

# NEWS RELEASE

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## East Texas Food Bank Partnerships: *A Recipe for Community Health*

(Tyler, Texas) 05/30/2018 – The East Texas Food Bank (ETFB) announces the launch of their new *Partners in Health* Program. The *Partners in Health* Program developed in collaboration with St. Paul Children’s Medical Clinic and UT Health Science Center at Tyler addresses food insecurity, a major public health problem in East Texas. Family members in food insecure households are more likely to report poorer health and depressive symptoms and have higher risks for chronic diseases like obesity, hypertension and diabetes. Food insecurity also negatively affects children’s health and development and increases risks for acute infection, chronic illness, hospitalization and developmental and mental health problems.

These issues hit home hard here in East Texas. The 2017 *Map the Meal Gap* study by Feeding America reported over 78,000 children in the 26 counties the East Texas Food Bank serves is food insecure. In Smith County alone, 19% or 42,160 of adults and 23.7% or 13,030 children may not know where they will get their next meal. Another study, *Hunger in America 2014*, provides demographic data for the client households served by ETFB. Results revealed that an estimated 39% of households report at least one member with diabetes, and 65% of households report at least one family member with high blood pressure. Texas has the highest adult obesity rate in the nation at 33.7% and childhood obesity rate of 33.3%.

“The high food insecurity rate in East Texas is not just an economic crisis, it is a public health crisis,” said Dennis Cullinane, CEO of the East Texas Food Bank. “Our mission is focused on solving hunger and this new *Partners in Health* Program is specifically designed to support the healing power of our medical community through nutrition education.”

The Pilot Program will launch at St. Paul Children’s Medical Clinic on June 7th. Patients who screened positive for food insecurity will participate in the 12-week program. Over the course of these three months, participants will stop by the Clinic during a scheduled two-hour window, once a week, to pick up a food box, which will contain fresh produce and healthy shelf-stable groceries, provided by a generous grant, matched by Amerigroup. The healthy food box will also include recipes and educational materials that will instruct participants in how to use the ingredients of the box to cook healthy meals. In addition to healthy foods, participants will also receive point-of-delivery nutrition education sessions from an East Texas Food Bank Nutrition Educator, who will reemphasize the connection between food and health, discuss the participant’s personal goals, provide motivational coaching, and answer questions.

The goal of the program is to impact food-insecure individuals at their place of healthcare by providing healthy foods paired with nutrition education. The desired outcomes of the program include reducing health disparities, reducing hunger, preventing chronic disease, and increasing the likelihood of making healthy food choices on a budget.

### **About East Texas Food Bank**

The East Texas Food Bank provided more than 22 million meals each year to 200 partner agencies in 26 East Texas counties. Our vision is for a hunger-free East Texas and our mission is to fight hunger and feed hope in East Texas. The East Texas Food Bank is a member of Feeding America and Feeding Texas. To learn more, please visit [EastTexasFoodBank.org](http://EastTexasFoodBank.org). Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/etfoodbank](https://facebook.com/etfoodbank) or follow our news on Twitter at [twitter.com/etfoodbank](https://twitter.com/etfoodbank).