

Better Living for Texans

Master Wellness Volunteer Training



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



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 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).



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: 2019 SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance, page 5

Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program Education (SNAP-Ed)



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



Better Living for Texans Program

Vision

Creating opportunities, changing lives

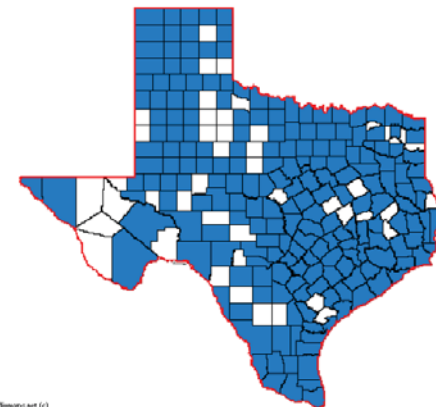
Mission

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



Better Living for Texans Counties

BLT programs are offered in 208 counties across Texas.



Source: @pupart (c)



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



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



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).



Focus Areas for BLT (continued)

Target Audiences – SNAP-Ed Guidance

- SNAP participants, low-income individuals eligible to receive SNAP benefits or other means tested federal assistance programs
- Individuals residing in communities with a significant low-income population
- SNAP-Ed eligible women and children remain the primary audience



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



Topics BLT Cannot Teach or Fund

- 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)



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/Participants in the County

- Coordinate with your County Extension Agent



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 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



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



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)
- *Be Well, Live Well* (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)



Nutrition Focus

A Fresh Start to a Healthier You!

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

Be Well, Live Live Well

- Nutrition education and physical activity
- Five-session series

*Be Well, Live Well:
A Program on Healthy Aging*

*A FRESH
START
to a
Healthier
You!*



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)
 - Incorporate existing BLT programs that teach the participants how to use the produce they grow in healthy meals and snacks
- Six-session series



Gardening Focus



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



Step Up, Scale Down

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



Physical Activity Focus

Walk Across Texas (WAT)

- Increasing physical activity
- Eight-week series



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



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



Evaluation of BLT Series

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



Collecting BLT Series Surveys

- Use the correct pre, post, and follow-up surveys or retrospective survey; 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



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



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>)



BLT State Office

BLT State Office in College Station

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BLT Regional Program Managers

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Orlando Salinas, South Region (Districts 10 and 12) – Weslaco
Lillian Garza, Southeast Region (Districts 9 and 11) – Corpus Christi



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.
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