and can be found at *Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Statistics* (<https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/records-statistics/data-statistics/supplemental-nutritional-assistance-program-snap-statistics>)
- BLT programming expectations and program funds are based on the county's BLT Level



BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Better Living for Texans Program

- Offers opportunities to help others live healthier lives
- Builds confidence in our participants to learn practical cooking and gardening skills
- Teaches the importance of being physically active
- Offers incentives that reinforce what is taught
- Creates support that encourages families and friendships



BLT works!

In 2019, BLT made a difference...

- More than 734,500 adults and youth educational contacts across the state
 - Educational programs and outreach through health fairs, newsletters, etc.
 - Participants in a series attended multiple sessions
- More than 423,100 individual direct and indirect educational contacts
- More than 22,900 youth and adults completed multi-session programs series focusing on nutrition, physical activity, and gardening



BLT works!



BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Results from 2019...

- Participants adopted healthy nutrition practices
 - Increased fruit and vegetable intake
 - Increased physical activity on more days of the week
 - Increased ability to plan and prepare healthy meals
 - Washed their fruits and vegetables before eating or preparing them
 - Used a shopping list and compared prices when shopping to cut food costs
- Participant comments:
 - “I am planning meals in advance more often and using shopping list to choose better foods.”
 - “I more conscientious of food choices that include portion sizes, food groups, and reading food labels.”
 - “I am trying to eat healthier. Storing and freezing foods properly to prevent food waste.”

Focus Areas for BLT

Target audiences

- SNAP-Ed eligible women and children remain the primary audience
- Other individuals/groups/audiences eligible are:
 - Those qualifying for SNAP benefits and other Federal assistance programs
 - Those living in communities with a significant low income population

BLT's Focus Areas for 2020 are:

1. Increase fruit and vegetable intake
2. Increase physical activity
3. Improving access to fruits and vegetables (gardening)
4. Food safety
5. Food resource management

Program Strategy

- BLT's primary target audiences are adults
- Emphasis on adults graduating from a program series
- Single education events (i.e. one-shot programs)
 - Are allowed for marketing the series programs or collecting 30-day follow-up surveys (Look on the FCH Agent website for single lessons that have the BLT logo)
- Youth programs are allowed and include single education events and program series



BETTER LIVING
FOR TEXANS
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Topics BLT Cannot Teach or Fund

- Education as it relates to the **treatment** of medical conditions
 - Diabetes
 - High cholesterol
 - High blood pressure
 - Mental health
- Obesity treatment
- Food safety for retail establishments (Food Protection Management)
- Life skills training
 - Debt management
 - English as a Second Language (ESL)

Implementing BLT

Participation Chart (see BLT ToolKit)

Program Delivery Methods

- Agents and educators implement programs with adults and youth
- Co-workers implement programs with adults and youth
- Volunteers participate as facilitators or educators



BLT Works with a Variety of Limited-Resource Audiences...

- SNAP recipients or those eligible to receive these benefits
- Individuals receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits
- Individuals living at public housing authorities
- Individuals receiving food from a food pantry or soup kitchen



BLT Works with a Variety of Limited-Resource Audiences... (continued)

- Schools where $\geq 50\%$ of students receive free/reduced meals (call school office for percentages or <http://www.publicschoolreview.com>)
- Individuals living in communities where at least 50% of the residents/population live at 185% of the federal poverty level or below (<http://www.squaremeals.org/Publications/IncomeEligibilityGuidelines.aspx>)



Other Possible Adult Audiences...

- Texas Work Force
 - Christian Women's Job Corps and Men's Job Corps
 - Migrant Workers
 - Grocery stores with high SNAP benefit usage (see BLT website or contact local food retailers for information)
 - Health and Human Services Commission
 - English as a Second Language Class
- If you do not know if the site meets the program requirement...
- Have the site coordinator review the [Site Certification Form](#) (see BLT [ToolKit](#)). If they meet the income level, have them fill it out and file it in your county office for auditing purposes.
 - Or complete the [Justification Form](#) (see BLT [ToolKit](#)). Keep it on file in the county office for auditing purposes.

Audiences not Eligible for BLT

- Individuals with incomes greater than 185% poverty
- Individuals who are incarcerated or in an institution
 - Jails/detention centers
 - Prisons
 - Nursing homes
 - Mental institutions
 - College students
- Individuals not responsible for planning and preparing their own meals.

BLT Curricula Series

Curricula/Interventions are research and evidence-based

Three focus areas with nutrition component:

Nutrition Focus

- *A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!* (adults)
- *Color Me Healthy for SNAP-Ed* (preschoolers and kindergarteners)
- *Choose Healthy* (middle age schoolers)
- *Get the Facts* (adults)
- *Carbohydrate Series* (adults – being developed)
- *Be Well, Live Well* (older adults)

Gardening Focus (with nutrition component)

- *Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!* (youth – developed for 3rd graders)
- *Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities* (adults)

Physical Activity (with nutrition component)

- *Balancing Food & Play* (youth – developed for 3rd graders)
- *Walk Across Texas! (WAT!) / Walk N Talk* (youth and adults)

Nutrition Focus

Adult:

- *A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!*
- *Get the Facts*
- *Healthier Carbs* (tentative title - being developed)
- *Be Well, Live Well* (50+ years of age)

Youth:

- *Color Me Healthy* (early childhood/ kindergarten age; and physical activity focus)
- *Choose Healthy* (middle school age)



Gardening Focus

Adult:

- *Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities*

Youth:

- *Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!* (elementary age)



Physical Activity Focus

Adult and Youth:

- *Walk Across Texas (WAT) / Walk N Talk*

Youth:

- *Balancing Food & Play (elementary age; and nutrition focus)*



Policy, Systems, or Environmental Change Interventions

- FNS has adopted standards to evaluate the impact of strategies and interventions related to SNAP
- 25% or more of SNAP activities are to be PSE

Policy, Systems, or Environmental (PSE) Change Interventions

- Identified when reporting BLT activities in TexasData
- **Policy Change:** includes passing laws, ordinances, resolutions, mandates, regulations, or rules at federal, state, or local level
- **Systems Change:** involves ongoing, unwritten, often qualitative decisions/changes made within an organization; systems change and policy change can work hand-in-hand; systems change impacts all elements of an organization and its participants
- **Environmental Change:** includes changes made to the physical, economic, social or message environments

Evaluation of BLT Series

Use pre, post, follow-up, or retrospective surveys

- Pre-survey: before the start of first session
- Post-survey: immediately after the last session
- Follow-up survey: completed 30 days later
- Retrospective survey: completed after the last session

Collecting BLT Series Surveys

- Use the current, correct pre, post, and follow-up surveys; surveys vary from series to series
- To increase participation in the follow-up survey, offer another BLT related class on a topic suggested by the audience
- Survey data is used by the BLT State Office in the annual report submitted to Texas HHSC and by County agents in their reports to stakeholders and for year-end summaries

Surveys Data Collection

A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!

- Entered into Qualtrics at the county level by agents, BLT educators, County Staff, or Volunteers
- On the FCH Agent Only website, http://fcsagents.tamu.edu/agent_login.php

Be Well, Live Well

- Entered into Qualtrics at the county level by agents, BLT educators, County Staff, or Volunteers
- On the FCH Agent Only website, http://fcsagents.tamu.edu/agent_login.php

LGEG

- Online student surveys used; paper copies available if needed
- On JMG/LGEG website, <http://jmgkids.us/lgeg/cooperative-extension/>

Walk Across Texas! (WAT!) / Walk N Talk

- Depending on the group (school, community teams, Walk & Talk program)
- Registration & Wrap-up information are entered at, <http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu/>

Other BLT Program Series

- See instructions for survey/evaluation data collection specific to program series on the FCH Agent Only website, http://fcsagents.tamu.edu/agent_login.php

Volunteer Match Information

Volunteer Overview

- Hours counted (3 to 1)
- Age requirement for volunteers (18 years and older)
- Volunteers match time is reported into TexasData by the County Extension agent or BLT educator
- A Volunteer Match-Time Certification Form is to be kept for each volunteer

See BLT ToolKit for more information

Program Management

BLT Reporting

- TexasData System (<https://texasdata.tamu.edu>)
 - County Extension Agents (CEA) and Extension Agents
 - Program plans and other BLT related activities
 - Volunteer hours are reported by agents and associates/assistants
- Time and Effort (as collected for CEAs and DEAs)
 - All CEAs – BLT related activities reported in TexasData
 - District Extension Administrators (DEAs) – contributions based on interaction with CEAs
- Match Reporting
 - County Support Staff – Manual Match Submission (Excel spreadsheet)
 - LGEG Teacher Match – Teacher Match Log
- Program/Program Activity Summary (Graduates) (Excel file)

Program Management

Onsite County Reviews

- County reviews will be conducted throughout the fiscal year by the BLT Regional Project Specialist
- USDA's FNS and Texas HHSC (program funders) may request to observe and review county files at any time during a fiscal year

BLT Program Filing System

- Expectation of each county implementing BLT program series and single education programs to keep the standard BLT filing system
- Files to be kept for 4 years – requirement of the program's funders, USDA's FNS and Texas HHSC
- This allows for consistency across the state

Program Management (continued)

Records That Must be Maintained

County Offices – Originals (Hardcopies or Electronic Storage)

- Justification Forms (a form for each site or location/fiscal year)
- Site Certification Forms (a form for each site or location/fiscal year)
- Participant Information Questionnaires
- Participant Sign-in Sheets
- Volunteer Match Certification Forms (a form for each person/fiscal year)
- BLT Series Surveys (Fresh Start, LGEG, etc.) – entered into database
- Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! Teachers Match Logs
- Manual Match Submission for County Support Staff
- Proposal Forms – County Proposals & Budgets, Cost Share Commitment, LGEG Principal Commitment Letters, & LGEG Teacher Match Commitment
- Participant Surveys – each completed series
- Participant Waiver Forms (each adult participant for the year)

Program Management (continued)

BLT Regional Offices – Copies for Tracking

- Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! Teachers Match Logs
- Manual Match Submission for County Support Staff
- Proposal Forms – County Proposals & Budgets, Cost Share Commitment, LGEG Principal Commitment Letters, & LGEG Teacher Match Commitment

BLT State Office – Permanent Records (Electronic filing system)

- Procard and Personal Reimbursement Transaction Form & Receipts
- Travel Authorization Form(s) – Annual
- Inventory Records/Forms
- Learn, Grow, Eat & GO! Teachers Match Logs
- Manual Match Submission for County Support Staff
- Proposal Forms – County Proposals & Budgets, Cost Share Commitment, LGEG Principal Commitment Letters, & LGEG Teacher Match Commitment

✦ **Records should be kept 4 years – includes the current fiscal year**

Program Supplies & Purchasing

Purchasing Options

- BLT Procard (preferred option)
- Personal Reimbursement (only if necessary)

Allowable/Unallowable Items

- When making purchases, ask yourself:
 - ✓ Is it necessary?
 - ✓ Is it audience appropriate?
 - ✓ Is it reasonable?

See BLT ToolKit for more information

Purchasing

- Operating & Travel Funds
- Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification
- Procard and Personal Reimbursement Transaction Form
- Budget Transfers – email request to your BLT RPS for consideration; the BLT State Office will make adjustments

Instructions and examples in BLT ToolKit

Recipes for BLT Programs

Recipe Databases

- BLT/EFNEP recipe database on the FCH Agent Only website (Family and Community Health) – at the Food and Nutrition tab (<http://fcs.tamu.edu>)
- Dinner Tonight Recipes; Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (<https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/>)
- *What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl*; USDA and SNAP Recipes (www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov)

Additional Information

- BLT Important Dates
- BLT Key Phrases & Words: To Use When Reporting BLT Activity
- Marketing Brochures – at the AgriLife Bookstore
- BLT Logos with & without AgriLife tagline
- USDA and HHSC Civil Rights and Credit Statements
- Texas A&M AgriLife EEO and Affiliation Statements
- Quick Tips for Food Demonstrations

**See BLT ToolKit and BLT website
(Educator's link; password: BLTcounty) for more information**

BLT Logos

The BLT logo with the AgriLife tagline can be used without the AgriLife Extension logo.



When using this BLT logo (no AgriLife tagline) the AgriLife Extension logo is to be added.



All BLT logos are available in black and white.

BLT State Office

BLT State Office in College Station

Dr. Jenna Anding, Associate Department Head and Nutrition Program Leader/Grant – Principal Investigator

Renda Nelson, Program Director

Lillian Folsom, Evaluator

Hannah Moore, Program Coordinator

Emalee Nelson, Multimedia Project Specialist

Cathy Schorn, Business Administrator

Margarita Jones, Business Administrator

Jeanette Martinez, Business Coordinator

Lisa Neill, Business Coordinator

Bertha Perez, Business Coordinator

Joy Junyun Yang, Business Coordinator

BLT Regional Project Specialists

Nancy McDonald, North Region (Districts 1 and 2) – Lubbock

Andrea Stelting, Central Region (Districts 3 and 8) – Vernon

Tami Putnam, East Region (Districts 4 and 5) – Overton

Barbara Brown, West Region (Districts 6 and 7) – San Angelo

Orlando Salinas, South Region (Districts 10 and 12) – Weslaco

Brenda Anderson, Southeast Region (Districts 9 and 11) – Corpus Christi

Helping Texans better their lives

BLT and its partners expand our outreach so more families and individuals can benefit from the program.

BLT is making a difference in the lives
of those we serve.

