



February 1, 2024

Make your Local Farmers Market a Meal Site Option

Partnering with Local Farmer Markets

Offering a Happy Helpings meal site at a farmers market is a unique way to increase access to healthy food for children in both rural and urban areas throughout the state. Fresh, nutritious foods, along with existing events and activities, make farmers markets ideal partners in helping kids and teens stay active and nourished while school is out.

By creating a partnership with local farmers markets, a Happy Helpings meal site can help children get access to food options that they may not otherwise have in both rural and urban areas.

Farmers markets also provide a safe place for children to gather and may offer the additional benefits of providing access to the freshest ingredients, connecting children with the sources of their food, increasing foot traffic to the market, and raising community awareness about Happy Helpings.

Setting up a meal site at a farmers market also allows sponsors to leverage existing activities that are associated with the market, giving kids an enjoyable experience in addition to a healthy meal, and removing the burden of coordinating activities from scratch.

Locally Grown Produce

Locally grown, fresh produce is abundant at farmers markets, especially during Georgia's peak summer growing season. When buying from farmers markets, food is transported directly from farm to table to ensure freshness, sustainability, and seasonality. A community garden is another way to introduce people, especially children to fresh, locally grown foods.

At a farmers market meal site, families may bring their children to get meals, purchase locally-grown produce, and try new seasonal items. In turn, these sites support local farmers, local economies, and increase exposure to unfamiliar produce items. This can increase healthy food choice options for families and connections with their own community.

Diana Myers, DECAL's Nutrition and Physical Activity Supervisor understands the importance of various avenues to feed children across the state. "With food insecurity rates rising across Georgia, Happy Helpings sites serve as critical food access points for children during the summer months. Hosting meal sites at farmers markets can increase food access for families by serving meals alongside fresh, local produce, connecting families to their local farmers, and educating children on the origins of food."

Here are some reminders to keep in mind if you would like to operate a meal site at a local farmers market or community garden:

- Identify the nearest farmers market or community garden in your area. Here's a link to the [USDA Local Food Directory](#)
- Ensure the site meets area eligibility requirements and that it is not within 1/4 mile of another meal site.

- If the farmers market is a for-profit organization, the site must be open to all children.
- Gather the necessary information and complete the SFSP application.
- Submit a Food Service Permit Inquiry Form to the county's environmental health office.
- Distribute a media release to your local media and promote the site to gain awareness.
- Train staff and designate a site supervisor.
- Prepare for a sponsor's pre-Op visit.

If you aren't able to operate a meal site at a farmers market, here are some tips to incorporate local foods into summer meals:

- Identify which local foods are currently being served.
- Contact a local farmer to find out which fruits and vegetables are in-season.
- Substitute food items you are eating with locally grown and harvested foods.
- Start a "Harvest of the Month" program in your community.
- Develop new recipes using local Georgia Grown foods.

Check out the following resources to help understand the importance of farmers markets and where to find a farmers market in your area:

- [FarmToSummerSheet.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#)
- [USDA Local Food Directories \(usdalocalfoodportal.com\)](#)
- [5 Reasons to take your kids to a Farmers Market - Ready Set Gwinnett](#)
- [8 Things to Know About Community Gardens](#)

FY24 Reimbursement Rates Released

The nationwide rates for 2024 are available below.

2024 Reimbursement Rates Effective January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

Maximum Rate per Meal (In Whole or Fractions of U. S. Dollars)

All States except Alaska and Hawaii		
Per Meal Rates in whole or fractions of U. S. dollars	Self-prep or Rural Sites	Other Types of Sites
Breakfast	2.9775	2.9225
Lunch or Supper	5.2125	5.1300
Supplement (Snack)	1.2350	1.2050

Summer 2024 will be Here Soon

Step-by-Step Guide for February

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

Here's a guide for **February 2024**:

- Sign up for mandatory sponsor training classes.
- Determine which sites are returning, explore new site options, and meet with community partners.
- Plan site staff training, meal production and delivery, and programs and activities.
- Begin exploring the potential for serving mobile meals.
- Continue developing a marketing and outreach campaign.

Happy Helpings Application Tips:

- Complete all forms in their entirety.
- Food Service Permit Inquiry Form- needs to be submitted/signed in every county where meals are being served prior to submitted to DECAL.
- Institution Application - If utilizing a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) or acting as a FSMC, ensure that items 42 & 43 are responded to correctly.

Board of Director Section:

- Ensure that all sections are completed for each board member.
- Any changes made to the Board of Directors (BOD) need to be supported with board meeting minutes.
- Ensure that delegation of authority form is signed by an Officer of the Board (as defined on the form).

Management Plan:

- Should be updated annually.
- Personnel/Staffing - the percentage of time allocated to HH should align with the allocation on the staff distribution report.

Site Application:

- Site changes (including add a sites) need to be approved prior to making changes to an approved budget.
- If seeking approval to serve non-congregate meals during excessive heat, please submit the demonstration project request form for non-congregate feeding.
- #14- Indicate days that the site will not serve meals during normal operating dates.
- If the site is outdoors (park, driveway, pool), please provide details in the plan that meals will be served indoors.

Excess Funds - Ensure that form is completed/submitted with supporting documentation. Before request can be approved, the prior year's reconciliation form must be acceptable (reconciled).

Related Party - If there are related parties, please submit the related part disclosure form and ensure that all applicable categories are checked in the Budget Questions and Assertions section.

Determining Other Program Income

Allocate Funds for Upcoming Happy Helpings Costs

Per FNS Instruction 796-2 Rev. 4 (IX D 5C), Income to the program occurs in two categories: Program income and other income. All income must be retained and used only in the institution's food service program.

Ensuring you have adequate streams of other income demonstrates your organization's financial viability to operate the program. Other program income could include but is not limited to:

- Prior year excess funds,
- Donations,
- Other governmental grants,
- and revenue producing activities.

As Happy Helpings is a reimbursement program, organizations will have the financial responsibility of covering expenses prior to receiving reimbursement. Once monthly claims are filed, allowable costs will be reimbursed.

During this planning time, ensure you have allocated adequate funds to cover upcoming Happy Helpings costs to cover program expenses that will be incurred prior to receiving your monthly reimbursement. When you are ready to enter costs in the budget, be sure to include your other program income as well in the Other Program Revenue section.

Areas of Need for Summer 2024

One of Nutrition Services goals is to have a meal site in every county of the state. Last summer, you helped us make significant progress in meeting that goal expanding service from 85 counties in 2022 to 100 counties in 2023! Thank you!

If your organization has the capacity to expand your meal service in 2024, please consider serving meals and snacks in any of the following target counties:



Areas of Need: 59 counties

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
| • Appling | • Cook | • Johnson | • Pulaski | • Webster |
| • Atkinson | • Dade | • Laurens | • Quitman | • Wheeler |
| • Bacon | • Dawson | • Lincoln | • Schley | • White |
| • Banks | • Dodge | • Long | • Screven | • Wilcox |
| • Berrien | • Emanuel | • Lumpkin | • Stewart | • Wilkes |
| • Bleckley | • Evans | • Marion | • Sumter | • Wilkinson |
| • Brantley | • Gilmer | • Miller | • Talbot | • Worth |
| • Brooks | • Gordon | • Montgomery | • Telfair | |
| • Calhoun | • Haralson | • Murray | • Towns | |
| • Camden | • Heard | • Oconee | • Treutlen | |
| • Charlton | • Jasper | • Oglethorpe | • Turner | |
| • Chattahoochee | • Jeff Davis | • Pickens | • Union | |
| • Clay | • Jenkins | • Pierce | • Warren | |



Interim Final Rule on Rural Non-Congregate Meals

On December 29, 2023, USDA FNS issued [Interim Final Rule: Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs](#). This interim final rule amends the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option (SSO) regulations to codify the flexibility for rural program operators to provide non-congregate meal service in the SFSP and SSO, collectively referred to as the summer meal programs.

Further information regarding the interim final rule is forthcoming from Nutrition Services.

Stay Informed: Revised Happy Helpings Memoranda and Policies

The following Happy Helpings policies and/or memoranda have been revised:

- [Area Eligibility in Child Nutrition Programs](#) – This memorandum was revised to include information on retaining documentation supporting a site's area eligibility.
- [Meal Disallowances for the Summer Food Service Program \(SFSP\)](#) – This memorandum was revised to include information on repayments for claimed ineligible meals.
- [Requirements for Obtaining a Food Service Permit](#) – This memorandum was revised to include additional information on the Food Service Permit Inquiry Form and its submittal to environmental health offices.
- [Policy #10 – Designation of the Program Contact in Organizations Participating in the Summer Food Service Program](#) – This policy was revised

to provide additional information on organization's officers who can delegate authority to principals/program contacts.

- **Policy #5 – Recordkeeping Requirements for All Sponsors and Sponsored Facilities Participation in the SFSP** – This policy has been revised to include the maintenance of school date eligibility information. Updates were also made to procedures regarding lost or destroyed SFSP records.
- **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Appeal Procedures** – This policy has been revised to include the option of a DECAL internal review and the addition of an optional appeal request form.

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

Unanticipated School Closure Waivers Available

On August 30, 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 following approved waivers are available when schools are closed with no virtual learning:

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

The waivers listed above are available through April 30, 2024. To read more, click [here](#).

Training Dates

February 19, 2024

Memo Monday

Are you maximizing your program funds? Join this webinar to review the following money management memos.

- ***Unused Reimbursement in the Summer Food Service Program – September 28, 2023***
- ***Best Practices for Managing Unused Reimbursement in the Summer Food Service Program – September 28, 2023***
- ***Nationwide Expansion of Summer Food Service Program Simplified Cost Accounting Procedures (Revised) – September 29, 2023***

February 22, 2024

Happy Helpings Experienced Sponsor Training (Virtual)

All returning Happy Helpings sponsors are required to attend experienced sponsor training.

March 6, 2024

Corrective Action Plan & Serious Deficiency Training

Are you familiar with the Serious Deficiency (SD) Process and how to submit a successful Corrective Action Plan (CAP)? Join this webinar to: (a) learn the required steps in this process and (b) receive guidance on completing a corrective action plan (CAP).

March 13-14, 2024

Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (Macon)

All non-experienced Happy Helpings sponsors are required to attend a two-day in-person new sponsor training.

March 14, 2024

Procurement Standards & Sourcing

Do you know the strategies to shop and source locally? Join this webinar to learn an overview of procurement principles related to sourcing and purchasing local foods in child nutrition program operators.

March 18, 2024

Rural Non-Congregate Meal Service Summer Option in SFSP

Have you heard that rural areas can now use alternate service models that are tailored to the needs of the children and communities they serve? Join this webinar to learn the latest on non-congregate meals service for rural areas.

April 10-11, 2024

Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (Atlanta)

All non-experienced Happy Helpings sponsors are required to attend a two-day in-person new sponsor training.

Please click [here](#) to register for all DECAL webinars listed above except for SFSP Boot Camp webinar.

Registration: This is a **two-step** process:

- **Step 1:**
 - After registering in GA ATLAS, you will receive a Training Confirmation email *immediately* from Georgia DECAL Help Desk - helpdesk@cnpus.com with a registration link to attend the webinar (**check your spam/junk folder**).
- **Step 2:**
 - You must then register for the training using the link provided on the Training confirmation email.
 - If you should have an issue with registering, please contact Leslie Truman **prior** to the day of training.
 - [Click here](#) if you need a refresher on how to register for training in GA ATLAS.

Please note: Only the Program Contact (PC) can self-register within GA ATLAS. If an additional person will be attending, please contact Leslie Truman, Administrative Assistant, at (404) 657-1779 for assistance.

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 [Bid Specifications & Managing Contracts](#) webinar. It discussed the elements of contract management, bid specifications and how they are developed.

Shop Simple with MyPlate

MyPlate can help you make healthy choices within your budget. Find savings in your area and discover new ways to prepare budget-friendly foods.

- **Scan the QR code below to shop**



Shelf-Stable Food Safety Tips

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service shares important tips to help keep food safe for meal preparation and consumption.

- [See Safety Tips](#)



Nutrition Ed Nook

Cruciferous Vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables are the February Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) spotlight. These vegetables come in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes. Cruciferous vegetables are rich in vitamins and minerals such as folate, vitamins A, C, E and K, and fiber. Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage also contain antioxidants that help reduce the risk of developing many cancers.

Broccoli is one of the best vegetable sources of vitamins A and C, and provides other important nutrients like potassium. In Georgia, broccoli is in season May and June and October through December. Add broccoli into main dishes such as a salad, pasta, or stir-fry, or enjoy them raw as a snack with a low-fat dip.

Cabbage varieties include green, red, savoy, napa, and Bok choy. In Georgia, cabbage is in season May through September. Try making a rainbow coleslaw using a mix of green and red cabbage, or boil or steam cabbages to use in stews, soups, and casseroles.

Cauliflower can be purchased in white, which is the most common, green, orange, and purple. In Georgia, cauliflower is in season October through December. Enjoy it raw on its own or with a low-fat dip, or steam or roast cauliflower as a side dish and season with spices for more flavor. Also, try it puréed, mashed, or grated!

Fun fact: The cruciferous vegetables family includes collard greens, mustard greens and turnip greens which are the January Harvest of the Month spotlight.

Integration:

- [Rainbow Coleslaw](#)
- [Roasted Broccoli and Cauliflower](#)
- [Broccoli Cheddar Soup](#)
- [Brocco Poppers](#)
- [Roasted Cauliflower Steaks](#)
- [Fresh Veggie Pizza](#)

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.
- **Compare & Contrast** the similarities and differences between cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower with program participants, including looks, feels, tastes, sounds, and smells. Are there more similarities or differences?
- **Read** [The Boy Who Loved Broccoli by Sarah A Creighton](#) with your program participants. Everyone knows it's hard to get children to eat their vegetables! "The Boy Who Loved Broccoli" is a humorous tale about Baxter, a boy who enjoys eating broccoli so much that it gives him super powers. After jumping over mountains and splashing through lakes, he goes on to perform superhero good deeds and convinces others to indulge in the delicious green veggie, only to find out that they become filled with super powers as well. Find out what happens next when Baxter finds himself in a bit of trouble!
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as rinsing broccoli or cauliflower florets to be cooked in a dish. **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate cruciferous vegetables into their meals!

Conversation:

- Have the participants you serve eaten cabbage, broccoli and/or cauliflower before?
- Which of the three, cabbage, broccoli, or cauliflower, is their favorite to eat?
- What other cruciferous vegetables (Bok choy, Brussels sprouts, arugula, kale, etc.) do participants like to eat?

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

Physical Activity Corner

Heart Health - Love, Hugs and Kisses



MAKE EVERY MOVE COUNT

When you Move More every day, you can reach some pretty big goals over time. Small steps can add up to huge strides — in your physical health, mental health, stress levels, sleep, productivity, relationships and more. Let movement take you places you never thought possible!

 10 Minutes of stretching is like walking the length of a football field	 2.5 Hours of walking every week for a year is like walking across the state of Wyoming
 30 Minutes of singles tennis is like walking a 5K	 1 Hour of dancing every week for a year is like walking from Chicago to Indianapolis
 20 Minutes of vacuuming is like walking one mile	 30 Minutes of grocery shopping every other week for a year is like walking a marathon

EAT SMART MOVE MORE BE WELL For more ways to add activity to your life, visit HEART.ORG/MOVEMORE

Love is in the air! The American Heart Association (AHA) observes February as American Heart Month, a time when all people can focus on their cardiovascular health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States. One person dies every 34 seconds in the United States from cardiovascular disease (CVD). This is a startling statistic that DECAL's physical activity program seeks to combat through preventative measures within child nutrition programs.

Did you know that physical activity is a lifestyle change you can make to decrease your risk of CVD? According to 2018 data, approximately 1 in 4 U.S. adults reported achieving adequate aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities to meet the physical activity guidelines. Being

physically active is one of the best ways to keep our heart, body, and brain healthy. One of the many activities to keep the heart healthy and strong is cardiovascular exercise which improves the pumping and circulation of the blood and helps reduce the chances of developing blockages or clots in the arteries.

Activities such as walking, running, dancing, swimming, yoga, and gardening are a few examples of fun and enjoyable activities that promote heart health. Take extra care of your heart and help your loved ones, or those who already suffer from heart diseases.

Integration:

- [American Heart Month 2024](#)
- [Heart Disease & Stroke Statistics \(2023 Update\)](#)
- [National Wear Red Day](#)
- [American Heart Association: Physical Activity 2024](#)
- [Celebrate Heart Health Month \(February\)](#)

Education:

- **Read** out loud, [“In My Heart: A Book Of Feelings,”](#) by Jo Witek.
- **Watch** the video on [I Heart Exercise S E16](#).
- **Talk** with families about ways to keep your heart healthy and strong daily. **Bonus:** Share [#HeartWalk](#), [#OurHearts](#) [#MoveToTheBeat](#), [#PumpItUp](#), [#LoveFitness](#) pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What physical activity promotes heart health?
- How can you keep your heart strong and healthy?
- Why is fitness important for your heart health?
- Why is it important to keep our children active and heart healthy?

Share your #DECALPhysicalActivity, #MoveToTheBeat, #PumpItUp, #LoveFitness, #OurHearts, #HeartWalk stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren at tina.mclaren@dec.al.ga.gov.

Eat Healthy and Live Active

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 23-24 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.

The Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month is a collaborative campaign to promote a different local, seasonal fruit or vegetable in child care settings each month.

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
February	Harvest of the Month: Cruciferous Vegetables
February 19	Memo Monday
February 19	Presidents' Day
February 22	Happy Helpings Experienced Sponsor Training (Virtual)
March	Harvest of the Month: Root Vegetables
March 6	Corrective Action Plan & Serious Deficiency Training Webinar
March 13-14	Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (Macon)
March 14	Procurement Standards & Sourcing Webinar
March 18	Rural Non-Congregate Meal Service Summer Option in SFSP Webinar
April 10-11	Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (Atlanta)

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- **Start-up Grants ensured More Georgia Kids had Access to Nutritious Meals & Snacks this Summer**
- **Increasing Access to Food Through Mobile Feeding**
- **Thank You for Another Successful Summer Season**
- **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 on the right to participate in the customer service survey. Responses are anonymous.

NEW DECAL Download

Family Peer Ambassadors



Our DECAL Family Peer Ambassadors are a group of volunteers working in their communities to share information with families about the resources available in our state.

They are fathers, mothers, grandparents, foster parents, and other kinship caregivers of young children. They serve as leaders in their community, providing families of young children with

information about child development and strategies they can use to support their children's school readiness.

DECAL is currently recruiting a new group of Ambassadors to join the 45 that are already active across the state. Joining us today to explain the process is Bridget Ratajczak, DECAL's Child and Family Development Supervisor and CDC's Act Early Ambassador to the state of Georgia. She is joined by Jenny Semendy, DECAL's Child and Family Development Training Specialist.

You will also hear a firsthand account of the program from three of our current Family Peer Ambassadors, Taquana Stubbs from Douglasville, GA, Christina Sanchez from Atlanta, and Teyona Early from Warner Robins, GA.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Nutrition Division

Marketing & Outreach Team



Cindy Kicklighter
Carl Glover

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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Nondiscrimination Statement: Spanish

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