

# Better Living for Texans

Master Wellness Volunteer Training



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## Better Living for Texans Program

### Session Topics

- Background and overview of the Better Living for Texans (BLT) program
- Focus of BLT – programs and audience
- Evaluation of BLT program series
- Program resources



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## The Situation



### In Texas

- 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
- 33% of adults are obese
- 33% of youth are either overweight or obese
- Less than 1/2 of Texans meet physical activity recommendations
- Most Texans are not eating enough fruits and vegetables



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## Response



The BLT program was initiated in 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 Service (FNS).



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## 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: 2018 SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance, page 12  
Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program Education (SNAP-Ed)



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## 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, and Volunteers is used to help meet the match hour requirement



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## Better Living for Texans Counties



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## Determining County BLT Levels

- County BLT levels are based on the number of SNAP recipients reported by Texas HHSC, (<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



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## BLT works!

The 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



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## Focus Areas for BLT

### BLT's Program Focus Areas are:

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

Focus areas are based on the SNAP-Ed guidelines outlined for that fiscal year (October 1 – September 30).



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## Focus Areas for BLT (continued)

### Target Audiences – SNAP-Ed Guidance

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



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## Program Strategy

- BLT's primary target audience is adults
- Emphasis on adults graduating from a program series
- Single education events (i.e., one-shot programs) are allowed for marketing a program series or collecting 30-day follow-up surveys
- Youth programs are allowed and include single education events and program series



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## Topics that cannot be taught or funded by BLT..

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



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## Implementing BLT

### Program Delivery Methods

- Agents and BLT assistants implement programs with adults and youth
- Co-workers implement programs with adults and youth
- Volunteers participate as educators or facilitators – coordinate with your County Extension Agent to identify county needs

### Identifying Audience/Participates in the County

- Coordinate with your County Extension Agent



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## 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



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### 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>)



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### Other possible adult audiences...

- Texas Work Force
  - Christian Women's Job Corps and or Men's Job Corps
  - Migrant Workers
  - Grocery stores with high SNAP benefit usage
  - Health and Human Services Commission offices
  - English as a Second Language Classes
- If you are unsure if the audience/site meets the program requirements, coordinate with your County Extension Agent – one of the following forms may need to be completed...
- Site Certification Form
  - Justification Form



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### Audiences not eligible for BLT...

- Individuals with incomes greater than 185% of the poverty level
  - Individuals who are incarcerated or in an institution
    - Jails/detention centers
    - Prisons
    - Nursing homes/convalescent centers
    - Mental facilities
- Individuals not responsible for planning and preparing their own meals do not qualify for BLT programs



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## BLT Curricula Series

- Curricula is research and evidence-based
- Three focus areas with nutrition component

### Nutrition Focus

- *A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!* (adults)
- *Eat Smart, Live Strong* (senior 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)
- *Step Up, Scale Down* (adults)
- *Walk Across Texas (WAT) / Walk N Talk* (youth and adults)



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## Nutrition Focus

### *A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!*

- Increase fruit and vegetable intake; food safety; food resource management
- Three to four-session series

### *Eat Smart, Live Strong*

- Nutrition education and physical activity (USDA's curriculum)
- Four-session series



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## Gardening Focus

### *Learn, Grow, Eat & GO!*

- Enhance gardening skills, improving fruit and vegetable intake; optional – physical activity (WAT)
- Ten-session series

### *Growing and Nourishing Healthy Communities*

- Learn to build gardens and grow fresh vegetable
- Work with the County Extension Agent to
  - Find a community garden location that is easily accessible to BLT audiences (i.e., a Housing Authority, low-income neighborhoods)
  - Teach this 6-week gardening curriculum
  - Incorporate existing BLT programs that teach the participants how to use the produce they grow in healthy meals and snacks
- Six-session series



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### Gardening Focus

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

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### Physical Activity Focus

**Balancing Food & Play**

- Increase physical activity; reduce screen time; increase fruit and vegetable intake; decrease sweetened beverages
- Four-week, 20-session series

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

**STEP UP, SCALE DOWN**

**Step Up, Scale Down**

- Increase fruit and vegetable intake; weight management; increase physical activity
- Twelve-week series

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### Physical Activity Focus

**Walk Across Texas (WAT)**

- Increasing physical activity
- Eight-week series

BETTER LIVING FOR TEXANS

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

**Walk N Talk**

- WAT with an added nutrition messages in a discussion format; Agents, BLT Assistants, or volunteers walk with their BLT participants once a week and have discussions about nutrition topics on selecting, growing, preparing, and eating more fruits and vegetables.
- Eight-week series

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## Policy, Systems, or Environmental Interventions (PSE)

- 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 Interventions

- **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

Your County Extension Agent will report these interventions



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## Evaluation of BLT Series

- Done by using pre, post and follow-up surveys
- Pre-survey: before the start of first session
- Post-survey: immediately after the last session
- Follow-up survey: completed 30 days later



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## Collecting BLT Series Surveys

- Use the correct pre, post, and follow-up surveys; surveys vary from series to series
- If a follow-up survey is used and to increase participation in this 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
- Coordinate with your County Extension Agent on collection and survey data entry



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## Program Supplies

- Curriculum materials
- Food demonstration supplies
- Incentive/educational reinforcing items
  
- When considering resources for BLT programs, ask yourself:
  - ✓ Is it necessary
  - ✓ Is it audience appropriate
  - ✓ Is it reasonable

Coordinate program supplies with your County Extension Agent



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## Recipes Used for BLT Programs

### Recipe Databases

- BLT/EFNEP recipe database on the FCH Agent Only website (Family and Community Health) – your county agent will have access to this website
- Dinner Tonight Recipes; Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (<https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu>)
- *What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl*; USDA and SNAP Recipes (<https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov>)



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## BLT State Office

### BLT State Office in College Station

Dr. Jenna Anding, Associate Department Head / Grant – Principal Investigator  
Renda Nelson, Program Director  
Jon Perrott, Program Coordinator  
Cathy Schorn, Business Administrator II  
Margarita Jones, Business Coordinator III  
Lisa Neill, Business Coordinator II  
Bertha Perez, Business Coordinator II  
Jeanette Martinez, Business Coordinator I  
Joy Junyun Yang, Business Coordinator I

### BLT Regional Program Managers

Nancy McDonald, North Region (Districts 1 and 2) – Lubbock  
Andrea Stelting, Central Region (Districts 3 and 8) – Vernon  
Lani Williams, East Region (Districts 4 and 5) – Dallas  
Barbara Brown, West Region (Districts 6 and 7) – San Angelo  
Orlando Salinas, South Region (Districts 10 and 12) – Weslaco  
Lillian Garza, Southeast Region (Districts 9 and 11) – Corpus Christi



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## Helping Texans better their lives

Volunteers are valuable to help expand our outreach so more families and individuals can benefit from the BLT program.

Thank you for helping us make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.  
This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — SNAP.  
Texas A&M AgrLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.  
The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.



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