



December 15, 2025

A Holiday Message from Nutrition Services

Happy Holidays from Tamika Boone and the Nutrition Services Team at DECAL.

We're grateful for your partnership and the incredible work you do throughout the year.



DECAL Nutrition Welcomes Monica Griffin



DECAL Nutrition Services is excited to welcome Monica Griffin, Nutrition Education and Physical Activity Supervisor.

In her role, Monica oversees statewide nutrition education and physical activity initiatives, providing training and technical assistance to child care providers, while collaborating across teams to ensure compliance, develop resources, analyze program data, and promote wellness in early learning environments.

She is a registered dietitian with more than 15 years of experience supporting early care and education programs across Georgia. She will work closely with child care programs and departments across the agency to help Georgia remain a model for healthy, high-quality learning environments.

Before joining DECAL, she served as the Assistant Director of Nutrition and Wellness Initiatives at Quality Care for Children, an Atlanta-based CACFP sponsor organization and Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. Her background also includes roles with Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Head Start, and a previous position at DECAL as the Nutrition Education Manager.

Monica shared that she was inspired to rejoin DECAL because of the incredible work happening in Georgia's CACFP and Happy Helpings programs. She looks forward to supporting and strengthening efforts around fresh foods, physical activity, and best practices in early learning environments.

Having collaborated with DECAL team members over the years, Monica said, "I'm excited to be back home and continue serving Georgia's early learning community".

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time at her children's many sporting events—especially volleyball and basketball—and shared a fun fact: she loves to hula hoop.

Her favorite quote, from Ellyn Satter, captures her approach to wellness: “When the joy goes out of eating, nutrition suffers.”

Faithful Service Awards Presented to Tamika Boone and Kristy Lanier

Nutrition Services is proud to recognize Tamika Boone, DECAL Nutrition Services Director (pictured on right), for her remarkable 20 years of dedicated service to the State of Georgia.

Presented by Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud (pictured on left), this award acknowledges Tamika's outstanding leadership, deep commitment to service, and unwavering dedication to strengthening the quality and integrity of DECAL's nutrition programs statewide.

Throughout her two decades Tamika is known for her strategic vision, collaborative spirit, and passion for ensuring children and families have access to healthy nutritious meals. Her influence has shaped countless initiatives, supported providers across Georgia, and made a lasting impact on the communities we serve.

Congratulations, Tamika! Thank you for your exceptional service, leadership, and commitment to DECAL's mission.



Nutrition Services is also proud to recognize Kristy Lanier, Budget Compliance Specialist (pictured at right), with the Faithful Service Award for five years of dedicated service to the State of Georgia.

Presented by Demeteria Thornton, Application Services Manager (pictured on left), this award celebrates Kristy's commitment to accuracy, accountability, and excellence in supporting the financial integrity of our nutrition programs.

Kristy is known by her colleagues as dependable, detail-oriented, and deeply committed to ensuring our programs operate smoothly and efficiently. Her strong work ethic, collaborative spirit, and willingness to go the extra mile have made a meaningful impact on Nutrition Services.

Congratulations, Kristy! Thank you for your exceptional service and the difference you continue to make each day.

Waivers Available during Unanticipated School Closures

On July 30, 2025, DECAL was approved by USDA to grant CACFP facilities waivers for the following:

- Non-Congregate Meal Service
- Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-up
- Meal Service Times

- At-Risk Enrichment Activities

You may access the waiver request approval [here](#).

These waivers can only be utilized during unanticipated school closures resulting from natural disasters, unscheduled major building repairs, court orders relating to school safety or other issues, labor-management disputes or when approved by DECAL for similar unanticipated causes.

In order for a CACFP facility to utilize the above-mentioned waivers, the facility:

- Must be approved to operate the CACFP (child care centers, adult day care centers, emergency shelters, day care homes, outside-school-hours care centers, and/or at-risk afterschool sites);
- Must be located in an area impacted by an unanticipated school closure resulting from natural disasters, unscheduled major building repairs, court orders relating to school safety or other issues, labor-management disputes or when approved by DECAL for similar unanticipated causes; and
- Must limit the use of the waivers to no more than 10 consecutive days. In situations that may warrant a longer time period, Food Nutrition Service (FNS) approval will be required.
- CACFP organizations must seek approval to utilize these waivers and can request their usage through the waiver module in GA ATLAS.

Please note: If desiring to utilize the Home Delivery or Parent/Guardian Pick-up meal service models, CACFP organizations must complete and attach in the waiver module, the USDA Waiver Request Addendum, which can be found [here](#).

Note: Home Delivery does not apply to day care homes.

For questions, please contact [Melissa Stanley](#) or [Tammie Baldwin](#).

FDCH Excess Carryover Funds Past Due

Family Day Care Home Sponsors (FDCH) who have administrative funds exceeding 10% of the fiscal year's administrative payments must return the excess funds to DECAL.

Please note that this requirement is now past due; the deadline was November 30.

To support the calculation, FDCH sponsors must also submit a general ledger or bank statement showing the total ending balance, along with the FDCH Carryover Letter, to the Budget Compliance Supervisor, [Gwendolyn Howard](#).

For more information, please refer to the CACFP Policy Memo, [Carry Over of Unused CACFP Administrative Reimbursement](#), dated October 1, 2020.

Reminder to Review Online CACFP Applications

CACFP Institutions/Sponsors are required to review their online application monthly in GA ATLAS and ensure that any updates are made within 30 days.

[Click here](#) to access CACFP application update procedures.

Independent Centers who have questions or concerns regarding updates, please contact your assigned Application Specialist:

Application Specialists	Institution Assignment	Email	Phone Number
Jerald Savage	o (zero)- G	Jerald.Savage@dec.al.ga.gov	(770) 405-7916
Shericka Blount	H-P	Shericka.Blount@dec.al.ga.gov	(404) 656-6411
Vanessa Goodman	Q-Z	Vanessa.Goodman@dec.al.ga.gov	(404) 591-6027

Sponsors who have questions or concerns regarding updates, please contact your assigned Business Operations Representative:

Business Operations Representative	Institution Assignment	Email	Phone Number
Lavesia Bolden	o (zero)- G	Lavesia.Bolden@dec.al.ga.gov	(404) 463-1066
Dylan Uhlir	H-P	Dylan.Uhlir@dec.al.ga.gov	(404) 591-5813
Joveta Watson	Q-Z	Joveta.Watson@dec.al.ga.gov	(706) 434-6831

Have You Thought about Feeding Kids this Summer?

Consider participating in Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program

Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program, ensures children 18 and under have access to nutritious meals and snacks during the summer when school is not in session.

If your institution currently participates in at-risk afterschool meals, you are well-positioned to offer summer meals.

Training is offered in February or March 2026. There are 50 Georgia counties where children did not have access to a Happy Helpings' meal site during FY25.

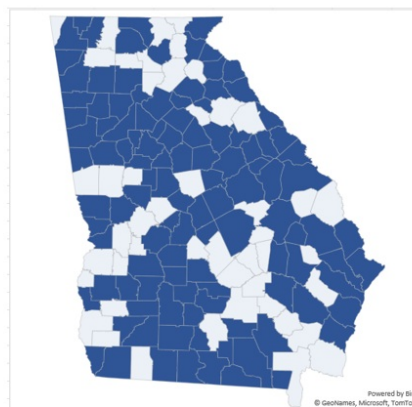
If you are able, please consider expanding your meal service to offer meals in any of the counties listed below.

To get started, please complete the online form on the sponsor page at happyhelpingsga.com.



FY26 Target Counties: 50 Counties

1. Bacon	11. Dawson	21. Johnson	31. Pickens	41. Towns
2. Banks	12. Dodge	22. Jones	32. Pierce	42. Treutlen
3. Berrien	13. Early	23. Long	33. Pike	43. Troup
4. Brantley	14. Evans	24. Marion	34. Pulaski	44. Union
5. Calhoun	15. Forsyth	25. Meriwether	35. Quitman	45. Webster
6. Camden	16. Gordon	26. Miller	36. Schley	46. Wheeler
7. Charlton	17. Grady	27. Montgomery	37. Screven	47. White
8. Coffee	18. Hall	28. Murray	38. Stewart	48. Wilkes
9. Crawford	19. Jeff Davis	29. Oconee	39. Taylor	49. Wilkinson
10. Dade	20. Jenkins	30. Oglethorpe	40. Telfair	50. Worth



Blue: Counties where HH Meals were available in FY25:
White: Counties where meals were not available in FY25

Upcoming Training Dates:

December 16, 2025

Tuesday Tip! Festive Flavors: Fun Snack Ideas for Every Month

1:30 - 2:30 pm

Join us for “CACFP Festive Flavors,” a hands-on, engaging training designed to help you:

- Plan creative, festive snack menus aligned with seasonal themes and holidays
- Understand how to make those snacks CACFP creditable (meeting meal pattern requirements)
- Reduce added sugar while keeping snacks fun and appealing
- Use practical tools, recipe templates, and visual inspiration you can apply right away
- Engage children in snack time through themes, taste tests, and participation

Whether you're new to menu planning or looking for fresh ideas, this training will give you a “snack idea calendar” you can use all year.

Participants can earn one [1.0] state-approved hour(s) for attending this training in its entirety.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

January 13, 2026

Tuesday Tip! Physical Activity in Small Spaces: Four Games to Promote Movement in Limited Space

1:30-2:00pm

Are you looking for simple, effective ways to keep children active even when space is limited? Would you like fresh ideas that promote movement, engagement, and fun in small indoor areas?

Please join this webinar for an energizing overview of how to promote movement in limited spaces.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

January 15, 2026

PALS Session 1: Physical Activity is Important in Early Childhood

1:00-2:00 pm

Are you interested in learning why physical activity is essential for young children, and how it supports healthy development? Do you want practical strategies to help integrate movement into daily routines?

Join us for an informative session on practical strategies to help integrate movement into daily routines.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

January 26, 2026

Memo Monday: Requirement to Accept Medical Statements from Registered Dietitians

10:00 am-12:00 pm

Are you aware of the guidelines for accepting medical statements completed by registered dietitians? Do you understand how this requirement supports accurate dietary accommodations and program compliance?

Join us for a clear overview of the guidelines for accepting medical statements from Registered Dietitians.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

January 27, 2026

Tuesday Tip! When to Request a Medical Statement

1:30-2:00 pm

Are you confident in knowing when a medical statement is required for participants with special dietary needs? Do you understand what documentation is necessary and how to properly follow program guidelines?

Please join this webinar for a clear and informative overview of:

- When to Request a Medical Statement
- Learn when a medical statement is needed
- What the medical statement must include
- How to ensure compliance for your program.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

Notes:

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 e-mail.**
- 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.

National CACFP Association Announcement:

Save the Date: CACFP Week is March 15-21, 2026



The National Child and Adult Care Food Program is excited to announce the campaign for 2026 CACFP Week: **Stirring Up Goodness**

CACFP Week is a national educational and information campaign sponsored annually by the National CACFP Association, designed to raise awareness of how the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program combats food insecurity and improves the nutrition in billions of meals served annually.

The upcoming campaign is [Stirring Up Goodness](#), which centers on the idea that every CACFP meal is more than just nutrition - it's a moment of care, learning and connection.

Join in celebrating the positive impact of the CACFP and the people who make it happen, one meal at a time.

Everyone who registers will also receive an exclusive sample cycle menu, which focuses on how children and adults can be more involved in the meals and snacks that they eat.

[Sign Up for CACFP Week](#)

Visit the National CACFP [website](#) for ideas and materials to help you create a fun, engaging post.

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 [FY 2026 CACFP Renewal Readiness](#) webinar. It provided step-by-step instructions on how to complete annual renewal requirements for FY 2026.

Nutrition Ed Nook *All Things Citrus*



Citrus is December's Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) feature.

Citrus fruits are juicy, flavorful fruits that grow on trees and have a thick, often bitter outer skin that must be peeled before enjoying the sweet and tangy inside. Most citrus fruits are packed with vitamin C, which helps heal cuts, boosts the immune system, and keeps skin healthy.

In Georgia, citrus plants are in season from November through December. There are 70+ citrus farming operations in Georgia and an estimated 300 acres dedicated to citrus production year-round, mostly in the southern portion of the state where the climate is ideal for growing these fruits.

Citrus fruits come in many varieties, including oranges, which are sweet and juicy and often eaten fresh or used to make juice. Tangerines and mandarins are small, easy to peel, and perfect for children's snacks. Grapefruits are larger and tart, often enjoyed sliced or juiced. Lemons and limes are sour and commonly used to add flavor to foods and drinks.

Citrus can be used in many fun and healthy ways. Try adding orange slices to a fruit salad or yogurt parfait, or use lemon juice to flavor steamed vegetables or fish. Citrus-infused water with slices of lemon, lime, or orange makes a refreshing drink. Blend citrus fruits into smoothies, use lime juice in homemade salsa or guacamole, or enjoy grapefruit segments as a tangy addition to breakfast.

Fun Fact: After citrus flowering shrubs or trees are planted, it takes around 4 years before a tree will start producing significant amounts of citrus.

Integration:

- [Fruit Smoothie](#)

- [Orange Banana Frosty](#)
- [Avocado and Corn Salsa](#)
- [Herry's Blueberry Lemon Parfait](#)

Education:

- **Watch** the [Where Do Fruits and Vegetables Come From](#) video to learn where different fruits and vegetables grow. Before watching, ask children where they think citrus fruits come from. You may hear answers like “trees,” “farms,” “the grocery store,” or even “Florida” or “Georgia.” Encourage discussion and let children share what they know or guess. After the video, talk about how citrus fruits grow on trees, often in warm climates, and are harvested by farmers.
- **Conduct a sensory exploration experiment.** Invite children to explore a variety of citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits. Offer whole fruits for observation and encourage children to notice the colors, shapes, and sizes of each one. Let them smell the fruits and describe the different scents. Allow children to touch the fruits, feeling the texture of the skin and the juiciness inside. Provide small pieces of each fruit for tasting, pointing out that some citrus fruits are sweet while others are sour. Finally, explore sound by listening to what the fruit sounds like when squeezed or gently dropped.
- **Read [An Orange in January](#)** by Dianna Hutts Aston. Plump, juicy oranges are one of the great pleasures of winter—and one that is usually taken for granted. Now here's an eloquent, celebratory picture of how those oranges have found their way to the grocery store shelves, and then into kids—tummies!
- **Talk** with families about how children can help with meal preparation such as peeling and separating orange segments for a snack.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate citrus fruits into their meals! Check [Pinterest](#) for recipe inspiration.
- **Want ECE citrus-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's [Harvest of the Month toolkit](#) and [Eat, Learn, Grow Georgia](#) for more ways to engage ECE students.

Conversation:

- Have the children you serve eaten citrus before?
- Have the children ever picked citrus fruit from a tree?
- Which citrus fruit is their favorite?

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

Physical Activity Corner

Let It Flow, Let It Glow: Holiday Movement & Mindfulness

New Month, New You - Energize Your Health. The holiday season is a wonderful time to connect with loved ones and build healthy habits together.

Whether you're caring for children or adults, staying active during Christmas and New Year can bring joy, reduce stress, and promote overall well-being. Let's make this season fun, festive, and full of movement.

Here are some simple active ways to stay active and stress-free. Reduce screen time, add exercise, and move it. You and your loved ones can create calendars of fun and easy fitness activities for the month of December. This can include indoor and outdoor activities, such as yoga, walking/jogging, gardening, dancing (Zumba), doing sit-ups, family hiking or nature walking, jumping rope, biking, playing basketball and soccer.

Post and write small, specific, measurable exercise goals in a visible area, such as on the



refrigerator, holiday calendar, and white board. Encourage each other to set active habits. Furthermore, do some stretches hours before bedtime to help with relaxation and sleep. Focus on creating moments of holiday joy and movement. Take time to relax and recharge, too. Make physical activity a part of the joyous and fun holiday season.

Integration:

- **Twelve (12) Days of Fitness on the holidays**
- **Move Your Way: Tips for Getting Motivated**
- **Winter Activities for Kids**
- **Healthier Holidays in 1-2-3**
- **What Exercise is Right for Me?**

Education:

- **Read** aloud the book, ***Grow Strong! A Book About Healthy Habits*** by Cheri J. Meiners.
 - **Watch** the video on, ***The Importance of Being Physically Active.***
 - **Talk** with families about ways to integrate fitness into the holiday winter season.
- Bonus:** Send #HolidayWorkout, #HolidayFitnessGoal pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What is your favorite festive fitness activity to do during the holiday winter season?
- How do you stay physically active during the holidays?
- Why is it important to keep moving and stay healthy during the holiday season?
- What is a stress free and easy exercise to do in the holidays?

Share your #HolidayFitnessChallenge, #HolidayFitnessGoals, #HolidayWorkout stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@dec.al.ga.gov.

Follow DECAL on Pinterest

Do you need ideas to help incorporate nutrition education and physical activity at your site?

Check out DECAL's Pinterest for CACFP, Happy Helpings& Harvest of the Month recipes, physical activity ideas, healthy holiday celebrations, and more click [here](#).

Nutrition and Physical Activity pins are saved and added weekly.

Questions or suggestions, submit to

morgan.chapman@dec.al.ga.gov or tina.mclaren@dec.al.ga.gov.



Eat Healthy and Live Active

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 25-26 Calendar

The Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month is a collaborative campaign between Quality Care for Children, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia Department of Human Services, and Georgia Organics. The campaign aims to encourage healthy eating habits by promoting a different local, seasonal fruit or vegetable each month.



Visit [EatLearnGrowGA](https://eatlearngrowga.org) to access a variety of classroom activities aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), recipes, book lists, family newsletters, and more to help you incorporate a new vegetable or fruit each month in the classroom, kitchen, and home.

For school-age children resources, visit the Georgia Department of Education's [Harvest of the Month webpage](https://doe.ga.gov).

CACFP Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- **GA Child Care Owners & Administrators: Do You Want Your Child Care Business to Thrive?**
- **FNS Issues Guidance on Using Federal Funds to Purchase Local Foods**
- **At-Risk Afterschool Waivers Available during Unanticipated School Closures**
- **Update on Cash in Lieu of Commodities (CILC) Rates and Claim Processing**
- **Helpful Hints for Completing the CACFP Application**
- **Supplier Change Request (SCR) Form and Updates**
- **Requirement to Accept Medical Statements from Registered Dietitians for Schools and Child and Adult Care Institutions and Facilities**
- **Guidance on the Interpretation of Discrimination Based on “Sex” in USDA Child Nutrition Programs**
- **Statements Supporting Accommodations for Children with Disabilities in the Child Nutrition Programs**
- **Reimbursement Rates for CACFP Providers**
- **Updated Procurement Forms to include Civil Rights Assurance Statement**
- **Updated Agreements for DCH and Administrative Sponsors**
- **How to File a CACFP Claim for Reimbursement**

You can find archived CACFP Newsletters [here](#).

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
December	Harvest of the Month: All Things Citrus
December 16	Tuesday Tip! Festive Flavors: Fun Snack Ideas for Every Month-Webinar
December 25	Holiday: Christmas Day
December 26	State Holiday
January 1	Holiday: New Year's Day
January 13	Tuesday Tip! Physical Activity in Small Spaces: Four Games to Promote Movement in Limited Space- Webinar
January 15	PALS Session 1: Physical Activity is Important in Early Childhood-Webinar
January 19	Holiday: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
January 26	Memo Monday: Requirement to Accept Medical Statements from Registered Dietitians-Webinar
January 27	Tuesday Tip! When to Request a Medical Statement- Webinar
March 15-21	CACFP Week

Decal Download

Chop, Look & Listen



Chop, Look & Listen is our new statewide campaign to prevent children from choking during meal times at child care, at home, or anywhere.

This week's DECAL Download was recorded on site in Brunswick, Georgia, after the second of our two media events launching the Chop, Look & Listen campaign.

Joining us on this episode to talk more about Chop, Look & Listen is State Representative, Dr. Rick Townsend, who represents Georgia House District 179 in the Georgia General Assembly and Pam Stevens, the Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services here at DECAL.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

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.

Nutrition Services Marketing & Outreach Team

Cindy Kicklighter
Joann Kilpatrick



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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