



October 2, 2023

Thank You for Another Successful Summer Season *2.8 Million Meals Served during FY23*

Thanks to you, more than 2.8 million meals were served to Georgia's children this summer. On behalf of GA DECAL, we thank you for your commitment to serving these meals!

By the Numbers:

- 69 Sponsors were approved to serve meals during FY2023
- 997 Meal Sites were approved in FY2023
- 100 Georgia Counties had Happy Helping Meal Sites during FY2023
- 2,835,057 Meals were served to Georgia's Children in FY2023

Annual Year-End Reconciliation Requirement for FY2023

It's that time of year again. Institutions operating FY2023 Happy Helpings Summer Food Program (May 2023- Aug 2023) must complete an Annual Reconciliation Form by **October 31, 2023**. Click [here](#) for the reconciliation form and [here](#) for instructions.

The form should include all FY2023 Happy Helpings operating months. Per SFSP Policy 5, sponsors are required to submit year-end reconciliation documentation as well as the bank statement and/or general ledger **supporting the ending balance on the reconciliation form**.

The Year End Reconciliation is completed after:

- The final claim is submitted to DECAL.
- All invoices are paid.
- Final reimbursement is received.
- Happy Helpings functional activity is closed.
- All Happy Helpings activity is accounted for on the last operating bank statement or general ledger.

The SFSP reconciliation form and final bank statement or general ledger must be submitted to DECAL no later than October 31, 2023.

Submit the form and supporting financial documentation together, to nutritionbudget@decals.ga.gov. Include the name of the institution and agreement number in the subject of the email.

Contact the budget team at nutritionbudget@decals.ga.gov with any questions.

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.

When approved, Summer Food Service Program (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 Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

In situations that may warrant longer approval periods, the FNS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) 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.

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



Sonja Adams Celebrates 15 Years with State of Georgia

Nutrition Services congratulates (L) Sonja Adams, Senior Manager of Provider Services for 15 years of dedicated service to the State of Georgia.



In her role, Sonja oversees Procurement, Nutrition Education, Training and Technical Assistance and Policy.

Director of Nutrition Services, Tamika Boone (R) presented Sonja with a service certificate at a recent staff meeting.

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 Budget Reconciliation Training](#). It discussed detailed information on the annual Year-End Reconciliation process, how to complete the Reconciliation Form, types of documents required for submission and potential next steps.

Food Buying Guide (FBG) for Child Nutrition Programs *New Food Yields!*

New yields are now available in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs Interactive Web-based (FBG) Tool and FBG Mobile App! New yield data is available for: individually quick-frozen (IQF) black beans, IQF pinto beans, roasted soybeans, roasted chickpeas, fresh oranges, grape tomatoes, and ready-to-use diced and sliced onions. Stay tuned for additional yield data releases coming soon. Explore the [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) today!

Nutrition Ed Nook

Pepper Palooza

We're celebrating peppers all month long as October's Harvest of the Month spotlight and this year's October is Farm to School & Early Care and Education Month *Pepper Palooza* campaign. Peppers come in all different shapes, sizes, colors, and flavors, and they can be found in cuisines throughout the world! Peppers are scientifically considered to be fruits because they contain seeds and are produced from a flowering plant.



Bell peppers & hot peppers are excellent sources of Vitamin C and B-6. A bell pepper provides 169% of daily vitamin C intake while a hot pepper provides 72% of daily vitamin C intake. As peppers become ripe, their vitamins A and C content increase, which makes sweet peppers get sweeter and hot peppers get hotter. You can tell when peppers are becoming ripe because their colors change from green to orange, red, or yellow.

Crisp and delicious Georgia bell peppers are harvested in both spring and fall and pop up in a variety of colors from mid-June through October. Locally grown varieties are usually more cost effective and fresher.

Fun Fact: The hottest pepper in the world is the Carolina Reaper. It is rated 1,569,000 on the Scoville Heat Unit (SHU). For comparison, a bell pepper is 0 (zero) SHU and a jalapeno is between 2,000-8,000 SHU.

Integration:

- **Simple Stuffed Peppers**
- **Salsa Verde**
- **Peach Salsa**
- **Veggie Quesadillas with Cilantro Yogurt Dip**

Education:

- **Watch** the **Learn Fruits and Vegetables for Kids: The Bell Pepper** video. In this episode, children get to know the bell pepper better and have fun!
- **Read** aloud the book **Green is a Chile Pepper – A Book of Colors by Roseanne Greenfield Thong**. In this lively picture book that Booklist described as "a cheerful color-concept book that presents a slice of Latino culture through food and fun," children discover a world of colors all around them: red is spices and swirling skirts, yellow is masa, tortillas, and sweet corn cake.
- **Create** pepper arts and crafts with the participants in your program.
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as washing and cleaning peppers for a meal. **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate peppers into their meals!

Conversation:

- Have your program participants eaten peppers before?
- What peppers have they tried?
- Which peppers do they like the most?

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



Physical Activity Corner: *"Walk"tober: Let's Get Walking*

Walktober - A new month, a new you, and a new start of the beautiful fall season. October is National Walk to School Month. Walking is one of the many physical activities people enjoy adding into their daily routine as the weather cools down. Start the day by moving - go for a walk with you and your family to keep your heart rate up for at least 30-minutes every day. Walking helps to raise awareness on the importance of physical activity and supports good health for our families, schools, and

neighboring communities.

As per the Centers for Disease Control's *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*, physical activity improves sleep, reduces anxiety and depression, lowers risk of hypertension and type 2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

How To Observe #OctoberWalks

- **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 during your break from the computer/office. Take the stairs, instead of the elevators.

The "Power of Walking" is an International Walk to School Month celebrated in the month of

October. Organize, plan, or coordinate a small walk community event or an activity with your family, school, work, or local communities. To find out more, please visit the following websites www.walkbiketoschool.org or www.livesmartoni.com/walktober.

Integration:

- **Walk to School**
- **The Every Body Walk!**
- **Step It Up! The Surgeon's General Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities**
- **State Parks and Trails in Georgia**
- **2023 Georgia 2-Day Walk for Breast Cancer**
- **Walks in Georgia**

Education:

- **Read** aloud the book **"We Walk Through the Forest,"** By **Lisa Ferland and Yana Popova.**
- **Watch** the video on the **Benefits of Walking.**
- **Talk** with families about ways to incorporate walking into their daily lives. **Bonus:** Send #WALKTOBER pictures and events that are happening in your home, early childcare centers, offices, schools, and communities.

Conversation:

- What is the best day and time to walk?
- Who do you enjoy walking with?
- What are the benefits of walking?
- How much should I walk a day?
- What is your favorite leisure place to walk (i.e., parks, trails, neighborhoods, schools)?

Share your #Walktober, #WalkDay, #Walkathon, #Walkclub, #WalkToSchool, and #WalkToWork stories and photos with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@dec.al.gov.

DECAL's Nutrition Spotlight:

Meet Cassandra Washington, Application Specialist

Cassandra Washington recently joined DECAL's Nutrition Division as an Application Specialist. In this role, Cassandra will assist new sponsors and institutions with their applications to participate in the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program. Other duties include reviewing and the processing of application documents, verification of compliance with federal regulations and state policy, coordinating field duties with field staff, issuing correspondence, and acting upon requests within specific time frames.



Previously, Cassandra worked for the Minnesota Department of Education as a Nutrition Consultant conducting administrative reviews for Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). She has over 20 years of extensive experience working in food service and with child nutrition programs- CACFP, SFSP and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). She has worked in the role of Food Service Director for one of DECAL's previously approved CACFP institutions.

Cassandra attended The Culinary Institute of New Orleans in Louisiana where she earned her Associate of Arts Degree. She was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and relocated to Powder Springs, Georgia, 17 years ago. She recently celebrated 27 years of marriage with her husband. Together, they have three children.

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
October	Harvest of the Month: Pepper Palooza
October 9	Columbus Day
October 31	Year-End Reconciliation Deadline

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Happy Helpings Year-End Reconciliation Memorandum](#)
- [Understanding Food Yield to Prevent Food Waste](#)
- [Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals](#)
- [After School Programs Required to Apply for License or Exemption to Participate in At-Risk](#)
- [Stay Informed on Monitoring](#)
- [Determining Duty Allocation in the Management Plan](#)
- [Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds Use Request](#)
- [Apply for a No Kid Hungry Grant Today](#)
- [Be a Health Hero - Health Empowers You](#)
- [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

Georgia Pre-K Week



The old saying goes ‘time flies when you’re having fun.’ Well, that’s just the case for our annual Georgia Pre-K week as we prepare to celebrate year number 13, October 2-6. This also marks 31 years offering Pre-K to students and families here in Georgia. In 1992, Governor Zell Miller launched a pilot program serving 750 four-year-olds in the state.

Now, 31 years later, the lottery-funded Georgia’s Pre-K Program has laid a solid foundation for academic excellence and future success in the lives of over 2-million children. Pre-K Week is an amazing opportunity for us to tell this great success story of Georgia’s Pre-K.

Joining us on this episode of DECAL Download to talk about Georgia Pre-K Week is Dr. Caitlin Dooley, the Executive Director of Voices for Georgia’s Children, and Georgia State Representative Teri Anulewicz, who has participated in previous Georgia’s Pre-K Weeks and is a frequent guest reader in Georgia’s Pre-K Program classrooms through the years.

Listen to the episode [here](#).



Nutrition Division

Marketing & Outreach Team

Cindy Kicklighter
Carl Glover

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Bright from the Start: DECAL | 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Atlanta, GA 30334

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