Child & Adult Care Food Program

March 15, 2023

Celebrating National CACFP Week

This week: March 12-18, 2023

CACFP Week is a national education and information campaign sponsored annually the third week of March by the National CACFP Sponsors Association. We thank Governor Kemp for officially declaring this CACFP Week in Georgia via this **proclamation**.

The campaign is designed to raise *awareness* of how the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program works to combat hunger as well as an opportunity for DECAL to *thank* our CACFP providers for ensuring Georgia's children and adults have access to healthy meals.

Throughout this week, we will focus our celebration on information and resources to recognize:

- **C is for Community & Food Access**
- **A is for Adults**
- **C is for Children**
- **F is for Farm to Early Care & Education**
- **P is for Physical Activity**

We've sent email reminders sharing our theme, resources, and events throughout this week. Two important reminders:

- **SHARE** photos of your CACFP Week celebrations using **#CACFPWeekGA** to be entered into a raffle. Winners will be announced via DECAL's **Facebook** and **Instagram** page on Friday, March 17 at 2:00pm.
- **TUNE IN** to Facebook Live on Friday, March 17 at 10:00am to follow along with a guided Garden Yoga video for children and adults.

Transitioning to Summer Meals

Up to $10k available in Happy Helping Start-up Grants

If your institution currently participates in at-risk afterschool meals, you are well-positioned to offer summer meals through Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program.

There are 73 Georgia counties where children did not have access to a Happy Helpings' meal site during FY22. Nutrition Services is now offering new and experienced Happy Helpings sponsors an opportunity to apply for a start-up grant to prop up meal sites in the unserved counties below. Up to $10k in grant funding will be available.

To qualify, sponsors must attend training and have an approved Happy Helpings application. The deadline to apply for the grant is May 15, 2023.

If you would like to offer year-round feeding and are a CACFP Sponsor, we'd like to invite you to register for New Sponsor Training in GA ATLAS. Training is offered on March 22-23 in Albany and April 26-27 in Atlanta.

For more information about the Happy Helpings start-up grants or becoming a sponsor, contact **Cindy.Kicklighter@decal.ga.gov.**

Nutrition Services DECAL

Happy Helpings
Georgia's Summer Food Service Program

Areas of Need: 73 Counties

- Bacon
- Baldwin
- Banks
- Ben Hill
- Berrien
- Bleckley
- Brantley
- Camden
- Charlton
- Chattahoochee
- Clinch
- Cook
- Crawford
- Dade
- Dawson
- Dodge
- Dooly
- Emanuel
- Evans
- Forsyth
- Gilmer
- Gordon
- Greene
- Habersham
- Hall
- Hancock
- Haralson
- Harris
- Heard
- Irwin
- Jeff Davis
- Jenkins
- Johnson
- Jones
- Laurens
- Long
- Lumpkin
- Marion
- Meriwether
- Miller
- Montgomery
- Murray
- Oconee
- Oglethorpe
- Peach
- Pickens
- Pierce
- Pike
- Pulaski
- Putman
- Quitman
- Schley
- Screven
- Stewart
- Talbot
- Taliaferro
- Taylor
- Telfair
- Towns
- Treutlen
- Troup
- Turner
- Twiggs
- Ware
- Warren
- Wayne
- Webster
- Wheeler
- White
- Wilcox
- Wilkes
- Wilkinson
- Worth

Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning
BRIGHT FROM THE START

Check your Email Messages & Update Your Email Address in ATLAS

Don't forget you can check the messages you receive from Nutrition Services within GA ATLAS. Navigate to the home page and you will see a section for messages just below your institution's information.

Also, please ensure that your email address is current in ATLAS.

For more information regarding GA Atlas, contact **Demetria.Thornton@decal.ga.gov** or **Leslie.Truman@decal.ga.gov**.

Updated Application Assignments

We are pleased to announce that Jerald Savage has been promoted from Business Operations Representative to Application Specialist effective February 16. Jerald has been with the Nutrition Services Division for 14 months. His hard work and dedication has prepared him for success in his new role.

Additionally, we would like to let you know that Paula Lawrence is no longer working with the Nutrition Team effective immediately. During Paula's 10-year tenure, she made significant contributions to our division and the agency's mission. We wish her success in her future endeavors.

Please see the updated assignments below:

Application Specialists	Institution Assignment	Email	Phone Number
Jerald Savage	0 (zero)-G V-Z	Jerald.Savage@decal.ga.gov	(770) 405-7916
Shericka Blount	H-P, Q-U	Shericka. Blount@decal.ga.gov	(404)656-6411

Business Operations Representative	Institution Assignment	Email	Phone Number
Demetria Thornton*	0 (zero)-C, H-P	Demetria.Thornton@decal.ga.gov	(404) 463-2182
Edith Pierre	D-G, Q-Z	Edith.Pierre@decal.ga.gov	(404)463-8314

**In the interim, Demetria Thornton, Application Services Manager, will serve as the Business Ops contact for Zero-C & H-P.*

Requesting Specific Prior Written Approval for Costs

Specific Prior Written Approval (SPWA) are costs that are not customarily incurred in the routine operation of the CACFP but are sometimes necessary and reasonable for effective operations. These costs are not allowed unless DECAL has provided the institution with specific written approval by item and amount before the cost is incurred.

How to Request SPWA:

- Complete the **Specific Prior Written Approval** form located on the **Nutrition Services** website. The form can be found under both CACFP and SFSP Forms tab.
- Send the completed and signed form with adequate supporting documentation for the cost to **nutritionbudget@decal.ga.gov** or in case of an emergency purchase, **gwendolyn.howard@decal.ga.gov**.
    - *SPWA requests must always be accompanied by supporting documentation to be considered for approval.*

For a list of costs that require prior or specific prior written approval, please visit DECAL's website **here**.

New Interactive Map shows CACFP Participation in Georgia

Voices for Georgia's Children & DECAL's Nutrition Services partnered to launch a NEW interactive story map; a resource for anyone looking at early childhood food insecurity, food deserts in Georgia and food programs in child care settings.

Launched in conjunction with CACFP Week, the map uses geographic system (GIS) technology to layer information about Georgia's child care provider locations, participation in CACFP, food access, family poverty & more. The map also helps users visualize CACFP participation & highlights communities where there is an opportunity to expand.

We encourage you to look at the data and to utilize the maps**here.**

Interactive State Policy Map

Stay Up To Date on State Level Policies

Our partners at the National Farm to School Network (NFSN) have a fantastic resource to help you stay up-to-date on state-level policies related to child nutrition. Explore what is happening in your state/territory by visiting their interactive State Policy Map.

See what's happening in your state**here**.

Keep Informed on Food Recalls to prevent Serious Illness

If you procure foods from a local producer, store, food vendor, or food service management company, the following information is very important. According to the Food and Drug Administration, food recalls are removals of foods from the market that violate the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) regulations. In short, FDA regulates all foods except meat, poultry, and processed egg products, which are regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) **(1)**.

As an Institution or Sponsor, it's essential to know the food recalled because it could cause serious illness. Food recalls are classified into three classes. The following describes the three classes of food recalls **(2)**:

- **Class I** is a health hazard situation with a reasonable probability that eating the food will cause serious, adverse health consequences or death. E. coli O157:H7 in bagged spinach; Salmonella in tomatoes
- **Class II** is a health hazard situation with a remote probability of adverse health consequences from eating the food. Example: A product containing a foreign material
- **Class III** is a situation where eating the food will not cause adverse health

consequences. Example: Food products not labeled correctly.

Food recalls are usually voluntarily initiated by the manufacturer or distributor of the food, and the FDA may request or mandate a recall. To safeguard the institution and the participants, rely on updated data rather than solely the news, vendors, or stores for information. Periodically search the recalls and more on the **FDA Recalls**, **Food Safety and Inspection Service-USDA**, and **FoodSafety.gov** websites and develop a traceability log.

For further information on procurement, please contact Tempest Harris at **tempest.harris@decal.ga.gov**

References:

1. *Food Recalls: What You Need to Know. Resources for You (Food) at Food and Drug Administration, 2022, listed **here**. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.*
2. *Responding to a Food Recall Procedures for Recalls of USDA Foods. Guidance and Handbook at USDA Food and Nutrition Services, 2014, listed **here**. Accessed 14 Feb. 2023.*

Proposed Rule: Child Nutrition Meal Pattern Changes to Align with 2020 Dietary Guidelines

The USDA is proposing a rule change that is available for the public to comment through April 10, 2023. Those proposed CACFP changes include:

- Changing total sugar limits to added sugar limits for cereals and yogurt
- Meal pattern flexibilities for Indian and Tribal Institutions
- Change terminology from Meat/Meat Alternates to Protein Sources

FNS hosted a webinar on the Proposed Rule on March 1, 2023 and the recording is currently available via PartnerWeb.

Program operators can access information on the Proposed Rule via the Federal Register **here** and information on submitting comments regarding the changes**here**.

Available CACFP Statewide Waivers

The emergency authority that allowed USDA to offer nationwide waivers in response to COVID-19 expired on June 30, 2022. Congress did not extend USDA's nationwide waiver authority. This means USDA can no longer offer the full range of nationwide waivers that have been available. However, USDA can provide limited operational and administrative flexibility through statewide waivers.

DECAL applied and was approved to use certain waiver flexibilities. Below you will find information regarding available CACFP waivers authorized by USDA, in addition to information on waivers that have expired or will be expiring very soon. A copy of the waiver approval can be found **here**:

A presentation summarizing the waivers and requirements update was created by the Nutrition team. If you would like to review the slides, you can access the deck **here**. The recorded version of the presentation can be found on DECAL's website under Training and Technical Assistance - Recorded Training Webinars/Videos located **here.**

CACFP Statewide Waivers Available for Request effective July 1, 2022

Waiver	Effective Dates	Request Usage via
Non-Congregate Meal Services	July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023	USDA Waiver Module
Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup	July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023	USDA Waiver Module
Meal Service Times	July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023	USDA Waiver Module

Non-Congregate Meal Service, Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup, and Meal Service Times Waiver Requirements

The Non-Congregate Meal Service, Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup, and Meal Service Times waivers may only be implemented when CACFP meal services are limited by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the following criteria is required for these three waivers to be approved and used by CACFP institutions and sponsors. Waiver requests must be based on at least 1 of the following criteria:

Criteria 1:

The center/facility must be located in a county that is designated as High, Substantial, or Moderate regarding COVID-19 community transmissions as determined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website:

- CDC, **here** - Under the "Data Type" pull down menu (located mid-page), the user would select "Community Transmission" to access a county's designation.

Criteria 2:

Institutions and sponsors can provide official documentation affirming a meal service has been impacted as a result of COVID-19 transmission. The documentation must be issued by (1) a public state, local, or county official; (2) a school superintendent or principal; or (3) a Center Director reporting a documented case of COVID-19 within the child and/or adult care facility. Documentation to support the documented case of COVID-19 could be a letter or email that was sent to parents or staff advising of the documented case.

The Non-Congregate Meal Service, Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup, and Meal Service Times waivers will be effective for **30 days** upon approval, with the option to re-apply for an additional 30 days, if the criteria are met using the most current data from the CDC, GA DPH, or with new documentation affirming that meal services have been impacted.

*Documentation to support the criteria chosen must be uploaded with the waiver request in GA Atlas. Additionally, waiver requests will be reviewed/approved only once a center/facility has been approved to operate the CACFP.

Requesting a Waiver via the USDA Waiver Module

The **Non-Congregate Meal Service, Parent/Guardian Meal Pickup, and Meal Service Times waivers must be requested through the USDA Waiver Module.** For information on requesting a waiver, please access the following resources:

- **USDA Waiver User Guide** – Provides step by step instructions on how to submit a waiver request in GA Atlas (applies to both CACFP and SFSP).
- **Important Reminders when using USDA Approved Waivers** - Discusses key recordkeeping requirements.
- **USDA Waiver Addendum** – Required when using the Parent Pick-up waiver or when home delivery under the Non-Congregate waiver.

USDA Nationwide Waivers Extended

Two USDA Nationwide Waivers for CACFP have been extended as a result of the COVID 19 Public Health Emergency being renewed another 90 days by the US Department of Health and Human Services. This renewal was issued January 11, 2023. Below are the two waivers that have been impacted by the renewal:

Waivers	Expires
Onsite Monitoring Requirements	June 10, 2023 (30 days after the end of the public health emergency)
Reimbursement for Meals & Snacks Served to Young Adults in the CACFP	May 11, 2023

Area Eligibility – Update

On May 13, 2022, USDA issued the memorandum ***Area Eligibility for Summer 2022 and School Year 2022-2023***. This memorandum provided guidance on the transition from COVID-19 Nationwide waivers related to the establishment of area eligibility in Child Nutrition Programs for summer 2022 and SY 2022-2023.

In SY 2021-2022 many schools participated in the Nationwide waiver to operate the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) during SY 2021-2022 and did not have to complete free and reduced eligibility information. This has resulted in an absence of complete SY 2021-2022 free and reduced-price school data. As school data and census data are the primary sources used to determine area eligibility in both CACFP and Happy Helpings, the USDA has advised that Program operators (CACFP institutions and Happy Helpings sponsors operating during unanticipated school closures only) may use one of the following two options with regards to school data:

- Use school data from SY 2019-2020 to determine area eligibility. SY 2019-2020 school data is now available on Nutrition Services' website (**Happy Helpings**, **CACFP**).
- SFAs may use Community Eligibility Provision Data (CEP). Once area eligibility data is established, all NSLP afterschool snack programs, SSO, CACFP at-risk afterschool and family day care homes, and SFSP operators may establish sites based on the determination.

Note: These options are not available for sites located in the attendance area of schools that operated NSLP in SY 2021-2022.

For general questions on requesting a USDA approved waiver, please contact **Tammie.Baldwin@decal.ga.gov**.

For specific policy questions pertaining to waivers, please contact **Robyn.Parham@decal.ga.gov**.

Get Informed: Upcoming Training Dates

March 22, 2023
Menu Planning in CACFP and Happy Helpings
Are you ready to retire your routine recipes? Join this webinar to learn tips, tools, and tangible resources for planning creative meals for your monthly menus.

- ***Participants can earn two [2] state-approved hours for attending this training in its entirety.***

April 4, 2023
Tuesday Tip! Adding Whole Grains to Your Menu
Does your monthly menu include whole grains? Join this webinar to learn CACFP requirements for serving at least one [1] whole grain-rich food per day.

- ***Participants can earn one half [0.5] state-approved hours for attending this training in its entirety.***

April 17, 2023
Memo Monday
Want to avoid the most common program findings and implement best practices to maintain

a compliant child nutrition program? Join our April Memo Monday webinar to learn the following:

- ***Ensuring Institutions Implement Adequate Oversight and Internal Controls of CACFP Operations***, dated October 1, 2020
- CACFP Most Common Findings at the Sponsor and Site Level
- CACFP Best Practices

April 19, 2023
Menu Modifications for Allergies, Dietary Restrictions, Chewing & Swallowing Difficulties
Do you need help with managing multiple menu modifications? Join this webinar to learn tips for making menu modifications for allergies, dietary restrictions, chewing and swallowing difficulties.

- ***Participants can earn two [2] state-approved hours for attending this training in its entirety.***

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 **January Memo Monday** webinar. It discussed new guidance on collecting racial and ethnicity data for enrolled and non-enrolled participants.

Training and Technical Assistance Webpage *New Section!*
The TTA Team has published a new section on our **TTA webpage** titled, "Test Your Knowledge." This section includes Team Nutrition quizzes on Child Nutrition Programs. A new Whole Grain quiz was recently released. Please ensure to check out the new section on our **TTA webpage**.

Crediting Tip Sheets in Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs)
Team Nutrition has developed these great tip sheets to provide handy references for program operators on how to credit the five meal components in child nutrition programs. Each tip sheet provides simple, easy-to-use information for one meal component.

- **Fruits**
- **Vegetables**
- **Meat/Meat Alternates**
- **Milk**

Meal Pattern Minute *New Videos!*
The **National CACFP Sponsor Association** has developed quick CACFP meal pattern tips, recipes, resources, and videos. View the videos of the following meal pattern minute tips below.

- **Meal Pattern Minute: Serving Nuts & Seeds**
- **Meal Pattern Minute: Crediting Popcorn**
- **Meal Pattern Minute: WIC Cereals *New!***
- **Meal Pattern Minute: Crediting Beans New!**
- **Meal Pattern Minute: Vegan Cheese *New!***
- **Meal Pattern Minute: Home-Frozen Fruits *New!***

CACFP Meal Pattern Training Worksheets
Team Nutrition has released three [3] new training worksheets for CACFP operators. All worksheets are available in English and Spanish. To see Team Nutrition's collection of CACFP training tools, visit the **CACFP Training Tools** page.

- **Serving Adult Participants in USDA CACFP Worksheet** provides an overview of meal pattern requirements and optional menu planning flexibilities for adult participants.
    - **English** and in **Spanish**
- **Serving Meats and Meat Alternates at Lunch and Supper in the USDA CACFP Worksheet** features sample meals and standardized recipes that include

meats and meat alternates.
    - **English** and in **Spanish**
- **Offering Water in the USDA CACFP Worksheet** provides ideas for offering and making water available throughout the day.
    - **English** and in **Spanish**

CACFP Meal Pattern Training Slides

Team Nutrition has released two [2] slightly revised PowerPoint (PPT) training slides for "Identifying Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP Using the Ingredient List", Parts 1 & 2. The English and Spanish versions of the following training slides have been updated to remove footnotes related to the COVID-19 Pandemic and to include new images.

- **Identifying Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP Using the Ingredient List Part 1:**
    - Available in **English** and **Spanish**
- **Identifying Whole Grain-Rich Foods for the CACFP Using the Ingredient List Part 2:**
    - Available in **English** and **Spanish**

Nibbles for Health Newsletter

USDA's Team Nutrition has released of two [2] slightly revised Nibbles for Health: Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children. The English and Spanish versions of the following newsletters have been updated to replace "servings" with "ounce equivalents":

- "Child Care: What Will My Child Eat?"
    - **English** & **Spanish**
- "Healthy Snacks with Smiles"
    - **English** & **Spanish**
- To view the full collection of Nibbles for Health Newsletters, click **here**.

Using WIC List to Identify Grains in CACFP

Team Nutrition has developed this worksheet to help program operators identify creditable grains in the CACFP. Program operators may also use the WIC Authorized Foods List (WIC List). The WIC List includes specific brands and product names of foods. Each State has its own WIC List. In some States, it may be called the "Approved WIC Foods Shopping Guide" or a similar name. You can use any State's WIC list to choose grain items that can be counted toward a reimbursable meal or snack in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The WIC List is attached above.

The Ultimate Guide to Seafood Cooking

The **Seafood Nutrition Partnership** has developed this guide to provide some quick tips to ensure seafood meals turn out delicious every time.

- [**Get the Guide**]

Discover MyPlate: Nutrition Education for Kindergarten ***Updated!***

USDA Team Nutrition is pleased to announce a new and updated *Discover MyPlate*. It is fun and inquiry-based nutrition education that fosters the development of healthy food choices and physically active lifestyles during a critical developmental and learning period for children — kindergarten. **Team Nutrition** has expanded the set to include additional foods, Spanish-language components, and new materials showing where food comes from.

- Kindergarten teachers and health and nutrition educators can use the standards-based lessons to help kids learn about nutrition while also reinforcing Math, Science, English, and Health Education content.
- School Nutrition Professionals can reinforce key *Discover MyPlate* messages at school meals.
- Parents/caregivers can use the fun readers, activity sheets, and more to help their child learn about food while practicing reading and math skills.
- *Discover MyPlate* can serve as a tool for local educational agencies to meet nutrition education goals described in their Local School Wellness Policy.

Discover MyPlate also includes six [6] Emergent Readers Mini Books featuring kindergarten-level sight words that help children build literacy skills while learning about the

five [5] food groups and MyPlate. They are available in English and Spanish.

- **Fruits**
- **Vegetables**
- **Protein Foods**
- **Grains**
- **Dairy**
- **A MyPlate Meal**

Safe Feeding Practices to Prevent Choking

The **Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN)** has shared some resources to help prevent choking with children between birth and four years of age. Children at this age are at the greatest risk of choking while eating, in part, because they may not chew food properly.

- [**Prevent Choking**]

Raising Adventurous Eaters

Partnership for a Healthier America and the Dr. Yum Project has shared these first foods guides to provide proactive tips and practical activities to boost feeding development and build healthy habits at every stage of a child's feeding journey. Guides are available in English and Spanish.

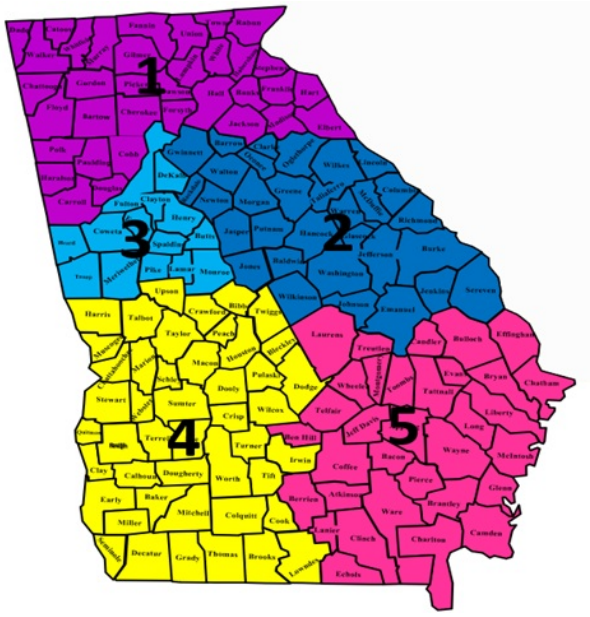
- [**English**]
- [**Spanish**]

Snack Attack *New Recipes!*

The **National CACFP Sponsor Association** has shared some snack options for program operators that are **#CACFPCreditable**.

- Black beans and tortilla chips
- Avocado slices and crackers
- Sugar snap peas and apple slices
- Strawberries and cereal
- Pineapple and waffle
- Yogurt dip and cucumbers

Training and 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 we continue to meet this goal during any transitions and/or position changes.

Therefore, institutions that reside in **region 2** listed above, please contact our Nutrition TA mailbox at **NutritionTA@decal.ga.gov** with any needed technical assistance.

You may also visit our **Training and Technical Assistance** webpage for program resources and recorded webinars.

Apply Now for WIC Outreach

Funding

CACFP sponsoring organizations can apply for new grants to develop and implement innovative outreach strategies to increase WIC awareness and participation.

Up to $10 million will be available under the USDA funded WIC Community Innovation and Outreach subgrants.

Interested? Learning more about the WIC CIAO RFA opportunity and**how to apply!**

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 beets, carrots and radishes.

Beets are packed with nutrients like antioxidants, fiber, folate, iron and potassium. They come in a variety of colors including Chioggia, golden, red, and white. 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. They also provide vitamin K and biotin. Orange carrots are the most recognized, however, they can also be purple, red, white, or yellow in color. In Georgia, carrots are in season January through June and October through December. Add this popular root vegetable 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, purple, and white. Their shapes and sizes also vary. In Georgia, this root vegetable is in season March through June. Enjoy radishes raw or added to main dishes such as pastas, salads, sandwiches, soups, and stews.

Integration:

- **Carrot Pancakes**
- **Mashed Carrots**
- **Beet Dip**
- **Un-beet-able Berry Smoothie**
- **Crunchy Vegetable Wraps**
- **Spring Vegetable Sauté**

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 children enjoy them and add it as a side item in your menu.
- ***Talk*** with families about how children 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 the children you serve 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, MCH at **morgan.chapman@decal.ga.gov**.

Physical Activity Corner:
Spring Into Health

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. It is 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**

Education:

- Read out loud, **"The Garden Project," by Margaret McNamara** .
- ***Watch*** the video on **"Building a Community of Lifelong Learners" by The Learning Tree Academy** 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**.

Be a Health Hero
Health Empowers You

HealthMPowers, a partner organization with the Georgia Department of Early Care & Learning, promotes healthy habits to build a better future for all children in Georgia.

To connect with their work, text 'HEALTHY' to 833-369-3547 to receive one text message per week on healthy tips, recipes, and activities for your whole family.

What are you waiting for? Sign-up now! Information is also available in **Spanish**.

DECAL's Nutrition Spotlight:
Meet Sonja Adams, Senior Manager of Provider Services

Meet Sonja Adams, Senior Manager of Provider Services for the Nutrition Services Division. In this role, Sonja manages a team of 13 who offer comprehensive services to program operators of both the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program. The departments Sonja oversees include policy, training and technical assistance, nutrition health education, physical activity and procurement.

Sonja's team works to help sponsors and institutions stay abreast of regulatory requirements, as well as to provide guidance on operating a seamless and compliant child nutrition program. Collectively, the team is responsible for ensuring sponsors and institutions are trained on USDA regulations and best practices, informed about important events and activities, and retained to help maintain a successful meal service operation.

"It's an honor to be working alongside a talented, result-oriented team that is passionate about serving the community," said Sonja. "That combination is essential to the work we do," she added.

Prior to joining DECAL, Sonja worked in the Georgia Secretary of State Press Office. Aside from State government, she served in the nonprofit sector in the areas of public policy, grassroots organizing and economic development.

In her spare time, Sonja enjoys music, writing, and spending time with her husband and two children.

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 Coalition for Early Care & Education settings.

Visit the **Georgia Department of Education's HOTM webpage** and the Quality Care for Children **website**. Upon viewing, you can findtips and tricks for preparing produce items, curriculum connections, activity lists and book alignment for your early care classrooms.

CACFP Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- **Guidance on Collecting Race and Ethnicity Data**
- **Procurement Helpful Hints**
- **Forecasting Purchases for CACFP**
- **Update Your Banking Information**
- **New and Revised CACFP Policies and Memoranda**
- **Non-profit Food Service & Procurement Procedures Monitoring**
- **FY2023 Annual CACFP Budget Submission**
- **Newly Revised CACFP Memorandum-Civil Rights Complaint Procedures**
- **Reminder - PolicyStat available on Nutrition Services' Webpage**
- **Procurement Documents Now Include Updated Non-discrimination**

Statement
- Unique Entity Identifier Field Added to ATLAS

You can find archived CACFP Newsletters **here.**

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
March	Harvest of the Month: Root Vegetables
March 12-18	National CACFP Week
March 22	Menu Planning in CACFP & Happy Helpings Webinar
April 4	Tuesday Tip! Adding Whole Grains to Your Menu Webinar
April 17	Memo Monday
April 19	Menu Modifications for Allergies, Dietary Restrictions, Chewing & Swallowing Difficulties Webinar
May 15	Happy Helpings Start-up Grant Deadline

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.

Join Us for a NEW DECAL Download!

Voices for Georgia's Children

As you all know, a lot goes in to meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. That's exactly why here at DECAL we appreciate all the early childhood advocates that we work with daily.

One of those advocates that helps us enhance early care and education for children and their families, is Voices for Georgia's Children, a nonprofit child policy and advocacy organization advancing laws, policies, and actions that improve the lives of Georgia's children.

You hear a lot about them during Georgia's Pre-K Week and the legislative preview every session. In this week's episode of DECAL Download, we discuss the work of Voices for Georgia's Children with their new Executive Director, Dr. Caitlin Dooley.

Listen to the episode **here**.

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