



April 3, 2023

USDA Guidance issued for Rural Non-Congregate Meal Sites

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), established a permanent non-congregate meal service option for rural areas with no congregate meal service available through the Summer Meals Programs to include the SFSP.

On February 28, 2023, the USDA issued the memo "*Implementation Guidance: Summer 2023 Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas.*" This memo can be found [here](#). This memo provides guidance on the administration and operation of non-congregate meal service in rural areas during summer 2023 for Happy Helpings.

Forthcoming guidance and a webinar for Happy Helping Sponsors regarding the service of non-congregate meals at rural sites will be available soon. Please keep a look out for training announcements.

For questions regarding this information, please contact [Robyn Parham](#).

Up to \$10k Grant offered to Expand Meal Access in Unserved Counties

Deadline to apply: May 15, 2023

Expanding access to nutritious meals and snacks in every Georgia county is an ongoing goal for Nutrition Services. Unfortunately, during fiscal year 2022, 73 counties did not have a Happy Helpings meal site. In an effort to increase meal access and feed more children this summer, ***DECAL is pleased to offer start-up grants, up to \$10,000, to both new and experienced Happy Helpings' sponsors.***

To qualify, sponsors must submit an application by **Monday, May 15, 2023**. Click [here](#) to apply.

What we are looking for:

DECAL Nutrition is seeking partners to increase access to meals and snacks in underserved or unserved Georgia counties through Happy Helpings during summer 2023. These counties include:

Areas of Need: 73 Counties

• Bacon	• Dade	• Haralson	• Miller	• Screven	• Warren
• Baldwin	• Dawson	• Harris	• Montgomery	• Stewart	• Webster
• Banks	• Dodge	• Heard	• Murray	• Talbot	• Wheeler
• Ben Hill	• Dooly	• Irwin	• Oconee	• Taliaferro	• White
• Berrien	• Emanuel	• Jeff Davis	• Oglethorpe	• Taylor	• Wilcox
• Bleckley	• Evans	• Jenkins	• Peach	• Telfair	• Wilkes
• Brantley	• Forsyth	• Johnson	• Pickens	• Towns	• Wilkinson
• Camden	• Gilmer	• Jones	• Pierce	• Treutlen	• Worth
• Charlton	• Gordon	• Laurens	• Pike	• Troup	
• Chattahoochee	• Greene	• Long	• Pulaski	• Turner	
• Clinch	• Habersham	• Lumpkin	• Putman	• Twiggs	
• Cook	• Hall	• Marion	• Quitman	• Union	
• Crawford	• Hancock	• Meriwether	• Schley	• Ware	

Requirements:

- Must be an approved experienced or new Happy Helpings sponsor in good standing prior to receiving funds.
- Must submit the Happy Helpings start-up grant application by 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2023.
- Grants will be awarded on a first come, first served basis.
- Start-up grant applications will be evaluated using a point-scoring system. The higher number of points will result in a higher award amount.
- Payments will be made on or before June 30, 2023.
- Must sign a grant agreement amendment with DECAL.
- Must agree to operate a Happy Helpings meal site in one or more of the underserved or unserved counties. *Failure to serve meals in at least one county will require the sponsor to return grant funds to DECAL.*
- Must use grant funds on allowable Happy Helpings' costs.
- Must claim meals provided in the unserved counties within 30 days.
- Must have the ability to share project outcomes, including how funds were used by September 30, 2023.

Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds Use Request

Excess funds are any amount of reimbursement or funds remaining which exceed a sponsor's expenditures at the close of the FY22 Happy Helpings program. Excess funds must be retained and expended **solely** for food service operations or improvements.

When requesting to use excess funds for the FY23 Happy Helpings program, an institution is required to submit a Pre-Award Cost Form **or** an Excess Funds Use Request Form. Here is how to determine which form to submit:

The Difference:

Pre-Award Costs: Costs that are incurred **in preparation of** the Happy Helpings Program when prior year funds are available.

Excess Funds: Costs that will be incurred **during** the operation of the program when prior year funds are available.

When to Request Fund Use:

Pre-Award Costs: Prior to submitting the FY23 HH application or before the application has been approved.

Excess Funds: After submitting the FY23 HH application and budget.

Supporting documents that are needed for approval:

Pre-Award Costs: Pre-Award Cost Form, invoices, quotes, allocation methods & Specific Prior Written Approval (SPWA) if applicable

Excess Funds: Excess Funds Use Request Form, invoices, quotes, allocation methods & Specific Prior Written Approval (SPWA) if applicable.

Both forms can be found at [Forms \(ga.gov\)](#).
For more information, contact [Gwendolyn Howard](#).

Summer 2023 Will Be Here Soon

Start Planning Now

Providing summer meals is a year-round effort. At any point throughout the year, there are things you can do to prepare for this summer!

April

- Review sites and ensure you are aware of their locations, operational hours, staff, and dates for monitoring.
 - Think about how meals will be delivered to the sites, and how many will be served.
 - Complete pre-operational site visits.
 - Ensure administrative staff are trained. Finish application and renewal forms.
 - Contract with a food service management company, if necessary.
 - Check with DECAL to determine if there are any potential sites lacking sponsors or areas lacking sites and sponsors and consider extending service to those areas.
-

Now is the time to Determine your Food Cost & Procurement Methods

Spring officially started two weeks ago, and now is the perfect time (not summertime) to determine the food cost and choose the methods of procurement that best fit the organization for the Happy Helpings Program (SFSP), *7 CFR 225.17 and 2 CFR 200.317-326*

Knowing the plate cost per participant is essential to developing the project food cost for Happy Helpings FY 2023. Calculating plate costs has benefits, such as understanding the food cost and ingredient pricing and enhancing Quality, Quantity and Service (QQS) to participants.

Think about the last time your organization reviewed its inventory management. Calculating plate costs requires you to take a detailed look at the ingredients purchased and the individual price of each ingredient.

You might learn that specific ingredients cost significantly more than previously planned due to food inflation and may need to be more cost-effective on the menu. Identifying plate costs will help the organization adequately design the menu (based on the meal pattern outlined in 7 CFR 225) and the Happy Helpings FY 2023 food cost. Once your food cost for Happy Helpings FY 2023 is determined, choose the appropriate procurement method(s).

Listed [here](#) are the various options your organization may choose for this Fiscal Year.

For further information on procurement, please contact [Tempest Harris](#).

Happy Helping Waivers available during Unanticipated School Closures

On May 18, 2022, DECAL received approval from the USDA for the following statewide waivers which are available during unanticipated school closures. These waivers are in effect October 1, 2022 through April 30, 2023. The waiver approval letter can be found [here](#).

Please note: For the purposes of these waivers, unanticipated school closures only occur when instruction is not provided to children. If a school plans to offer virtual learning or a mix of in-person classes and virtual learning, then the school would be considered open and not in an "unanticipated school closure" status.

- **Waiver 16: Non-Congregate Meal Service during Unanticipated School Closures** waives the requirements that meals must be served in a congregate setting and be consumed by participants on site.
- **Waiver 17: Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-Up during Unanticipated School Closures** waives the requirement that meals be served directly to eligible participants.
- **Waiver 18: Meal Service Times for Unanticipated School Closures** waives meal service time requirements.
- **Waiver 19: Service of Meals at School Sites during Unanticipated School Closures** waives the requirement that State agencies are to only approve meal service operations at non-school sites.

These waivers are only applicable when the congregate meal service is limited by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the following criteria is required for these waivers to be approved and used by Happy Helpings sponsors during unanticipated school closures. Waiver requests must be based on at least 1 of the following criteria:

Criteria 1:

The site must be located in a county that is designated as High, Substantial, or Moderate regarding COVID-19 community transmissions as determined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

- CDC, [listed here](#) – Under the "Data Type" pull down menu (located mid-page), the user would select "Community Transmission" to access a county's designation.

Criteria 2:

Sponsors can provide official documentation affirming a meal service has been impacted as a result of COVID-19 transmission. The documentation must be issued by the following:

- A public state, local, or county official
- A school superintendent or principal
- An SFSP Sponsor reporting a documented case of COVID-19 at an SFSP Site.
Documentation to support the documented case of COVID-19 could be a letter or email that was sent to parents, staff, or site location such as an apartment complex advising of the documented case.

These waivers will be effective for **30 days** upon approval, with the option to re-apply for an additional 30 days, if the criteria are met using the most current data from the CDC, GA DPH, or with new documentation affirming that meal services have been impacted.

Happy Helpings sponsors interested in applying for these waivers during unanticipated school closures must submit waiver requests via the Waiver Module within GA ATLAS.

*Documentation to support the criteria chosen must be uploaded with the waiver request in GA Atlas. Additionally, waiver requests for sponsored sites will be reviewed and approved upon the site's approval to operate the Program.

More Information on Requesting a Waiver: For information on requesting a waiver, please access the following resources:

- **USDA Waiver User Guide** - Provides step by step instructions on how to submit a waiver request in GA Atlas (applies to both CACFP and SFSP).
- **Important Reminders when using USDA Approved Waivers** - Discusses key recordkeeping requirements.
- **USDA Waiver Addendum** - Required when using the Parent Pick-up waiver or when conducting home delivery under the Non-Congregate waiver.

For general questions on requesting a USDA approved waiver, please contact Tammie.Baldwin@dec.al.ga.gov.

For specific policy questions pertaining to waivers, please contact Robyn.Parham@dec.al.ga.gov.

Additional Statewide Unanticipated School Closure Waivers have been Approved

On March 14, 2023, Nutrition Services received USDA approval for statewide waivers for Happy Helpings sponsors to utilize during unanticipated school closures.

The following waivers are available during unanticipated school closures when meal service operations are limited due to natural disasters, unscheduled major building repairs, court orders relating to school safety or other issues, labor-management disputes, or when approved by the State agency for similar unanticipated causes. The approved waivers are as follows:

- **Non-Congregate Meal Service**
- **Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-up**
- **Meal Service Times**
- **Service of Meals at School Sites**

When approved, SFSP sponsors may only serve meals in a non-congregate setting, adjust the time of meal service, allow parent pick up, and allow service of meals at non-school sites. Waivers cannot be approved for more than 10 consecutive operating days without approval from FNS. In situations that may warrant longer approval periods, the FNS Southeast Regional Office will work closely with Nutrition Services to determine if an extension is needed.

Happy Helpings sponsors interested in applying for these waivers during unanticipated school closures must submit waiver requests via the Waiver Module within GA ATLAS.

Get Informed: Upcoming Training Dates

Happy Helpings Georgia's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Training

Do you plan to serve summer meals during the FY 2022-2023 program year? If so, please plan to participate in **one (1)** of the upcoming *SFSP Orientation and Program Training* sessions. Registration is now open.

Happy Helpings Experienced Sponsor Training (1 Day)

- April 13, 2023 (Virtual)

Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (2 Days)

- April 26-27, 2023 (Atlanta Metro State College)

April 20, 2022 – Happy Helping Budget Readiness

Do you have the budget basics? Join this webinar to learn:

- the purpose of the budget package,
- the purpose of all budget line items in GA ATLAS, and
- how to prepare & develop a complete GA ATLAS budget package.

April 20, 2022 – Happy Helping Procurement Readiness

Are you practicing proper procurement requirements? Join this webinar to learn:

- relevant procurement practices when procuring food & non-food items,
- how to develop formal solicitations, and
- how to incorporate local sourcing practices into a meal service.

Training Resources

In Case You Missed It: Webinar Recordings Now Available!

If you missed a webinar, please visit the [Training and Technical Assistance](#) webpage for previously recorded webinars. This month's training highlight is the [January Memo Monday](#) webinar. It discussed new guidance on collecting racial and ethnicity data for enrolled and non-enrolled participants.

The Ultimate Guide to Seafood Cooking

The [Seafood Nutrition Partnership](#) has developed this guide to provide quick tips to ensure seafood meals turn out delicious every time.

- [[Get the Guide](#)]

Crediting Tip Sheets in Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs)

Team Nutrition has developed these great tip sheets to provide handy references for program operators on how to credit the five meal components in child nutrition programs. Each tip sheet provides simple, easy-to-use information for one meal component.

- [Fruits](#)
- [Vegetables](#)
- [Meat/Meat Alternates](#)
- [Milk](#)

Safe Feeding Practices to Prevent Choking

The [Institute of Child Nutrition \(ICN\)](#) has shared some resources to help prevent choking with children between birth and four years of age. Children at this age are at the greatest risk of choking while eating, in part, because they may not chew food properly.

- [[Prevent Choking](#)]

Training & Technical Assistance

The goal of the Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Unit is to improve performance and better equip new and participating institutions and sponsors by providing practical, user-friendly resources and guidance materials that strengthen internal controls and result in successful, sustainable Program administration and operation. We want to ensure that we continue to meet this goal during any transitions and/or position changes.

Therefore, sponsors that reside in **region 2** listed in the map above, please contact our Nutrition TA mailbox at NutritionTA@dec.al.ga.gov with any needed technical assistance.

You may also visit our [Training and Technical Assistance](#) webpage for Program resources and recorded webinars.



Nutrition Ed Nook

Juicy, Red Strawberries

Strawberries are April's Harvest of the Month ([English](#)



and **Spanish**) spotlight. They are sweet with a juicy texture and bright red color. Strawberries are also an excellent source of vitamin C, which helps with the healing of wounds. They also provide other important nutrients like folate, potassium, fiber, and vitamin A. Enjoy this fresh fruit as a snack or add them to smoothies, oatmeal, or cereal.

Strawberry season in Georgia is April through June. In Georgia, much of the production for the fruit is from small, family-owned farms. Plan a field trip to a local farm near you to pick your own delicious, bright red strawberries!

Fun Facts: Strawberries are the only fruit with seeds on the outside. Eight strawberries will provide 140% of the recommended daily intake of Vitamin C for kids.

Integration:

- [Strawberry S'Mores](#)
- [Fruit Kabobs with Yogurt Dip](#)
- [Frozen Strawberry Yogurt](#)
- [Strawberry Salsa](#)
- [Banana Berry Smoothie](#)
- [Elmo's Strawberry Pops](#)

Education:

- **Watch** the [Harvest with Holly](#) video that explores the Harvest of the Month spotlight, how these items grow, where they grow in Georgia, and how they get from the farms to school meals all across the state of Georgia.
- **Grow** strawberries. You want them to be a full red color, bright luster, and firm, plump flesh. Check out this guide for [Starting a Strawberry Garden](#).
- **Read** [The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry](#), and [the Big Hungry Bear](#) with program participants as they enjoy a [Paradise Freeze](#).
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as washing strawberries under cool running water and pulling off the green caps. **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate strawberries into their meals!

Conversation:

- Have your program participants eaten strawberries before?
- What are strawberries shaped like?
- What other red fruits and vegetables do they like to eat?

Share your Harvest of the Month stories and menu integration of strawberries with Nutrition Education Specialist, Morgan Chapman, MPH, MCH at morgan.chapman@decal.ga.gov.



Physical Activity Corner: *Spring Into Action with Physical Activity*

Spring is here – the perfect time of year to start fresh and keep moving. It's almost time to bring out those shorts, running shoes, bicycles, and get moving again after the cold winter.

Whether it's planting a garden, going for a run, or taking a walk around your neighborhood, there are plenty of activities to keep everyone moving and active outside this spring season. Simply moving and sitting less helps build the momentum of

our bodies to move forward. This may include walking, jogging, running, dancing, kickboxing, visiting the gym, or yoga.

Be sure to be mindful of drinking water while being active, especially as we shift into the warmer months. Staying active contributes to a healthy lifestyle that decreases risk of chronic diseases, enhances mental health, and improves overall wellbeing. How will you get active?

Integration:

- [Explore Georgia in Spring](#)
- [CDC Eight \(8\) Strategies for a Healthy Spring](#)
- [Spring Movement Activities for Young Children](#)

Education:

- Read out loud, [“The Tiny Seed,” by Eric Carle](#).
- **Watch** the video on [Spring Dance! by Jack Hartmann](#).
- **Talk** with families about ways to spring into action with fitness at home, in their community, childcare centers and adult care centers. **Bonus:** Share [#KeepItMoving](#), [#SpringIntoAction](#), [#HealthyLifestyle](#), and [#SpringFitness](#) pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What are your favorite spring physical activities?
- How do you spring into action after a cold winter?
- Why is spring the best season to get outdoors and exercise?
- Why is it important to keep moving daily?
- What are the keys to a healthy lifestyle?

Share your [#DECALPhysicalActivity](#), [#SpringFitness](#), [#SpringIntoAction](#), [#HealthyLifestyle](#), and [#KeepItMoving](#) stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@decals.ga.gov.



DECAL's Nutrition Spotlight:

Meet Julie Edwards, Technical Assistance Coordinator and Trainer for the East region

Julie Edwards recently joined the Nutrition Services Division as the Technical Assistance Coordinator and Trainer for the East Region.

Her service area includes 31 counties: Baldwin, Barrow, Burke, Clarke, Columbia, Emanuel, Glascock, Greene, Gwinnett, Hancock, Jasper, Jefferson, Jenkins, Johnson, Jones, Lincoln, McDuffie, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, Oglethorpe, Putnam, Richmond, Rockdale, Screven, Taliaferro, Walton, Warren, Washington, Wilkes, and Wilkinson.

In this role, Julie will coordinate and perform duties which include planning, evaluation, technical assistance and training to assist sponsors and institutions participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program.

Julie brings over 20 years of experience working at an adult day care center. Previously, she was the Director at AutumnCare Adult Day Center, Inc, in Augusta. In that role, she was the center's point of contact for Nutrition Services. She also has more than 25 years of healthcare management experience.

As the point of contact, Julie had a great experience with DECAL. She always felt prepared after attending training. She knew that joining DECAL was an opportunity she couldn't pass up. "When this position opened up, I felt like it was a job I had to apply for. I believed this job would be different, but fun. The experience participating in the CACFP was a positive one, so

I was excited to bring my experience and knowledge to the Nutrition team,” said Edwards.

Julie describes herself as a natural caregiver and is excited about teaching others. “I always felt like DECAL was helpful to me and made me feel comfortable. I received incredible training, and I could always ask questions. I want to make other providers and program contacts throughout Georgia feel the same way. Helping people is part of who I am.”

Julie is married to her husband, Scott. They live in Appling, Georgia, on Clarks Hill Lake, which is known as Lake Thurmond for those living in South Carolina. Julie enjoys spending time on the boat at the lake. Julie and Scott have an adult son who recently got married. Football season is a fun time for Julie and Scott, as he went to Georgia and Julie graduated from the University of South Carolina with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration.

Eat Healthy and Live Active

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 22-23 Calendar

Harvest of the Month (HOTM) is the Georgia Department of Education School Nutrition Program’s farm to school initiative that highlights an item each month that can be sourced locally and served in Georgia’s school meals.

DECAL’s Harvest of the Month calendar aligns with the Georgia Department of Education’s Harvest of the Month initiative and was created in partnership with Quality Care for Children, Georgia Organics, and the Farm to Early Care & Education (ECE) Coalition for ECE settings.

Visit the Georgia Department of Education's [HOTM webpage](#) and Quality Care for Children [webpage](#). Upon viewing, you can find tips and tricks for preparing produce items, curriculum connections, activity lists and book alignment for your early care classrooms.



Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
April	Harvest of the Month: Strawberries Start planning for Summer 2023
April 13	Happy Helpings Experienced Sponsor Training
April 20	Happy Helpings Budget Readiness Webinar
April 20	Happy Helpings Procurement Readiness Webinar
April 26 & 27	Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training
May 15	Happy Helpings Start-up Grant Deadline

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- Omnibus Spending Bill Signed into Law
- Capacity Builder Tool helps Sponsors Identify Locations for New Meal Sites
- FY23 Reimbursement Rates Released
- Locate Happy Helpings' Meal Sites on FoodFinder
- New Organizations Interested in Happy Helpings

- **Apply for a No Kid Hungry Grant Today**
- **Be a Health Hero - Health Empowers You**
- **USDA re-names Farm to School Program**
- **Step of Faith Outreach recognized for providing High Quality Summer Meals**
- **Annual Sponsor Survey Feedback**
- **Guidance on Collecting Race and Ethnicity Data**
- **Updated HH Forms and Policies**
- **Reminder: PolicyStat is available on the Nutrition Services' Webpage**
- **Thank You Happy Helpings Sponsors**
- **After School Programs Required to Apply for License or Exemption to Participate in At-Risk**
- **Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals**
- **Check your Email Messages in GA ATLAS**

How was my Customer Service?

Provide feedback on your experience with the Nutrition Team



Click on the icon at right to participate in the customer service survey. Responses are anonymous.

NEW DECAL Download

DECAL's New Human Resources Director

In this week's episode of DECAL Download, we talk with our new Human Resources Director. Since January 1, 2020, Sheryl Young-Wilhite has served as a Senior Human Resources Manager here at DECAL responsible for recruitment, employee relations, and training.

On a previous episode, we talked with Robin Stevens about her planned retirement beginning March 1, after being our first Human Resources Director and serving for 11 years. Also on March 1, Sheryl became our new Human Resources Director and we thought this was a good time to get to know her a little better.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Nutrition Division

Marketing & Outreach Team



Cindy Kicklighter
Carl Glover

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