



March 1, 2024

Certain Rural Areas will be able to Distribute Nutritious Meals Outside of the Congregate Setting

Register for the Rural Non-Congregate Meal Service Webinar on March 18

Did you know that sites located in rural areas can now use enhanced meal service models that are tailored to provide better access to meals?

On March 18 from 10:00 a.m. until noon, DECAL will offer Memo Monday on Rural Non-Congregate Meal Service in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). This webinar will offer the latest information on:

- expanded and revised regulatory definitions;
- enhanced rural map that expands coverage of areas designated as “rural”;and
- detailed guidance on the use of parent/guardian pick-up, bulk meals, and home delivery.

Register for the webinar in GA ATLAS [here](#).

Further information regarding the interim final rule, including information on applying to utilize rural non-congregate, is forthcoming.



DECAL represented at Family Connection Community Resource Fair

Carl Glover, Marketing and Outreach Specialist in DECAL's Nutrition Division traveled to Lanier Technical College in Gainesville, Georgia, on February 2 to attend the Family Connection Community Resource Fair. Those in attendance learned about Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program.

There were over 50 exhibitors from the following counties; Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White.

Out of those 13 counties, Banks, Dawson, Lumpkin, Towns, Union and White did not have access to a Happy Helpings meal site in 2023. If you are located in one of these six counties, be sure to reach out to [Carl Glover](#) to find out how you can serve children in these areas free, nutritious meals this summer.

Summer 2024 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!

Here's a guide for 2024:

March/April

- Review sites and ensure you are aware of the 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.
- Complete application and renewal forms.
- Contract with a food service management company (FSMC), if necessary.
- Check with DECAL to determine if there are any potential sites lacking sponsors, or areas lacking sites and consider extending service to those areas.

Tips for Completing the Application:

- To minimize confusion and delays, only the program contact and/or authorized representative should be contacting the application reviewer. Keep in mind that the program contact is responsible for entering the information in the online application, GA ATLAS.
- Complete all forms in its entirety.
- The Food Service Permit Inquiry Form needs to be submitted/signed in every county where meals are being served prior to being submitted to DECAL.
- If utilizing a FSMC or acting as a FSMC, ensure that numbers 42 & 43 are responded to correctly on the institution application.

Board of Directors 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 the "delegation of authority" form is signed by an officer of the board (as defined on the form).

Management Plan:

- The plan should be updated annually.
- The percentage of time allocated to Happy Helpings for personnel/staffing 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 for excessive heat, please ensure to submit the demonstration project request form for non-congregate feeding.
- Ensure to indicate days that the site will not serve meals during normal operating dates on #14.
- If site is outdoors (park, driveway, pool), please detail the plan if indicating that meals will be served indoors when answering #28.

Maximum Meal Count (MMC):

- The threshold for the maximum number of meals that can be served is 100.
- Sponsors that request a MMC over the threshold prior to the initial approval of the site application must submit written justification to their assigned Application Specialist explaining why an increase is needed.
- Enrollment/registration information should be submitted to justify the increase for sites that are closed enrolled.
- Letters of authorization for sites located at unaffiliated schools and/or unaffiliated apartment communities can include information to justify the increase.
- A justification letter is not required for sites requesting the same MMC over the

threshold that was approved the previous year. Additionally, if the request is over the MMC threshold, but under the approved MMC that was approved the previous year, no justification letter is required.

- If a request appears unreasonable/unsupported, then the MMC over 100 will not be approved.
- Sponsors that begin operations and later request a MMC over the threshold must submit written justification to their assigned Business Operations Specialist explaining why the increase is needed. Additionally, three consecutive days of daily meal count (DMC) forms must be submitted. If the request is unsupported, the MMC to provide more than 100 meals will not be approved.

Budget:

- **Excess Funds:** Ensure that the form is completed/submitted with supporting documentation. Before a request can be approved, the prior year's reconciliation form must be acceptable and reconciled.
- **Related Party:** Please ensure to submit the related party disclosure form and ensure that all applicable categories are checked in the budget questions and assertions section.

Identifying the Difference between Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds

The Difference:

Pre-Award Costs: Costs that are incurred *in preparation of* the Happy Helpings (HH) 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 FY24 HH application or before the application has been approved.

Excess Funds: After submitting the FY24 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: When submitting the FY24 HH application and budget that is intended to be used **during** the program.

For questions regarding your 2024 Happy Helpings budget, please email nutritionbudget@decal.ga.gov.

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 | |

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

March 6, 2024
Corrective Action Plan & Serious Deficiency Training
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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)
9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

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

March 14, 2024
Procurement Standards & Sourcing
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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)

10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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

April 15, 2024

Memo Monday!

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m.

Are you familiar with the updated guidance on the Happy Helpings SFSP meal service and cost requirements? Join this webinar to learn the latest information in the following memos:

- **Meal Service Requirements in the Summer Meal Programs, with Questions and Answers (Revised) – 1.31.2024**
- **Meal Disallowances for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) – October 30, 2023**
- **Cost Disallowance in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) – November 1, 2023**

April 16, 2024

Happy Helpings Budget Readiness

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

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 18, 2024

Procurement Supporting Documents & Resources

1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Each year, program operators are tasked with calculating the food cost for the fiscal year and selecting the appropriate procurement method(s) to support the food cost. Join this webinar to learn ways to:

- distinguish the standard procurement methods with each procurement threshold,
- complete or create a Procurement Policy, and
- understand the required procurement documents to complete and submit to support the food cost.

Please click [here](#) to register for all DECAL webinars listed above.

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 [Happy Helpings Procurement Training](#) webinar. It discussed 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.

Verifying Farm Food Safety Webpage

This page is a helpful guide for child nutrition operators as they visit and navigate local farms to purchase produce. Program operators can also learn more about the farm's food safety standards and make informed decisions.

Food Buying Guide (FBG) for Child Nutrition Programs *New Foods & Features!*

Team Nutrition released new foods that consist of USDA frozen mixed vegetables and a variety of meat items including 11, 43, and 48-ounce pouched tuna; boneless, skinless chicken thighs; ground mutton, mutton shoulder chops and stew meat; catfish fillets; and USDA Foods canned pork. Stay tuned for additional yield data releases.

There are also two [2] new features of the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG) Interactive Web-based Tool. Both features below are available under the Tools menu on the toolbar.

1. **Interactive flow chart on using the preparation yield** walks users through when to use the Preparation Yield factor in the Recipe Analysis Workbook (RAW).
2. **An Ounces to Pounds Calculator** allows users to easily convert ounces to pounds and pounds to ounces to make converting units a breeze!



Nutrition Ed Nook

Rooting for You

Root vegetables are the March Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) spotlight. These vegetables, which grow underground at the base of a plant, bring vitamins, minerals, starches, and sugars to help supply the body's needs. Root vegetables include carrots, beets, and radishes.

Beets are packed with nutrients like fiber, iron, folate, potassium, and antioxidants. Beets come in a variety of colors, including white, red, Chioggia, and golden. Smaller

to medium size beets tend to have better flavor. In Georgia, beets are in season April through June. Sauté them with chopped onion and garlic for a healthy side dish.

Carrots are high in vitamin A, which supports good eyesight. Carrots also provide vitamin K and biotin. Orange carrots are the most recognized, however, carrots can also be red, purple, white, or yellow in color. In Georgia, carrots are in season January through June and October through December. Add carrots to salads and soups for a crunchy, sweet flavor.

Radishes are a good source of vitamin C, which is good for a healthy immune system and skin. They are also a good source of fiber and potassium. Radishes are crisp, crunchy, and come in different colors such as red, pink, white, and purple, shapes, and sizes. In Georgia,

radishes are in season March through June. Enjoy radishes raw or added to main dishes such as salads, stews, soups, pastas, or sandwiches.

Integration:

- [Peach and Carrot Smoothie](#)
- [Carrot Pancakes](#)
- [Beet Dip](#)
- [Un-beet-able Berry Smoothie](#)
- [Crunchy Vegetable Wraps](#)
- [Delicious Dunking Dip](#)

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.

Taste test with carrots, beets, radishes, or another root vegetable to see how participants enjoy them and add it as a side item in your menu.

Read [Rah, Rah, Radishes!](#) by April Pulley Sayre . Know anyone who doesn't like veggies? Here is a book that's sure to change their hungry minds! With raucous, rhyming text, *Rah, Rah, Radishes!* celebrates fresh vegetables, nature's bright colors, and the joy of healthy eating. The book's interactive spirit encourages kids to join in on the read-aloud fun, and little ones won't be able to resist the book's vibrant photographs-they're a feast for the eyes.

Talk with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as rinsing and drying root vegetables to be cooked in a dish. **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate root vegetables into their meals!

Conversation:

- Have your participants tried carrots, beets, and/or radishes before?
- Which of the three, carrots, beets, or radishes, is their favorite to eat?
- What other root vegetables do they like to eat?

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

Physical Activity Corner

Spring into health with Gardening



As spring approaches, now is the perfect time to venture outdoors and get in some physical activity while smelling the fragrance of bright, beautiful flowers blossoming in the morning.

“Spring Into Health” with gardening this season, a great form of physical activity! Gardening improves fitness and overall health and mental wellbeing. In addition, gardening is a way to integrate family engagement through Farm to Early Care & Education (ECE) in your program.

Farm to ECE has become increasingly popular in our communities in Georgia for many good reasons! When children are gardening with the assistance of parents or providers, they tend to eat more fruits and vegetables, have a better understanding of nutrition, improve their physical and mental development, increase social & emotional skills, and connect with nature.

Gardening can provide farmers, providers, parents, and children with a sense of purpose in life and nature; this may include the feeling of the soil slipping through their fingers for

strength and the awe in harvesting fruits and vegetables after planting, caring, and harvesting them. Gardening helps to enhance body movement, coordination, and fine & gross motor skills.

Gardening is a great way to bring the family together while planting, caring, and harvesting fresh fruits and vegetables, preparing and cooking meals with the produce from your garden, and engaging in the outdoors in a meaningful way. Time to get outdoors, experiment, and explore!

Integration:

- **Getting Started: Georgia Farm to ECE Guide**
- **Georgia Master Gardeners: Gardens of Georgia**
- **Quality Care for Children's Farm to ECE Webpage**
- **UGA Extension's Community and School Gardens**
- **Join a Community Garden – Food Well Alliance**

Education:

Read out loud, "*The Garden Project*," by Margaret McManara.

Watch the video on "**Introduction to Gardening with Children**" by Georgia Organics in Georgia.

Talk with families about ways to start a small garden, whether at home, in their local community, at your childcare site, or at their local school. **Bonus:** Share **#LoveGardening**, **#SpringIntoHealth**, **#GardenLife**, **#Instagarden**, **#CommunityGarden** pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- How do you feel after gardening?
- What would you like to plant in your garden?
- How does gardening help you with physical activity?
- Why is it important to build and to grow gardens in your communities?

Share your **#LoveGardening**, **#SpringIntoHealth**, **#MyGarden**, **#GardenLife**, **#Instagarden** stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren at tina.mclaren@decal.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
March	Harvest of the Month: Root Vegetables
March 6	Corrective Action Plan & Serious Deficiency Training
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
March 31	Easter
April	Harvest of the Month: Legumes
April 10-11	Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (Atlanta)
April 15	Memo Monday
April 16	Happy Helpings Budget Readiness Webinar
April 18	Procurement Supporting Documents & Resources Webinar

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Make your Local Farmers Market a Meal Site Option](#)
- [FY24 Reimbursement Rates Release](#)
- [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

GOAL Winner: Ashley Ford



An Early Childhood Care and Education Student at Ogeechee Technical College in Statesboro has been named as the school's 2024 GOAL Student. G.O.A.L stands for Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership.

Ashley Ford is a mother of two daughters and a child care teacher at Kids World Learning Center in Statesboro. She now moves on to regional and state level

competitions where she could win a new car and serve as spokesperson for technical educations here in Georgia.

Joining us on this week's episode of DECAL Download to talk about the program and the competition is Ashley Ford, the 2024 GOAL Student for Ogeechee Technical College, along with Sarah Beverley, who is a Student Navigator and GOAL coordinator at the college. Also joining us is Dr. Christi Moore, the Professional Learning Director here at DECAL.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Nutrition Division

Marketing & Outreach Team



Cindy Kicklighter
Carl Glover

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Nondiscrimination Statement: English
Nondiscrimination Statement: Spanish

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