

**City of Houston**  
**Recognized Charitable Food Service Provider Program**  
**Coordination Guidelines**  
**Revised August 15, 2012**

**Background:** These guidelines support the implementation of the voluntary Recognized Charitable Food Service Provider Program (the “program”), a program jointly coordinated by the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (health department). This program is established by Sections 20-251 through 20-257 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Houston. The ordinance amendments are effective July 1, 2012.

The program includes a voluntary process of coordination and recognition for individuals and organizations which provide food without charge to more than five individuals at an outdoor location not owned, leased or controlled by the individual or organization providing the food.

The goals of this program are to improve the quality, quantity and availability of food for those that may not have the resources to provide meals for themselves. The program is designed to coordinate volunteer efforts so that the needed amount of food is available at known serving locations.

One important aspect of the program is food safety. At least one person from each organization should be trained in safe food handling. The program Participation Form, as well as more information about the program and food safety classes is available at <http://www.houstontx.gov/health/homeless.html>.

**Highlights of the Program**

**1. Property Owner Consent:** Prior to serving food to homeless individuals, advance written consent of the public or private property owner or other individual with lawful control of the property must be obtained. A fully completed Property Agreement must be provided to the health department when submitting the Participation Form if the proposed feeding location is a private property or a public property that is not owned by the City of Houston. If the proposed feeding location is owned by the City of Houston, the Property Agreement should be fully completed except for the line for the signature of the “Property Owner or Representative”.

- a. **Private property or public property not owned by the City of Houston:** If the food service provider wishes to propose a food service event at a *private property or public property not owned by the City of Houston*, the completed Participation Form, including the fully executed Property Agreement indicating approval by the property owner, should be **submitted to the health department at least seven (7) days prior to the proposed food service event**. This information will be shared with the Coalition for the Homeless for coordination

purposes. (Private property ownership information is available at [www.hcad.org](http://www.hcad.org).)

**b.City-owned property:** If the food service provider wishes to propose a food service event at a *property owned by the City of Houston*, the food service provider should submit to the health department the Participation Form, fully completed except for the line for the signature of the “Property Owner or Representative” in the Property Agreement.

To complete a request to use a City of Houston park, please go to <http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/ourparks/index.html>. Find a map of the selected park by clicking on the first letter of the park at the bottom of the page. You will be redirected to a listing of parks. Print out a copy of the map and please mark the desired location for feeding activities with an “X”. Submit the map with the indicated location with the completed participation package.

1. The Participation Form should be ***submitted to the health department at least fourteen (14) days prior to the proposed food service event*** involving a city-owned property. The health department will contact the city department which has responsibility for the city-owned property identified by the provider.
2. The Health Department will notify the food service provider of whether the use of the requested city-owned property has been approved or disapproved. If approved, the health department will send a copy of the fully executed Participation Form to the food service provider and will also provide this information to the Coalition for the Homeless for coordination purposes.

**2.Completed and Approved Paperwork:** At the food service event, the food service provider should have a copy of the completed and fully executed Participation Form, including the completed Property Agreement to present to the health officer or any other agent of the City upon request.

**3. Program Registration and Recognition:** On the Participation Form the food service provider will propose the location, date, time and duration for the proposed food service event and make the following pledge:

Food Service Provider pledges to (1) cooperate with the program coordinators in the scheduling and siting of food service events; (2) provide charitable food services in a manner consistent with good hygiene, sanitation, and food safety, by: (a) following basic standards for food preparation, handling, storage, and use promulgated by the Health Department, (b) conducting each food service event under the guidance of at least one person who has received an appropriate charitable food service certification, (c) authorizing the inspection of all food preparation areas, all food transport vehicles, and all food service events by appropriate representatives of the Health Department, and (d) agreeing to implement improvements to their food preparation, transportation, and service processes as suggested by the Health Department; (3) provide adequate personnel, trash receptacles, and trash containment and removal measures to contain all trash, refuse, and litter on the site of the food service event and to remove all trash, refuse, litter and unused food from the site at the conclusion of the food service event.

- a. The health department will issue a Recognized Charitable Food Service Provider registration to each individual or organization which participates in the program in accordance with the ordinance. Once the organization is registered with the program, the organization must apply annually for a renewal. The renewal shall be issued as long as the food safety training certificate is valid, the organization provides a current Participation Form with consent of property owner and the organization is in good standing under the program.
- b. After one year the City will maintain on its website a list of the Recognized Charitable Food Service Providers which are in good standing under the program. The website will identify each Provider by name and address (and if requested by the Provider, other direct contact information).
- c. The completed Participation Form should be submitted to the health department by email to [webadmin@houstontx.gov](mailto:webadmin@houstontx.gov); or by fax to 832-393-5208; or by mail to Department of Health and Human Services, Consumer Health Services, and P.O. Box 300008, Houston, TX 77230-0008; or by overnight mail to Department of Health and Human Services, Consumer Health Services, 8000 N. Stadium Dr., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, and Houston, TX. 77054.

**4. Food Safety Course:** Each food service event must be conducted under the guidance of at least one person who has attended a city-sponsored, free-of-charge food safety training class, or has attended a recognized food safety training class. A person qualified as a food service manager under section 20-53 of the Code of Ordinances is sufficient and no further training is required. Certificates from accredited State of Texas or nationally accredited food safety training programs are also acceptable. Information about upcoming food safety classes is available at <http://www.houstontx.gov/health/homeless.html> or by calling 832.393.5100.

**5. Scheduling and Coordination:** The Health department will forward all fully executed Participation Forms to the Coalition for the Homeless for scheduling and coordination of events. The Coalition will maintain the calendar and schedule for all such events.