



May 1, 2023

Guidance 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. In response, USDA issued the guidance, *Implementation Guidance: Summer 2023 Non-Congregate Meal Services in Rural Areas*.

To provide further clarity, Nutrition Services developed a recorded webinar and memorandum, providing guidance on the following topics (not an exhaustive list):

- Rural non-congregate meal site eligibility criteria
- Non-congregate meal service models
- Multi-day and bulk meal distribution
- Recordkeeping requirements

The webinar also includes information on racial and ethnic data collection, regulation changes as a result of the Final Rule, and DECAL's sponsor tiering system.

You may access the webinar recording [here](#) and the DECAL memorandum, *Rural Non-Congregate Meal Services in the Summer Food Service Program*, [here](#).

Please email your questions, comments, concerns, and any feedback you may have about the recorded webinar to Leatha.Bryant@dec.al.ga.gov or the Nutrition TA Mailbox at NutritionTA@dec.al.ga.gov. The Nutrition Services Team will respond to all questions and make the responses available.

Please note: Since the publication of the recorded webinar and DECAL's memorandum, USDA issued further guidance on non-congregate meal services in rural settings. This new guidance, entitled *Questions and Answers #2: Summer 2023 Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas*, can be found [here](#). Nutrition Services will incorporate USDA's new information and any additional updates in forthcoming guidance.

For questions regarding the memoranda, 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. You may apply for the grant before your application is approved.

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 | • Dooley | • 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.

Happy Helpings Application Due by June 15

If you have not submitted your Happy Helpings (HH) application, please make sure to do so by the federal deadline on Thursday, June 15, 2023. Applications not submitted by the deadline date **will not** be reviewed; therefore, **it cannot** be approved.

If your organization still has plans to participate this summer, you are strongly encouraged to complete and submit the application by the deadline date. For detailed instructions on completing the application, you may refer to the [FY 2023 HH Application Instruction Booklet](#).



Week May 1-5, 2023

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is currently celebrating the third annual Children's Mental Health Week.

Children develop social and emotional skills—mental health—through strong, nurturing relationships with the adults in their lives. There is a window of opportunity in early childhood to establish relationships that build the foundation for a child's

emotional wellbeing throughout life.

During Children's Mental Health we promote activities that help children, and their caregivers recognize the importance of social and emotional development. We also celebrate early learning professionals and the important role they play in supporting early childhood mental health!

We have lots of fun activities planned for early care and learning classrooms for the week, and you can find out all about them [here](#).

Be sure to check out the self-care resources for teachers while you're there. Please share pictures of your class engaged in Children's Mental Health Week activities to social media using the hashtags **#littlekidsbigfeelings** and **#DECALCMHWeek2023** during the week, and you'll be entered into a drawing to win self-care gift cards being provided by our partners at the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS).

Updated Business Operations Representative Assignments

We are pleased to announce that Lavesia (Vee) Ervin has been hired on as a full time Business Operations Representative effective last month. Lavesia worked in multiple temporary roles with DECAL from August 2022 to February 2023. Her hard work and dedication has prepared her for success in this new role.

Please see the updated assignments below:

Business Operations Representative	Institution Assignment	Email	Phone Number
Lavesia Ervin	o (zero)-C H-P	Lavesia.Ervin@dec.al.ga.gov	(404) 293-5258
Edith Pierre	D-G, Q-Z	Edith.Pierre@dec.al.ga.gov	(404) 463-8314

Requesting an Advance Payment for Happy Helpings

Advances can only be used for Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) administrative or operating expenditures. Federal regulation, **7 CFR 225.2** defines an advance payment as financial assistance made available for Program costs prior to the month in which such cost will be incurred.

Happy Helpings sponsors may request an advance payment via the annual application process via GA ATLAS. Advance payment requests will be considered upon the approval of the annual SFSP application and the execution of the SFSP Program Agreement (new sponsoring organizations only).

REQUIREMENTS

- Happy Helpings sponsors must have an executed Program Agreement.
- Happy Helpings sponsors must operate for a minimum of 10 days during the month in which the advance is requested.

For questions, email nutritionbudget@decals.ga.gov.

Happy Helpings and Farmers Markets work together

Farmers markets are places where farmers can sell homegrown produce directly to consumers. These marketplaces differ from grocery stores or supermarkets because the farmer sells fresh produce in season. You will not find packaged or frozen goods typically found in grocery chains, however, you can find plenty of farmers' markets across many states, like supermarket chains! Search Farmers Markets [here](#) and make sure to share this resource with families.

This summer, micro-purchase (less than \$10,000) informal procurement method is the most compatible purchasing method to use at the farmers market. A vital part for Organizations to remember when purchasing from the Farmer's Market is maintaining accurate program expense records. Below is a list of best practices for managing Happy Helpings receipts to support the purchase(s). Make sure farmer's receipts have all the following elements:

- Date
- Farm Name (Vendor)
- Contact information of the farm
- An itemized list of goods and quantities
- Description with the price of items
- The total amount and tax
- The payment method
- The receipt text should be clear and legible

Shopping at the farmers market is a great way to equally distribute purchasing, provide a healthy variety of food options, support your area's economy, reduce waste, and lower your carbon footprint. Check out your local Farmer's Market (Georgia Department of Agriculture) today!

For questions regarding procurement, please contact Tempest Harris, Procurement Compliance Specialist at [Tempest Harris](#).

Happy Helping Waivers during Unanticipated School Closures have Expired

On May 18, 2022, DECAL received approval from the USDA for statewide waivers available during unanticipated school closures when congregate meal services were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 14, 2023, DECAL also received USDA approval for statewide waivers for unanticipated school closures as a result of 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 a similar unanticipated cause.

All waivers listed below for unanticipated school closures **expired on April 30, 2023**:

- Non-congregate Meal Services
 - Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-Up
 - Meal Service Times
 - Service of Meals at School Sites
-

Get Informed: Upcoming Training Dates

May 22, 2023 – *Memo Monday*

Do you need a refresher on the new SFSP final rule and latest updates?

Join our May Memo Monday webinar to learn the following:

- **Guidance on Performance Standards, Budgets, and Management Plans in the Summer Food Service Program**, dated March 7, 2023
- **Unique Entity Identifier Transition**, dated March 20, 2023

May 23, 2023 – *Let's Move! Encouraging Physical Activity throughout the Lifespan*

Do you need innovative ideas to incorporate more physical activity?

Join this webinar to learn ideas to increase physical activity throughout the day in small spaces, outdoor areas, and while using minimal equipment.

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 **SFSP Updates** webinar recording. It discussed guidance on the rural non-congregate meal service option; final rule; collection of racial and ethnicity data and the new tiering process.

Food Buying Guide (FBG) for Child Nutrition Programs Interactive Web-based Tool **New features!**

USDA's Team Nutrition has released an update to the Exhibit A Grains Tool on both the web and mobile app of the Food Buying Guide, which now requires the program and meal to be selected to filter the search results to only creditable grain items for that specific program. Haven't used the Food Buying Guide Exhibit A Grains tool? We have great webinars for you to learn the basics, as well as a refresher on how to calculate ounce equivalents of grains. Explore the **Food Buying Guide** today! Also, check out the additional resources regarding grains.

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.





Berry Delicious: Blueberries

Blueberries are May's Harvest of the Month (**English** and **Spanish**) spotlight. They are simple, healthy, and delicious. Blueberries are an excellent source of vitamin C, which promotes a healthy immune system. They are also a good source of fiber and copper, and high in vitamin K and manganese. Enjoy fresh blueberries as a snack or add them to cereal, oatmeal, salads, smoothies, or yogurt.

Blueberry season in Georgia is April through July, when they are of highest quality and most cost effective. The two main varieties of blueberries grown in Georgia are Southern Highbush and Rabbiteye. Georgia's blueberry capital is Alma, located in Bacon County.

Fun Fact: Each blossom on a blueberry bush becomes one blueberry - first hard and green, then reddish-purple, and finally blue, sweet, and ready to eat!

Integration:

- **Frozen Yogurt Covered Blueberries**
- **Blueberry Breakfast Bites**
- **Red, White & Blue Parfaits**
- **Blueberry Cheesecake Smoothie**

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** blueberries. Rabbiteye types are the best choice for home gardens. This species is actually native to Georgia, and there are varieties that can be produced across the state from the coastal flatwoods to the mountain regions.
- **Read** *Mr. Astley's Blueberries* by **Kelly Jenkins Lin** with your program participants. Follow Mr. Astley as he works in his blueberry patch all year long and see why his blueberries really are the best blueberries yet!
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as rinsing blueberries under cool running water. **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate blueberries into their meals!

Conversation:

- Have your program participants eaten blueberries before?
- What is their favorite way to eat blueberries?
- What other types of berries do they like to eat?

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



May's Harvest of the Month Bonus Item:

Vidalia Onions

The May Harvest of the Month Bonus spotlight is the Vidalia Onion. They can boost flavor and add antioxidants for cell and tissue health. When shopping, choose whole onions that are firm and heavy for their size and have no

scent. Avoid cut, bruised, or sprouting onions.

Types of onions include green, red, white, yellow, sweet, chives, and leeks. When cooked,

Vidalia onions become sweeter. Caramelize, dice, grill, roast, sauté, or steam them up and add them raw on top of tacos or a salad to boost the flavor!

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



Physical Activity Corner: *National Physical Fitness and Sports Month*

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month – a campaign that provides an opportunity to celebrate and promote physical activity, sports, and all of its many health benefits to all ages, communities, schools, and workplaces.

Move in May is about enjoying physical activity, exercise, and sports. There are lots of ways to be more physically active, and to find a form of physical activity that each person can enjoy.

Physical activity is key to maintaining health and well-being. Being active can improve fitness, reduce stress and risk for many chronic diseases, and support good mental health. Youth sports can help kids and teens get active and develop leadership, time management, and relationship-building skills.

According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition (ODPHP), here are the recommendation on all ages:

- Children ages 3 through 5 years need to be active throughout the day.
- Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 need to be active for 60 minutes every day.
- Adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination each week.
- Adults aged 65 and older need:
 - At least 150 minutes a week (for example, 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week) of **moderate-intensity activity** such as brisk walking. Or they need 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity such as hiking, jogging, or running.
- Adults with chronic health conditions or disabilities who are able should:
 - Get at least 150 minutes (for example, 30 minutes 5 days a week) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity a week.

How To Observe Physical Activity:

- At home: Break away from sitting less and *MOVE* more. Take a 15-minute walk early in the morning or during a lunch break. End a long day of work with a few stretches or a yoga session for quietness, tranquility, and peace of mind.
- To school (children/parents): As a family, go together with your children early in the morning to walk to and from school or after school in the afternoon.
- With the family: Walk in with your neighborhood or community – to the park, local mall, local farmer’s market, or a grocery store in the day or on a weekend. Be safe!
- At work (colleagues): Invite a colleague to take a 10-minute walk (break) from the computer/office. Take the stairs, instead of the elevators.

Enjoy the outdoors this summer season and **Let’s Move It!**

Integration:

- [Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition](#)
- [National Sports Youth Strategy](#)
- [Move Your Way® Community Resources](#)

Education:

- Read out loud, “**Sports**” by Alyssa Liang.
- **Watch** the video on **Move Your Way: Tips for Getting Active as a Family**.
- **Talk** with families about ways to move more at home, in their community, at childcare and at adult care centers. **Bonus:** Share #MayFitness, #MoveInMay, #NationalPhysicalActivity&Sports #MoveYourWay pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What is your favorite physical fitness activity daily?
- What sports do most children play?
- Why is physical fitness important in sports?
- What are the benefits of staying physically active?
- How do you stay motivated to exercise daily?

Share your #DECALPhysicalActivity, #NationalPhysicalActivity, #Fitness&Sports, #MayFitness, #MoveInMay, #BeActive, #MoveYourWay stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren at tina.mclaren@dec.al.gov.



DECAL's Nutrition Spotlight: *Meet Lavesia Ervin, Business Operations Representative*

Lavesia (Vee) Ervin recently joined the Nutrition Services Division as a Business Operations Representative.

In this position, Lavesia is responsible for all sponsor and institution assignments that fall under Zero (O)-C and H-P. She is responsible for assisting sponsors and institutions who want to add additional sites and to make site level updates to their application that require approval. She also distributes Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) reports to the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Most recently, Lavesia was a temporary employee serving in the role as Administrative Assistant for the Nutrition Services Division, where she gained extensive knowledge of both the Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). She also assisted the marketing and outreach team recruiting potential partners to participate in the Happy Helpings program.

Lavesia is looking forward to learning new things about the application process and providing everyone she meets with top-notch customer service. "It is my pleasure to be here, and I look forward to working with everyone," said Lavesia.

Lavesia has 20 years of experience as an executive assistant. She previously worked for One & All Atlanta Marketing Agency, where she was the Sr. Executive Assistant supporting the C-suite level leadership. Lavesia also worked as a logistic assistant in the oil and gas industry where she managed a quarterly 1.5 million dollar build plan.

Originally from Texas, Lavesia has lived in Georgia since 2016 and currently resides in Atlanta with her husband. She loves anything outdoors, including riding horses. She is a jubilant grandmother, as her grandchildren “make her heart sing.” Lavesia loves assisting people and is deeply spiritual. Her favorite quote is from Gandhi who once said, “In a gentle way, you can shake the world.”

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.

The poster is titled "Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 2022-23 Calendar". It features a grid of 12 months, each with a main produce item and a bonus item. The background is green with faint illustrations of various fruits and vegetables. At the bottom, there are logos for Quality Care for Children, Georgia Organics, and the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, along with a website URL and a statement of equal opportunity.

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 2022-23 Calendar		
AUGUST Watermelon	SEPTEMBER Bell Peppers BONUS Apples	OCTOBER Squash Summer, Winter, Pumpkin BONUS Apples
NOVEMBER Sweet Potatoes	DECEMBER Lettuce BONUS Citrus	JANUARY Greens Collard, Mustard, Turnip
FEBRUARY Cruciferous Vegetables Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower	MARCH Root Vegetables Carrots, Beets, Radishes <small>National GAP Week March 13-15, 2023</small>	APRIL Strawberries
MAY Blueberries BONUS Vidalia Onions	JUNE Cucumbers	JULY Peaches

Logos: Quality Care for Children, Georgia Organics, Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning
Get monthly harvest-themed lesson plans, resources, parent newsletters and books here: www.qualitycareforchildren.org/farm-to-ec
THIS INSTITUTION IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER.

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
May	Harvest of the Month: Blueberries Bonus Harvest of the Month: Vidalia Onions
May 1-5	Children's Mental Health Week
May 22	Memo Monday
May 23	Let's Move! Encouraging Physical Activity throughout the Lifespan Webinar
May 15	Start-up Grant Application Deadline
June 15	Deadline to submit Happy Helpings Application

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds Use Request](#)
- [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](#)
- [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

Children's Mental Health Week

This week, DECAL is celebrating the third Annual Children's Mental Health Week here in Georgia. At DECAL, we support the social and emotional growth of children every day.

Children's mental health week reminds us that we all have a

On the next ...
DECAL
Download 
New Episodes Every Wednesday!



Esther Duggan
Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialist

Perri Walden
Pre K Specialist

Lori Ballew
Infant Toddler Specialist

Laura Lucas
Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Director

This Week's Topic:



role to play in promoting children's mental health through strong, nurturing relationships with the children in our lives.

Joining us on this week's DECAL Download to tell us more about Children's Mental Health Week, is Laura Lucas, the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Director here at DECAL and Esther Duggan, an

Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialist. We are also joined by one of our Pre-K Specialists, Perri Walden and Infant Toddler Specialist, Lori Ballew.

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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