

September 16, 2025

## Prepare for New CACFP Sugar Rules Effective October 1

Register today for September 18 Webinar



Effective October 1, 2025, CACFP regulations are moving to added sugar limits for breakfast cereals and yogurts.

Program operators must ensure that breakfast cereals contain no more than six grams of **added** sugars per dry ounce, and yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of **added** sugars per six ounces (Two grams of **added** sugars per ounce).

Be in the know on how to prepare for the transition and calculate the new added sugar limits by registering for the **Preparing for CACFP's Sugar Rules** webinar on September 18.

This webinar will help providers learn what this means for product selection, menu planning, and staying in compliance, so you can confidently serve nutritious meals to children in your care.

#### You will learn:

- 1. how to use the Nutrition Facts Label to identify added sugars for breakfast cereals and yogurt.
- 2. how to evaluate breakfast cereals and yogurts to see if they meet the added sugars limit.

Please review the following policy memos for more detailed information:

- Meal Pattern Updates due to 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
   June 28, 2024
- Memo on Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

## **Submit Your Application by September 30**

Participating CACFP Sponsors and Institutions are required to meet annual renewal requirements by **September 30**, **2025**. The Nutrition Division opened registration for the required annual training on July 15, 2025, and enrollment for the 2026 application renewal opened on August 1, 2025.

#### **Step 1: Complete Annual Training Requirements**

Registration for the CACFP Annual Training requirements opened on July 15. These requirements include:

- Reviewing the CACFP 2026 Annual Training presentation in GA ATLAS
- Completing the CACFP 2026 Annual Training Test Assessment in GA ATLAS

Once the annual training assessment has been completed and submitted, you will receive access to the FY 2025-2026 CACFP application.

#### Step 2: Enroll in FY 2026

Upon completion of the Annual Training and Assessment, the CACFP application for the associated program year will change the institution or sponsor's status to "Not Enrolled" and the "Enroll" button will be available.

• Enroll into FY 2026 on or after August 1, 2025

#### Step 3: Submit your FY 2026 Application on or before September 30

Original or Annual Budgets and Budget Amendments must also be submitted on or before **September 30, 2025**.

Failure to complete the annual requirements by the specified deadline date will impact continued participation in the CACFP, which includes submission of monthly claims for reimbursement.

Date	Task
August 1	Open Enrollment for FY 2026
	*Upon completion of Annual Training and Assessment, Sponsors & Institutions may enroll in FY 2026
September 15	Deadline to submit any Additional Changes to the FY 2025 Application
	Any FY 25 changes include:
	*updates to the application *management plan and budget *the addition/termination of centers/homes
	$^*$ Must be completed in GA ATLAS by September 15, 2025, to all time for review and processing.
September 30	Deadline to complete FY 2026 CACFP Annual Training and Assessment.
	Deadline to submit FY 2026 CACFP Application.
	Deadline to submit original or annual budget and budget amendments.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your Application Specialist:

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

# **Updated Assignments for Business Operations Specialists**

Please note the following assignment changes for the Business Operations Specialists below. Please make sure you are familiar with your organization's assigned Business Operations Specialist.

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

## Are You Required to Submit a Budget for FY 2026?

Deadline: September 30, 2025

As annual renewal is now open, please be sure to check your budget to determine if you are required to submit a revision for the upcoming fiscal year beginning October 1, 2025.

If your institution is one of the following types, you are required to submit a budget for FY26 by September 30, 2025:

- Institution of Affiliated Sites
- Institution of Unaffiliated Sites
- DCH Sponsor
- Independent Center
- a center who has previously approved or newly projected costs, or costs that require specific prior written approval or using the meal reimbursement to pay for allowable administrative expenses.

Please log in to Atlas to review your current budget submission to determine next steps.

For all questions, please contact NutritionBudget@decal.ga.gov.



## **Are You Ready to Crunch Into the Fun?**

Get Kids Eating, Growing & Learning about Apples

Each October, Georgia Organics leads a statewide campaign to inspire kids to eat, grow, and learn about a locally grown fruit or vegetable. This year, we're shining the spotlight on one of fall's favorite fruits with our *Apple of Our Eye* campaign!

Get ready to celebrate apples to the core! The *Apple of Our Eye* Toolkit is now live and accessible to anyone! This *ap-peel-ing* toolkit is **FREE** and packed with apple-themed lesson plans, activities, cafeteria recipes, and more. Whether you're in the classroom or the cafeteria, the toolkit has everything you need to make this October a bushel of fun.

Join the celebration by sharing your apple-themed activities and photos on social media using #appleofoureye throughout October. Show others across the state how you're growing healthy habits—one apple at a time!

## At-Risk Afterschool 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.

## **Training & Technical Assistance Team Announces New Roles**



#### Nkem Ijeh promoted to Training Coordinator

We are thrilled to announce that Nkem Ijeh has been promoted to Training Coordinator.

Nkem has been an integral part of Nutrition Services for the past six years, providing outstanding training, technical assistance, guidance, and user-friendly resources to Child Nutrition (CN) Program operators in her previous role as the North/Northwest Technical Assistance Coordinator & Trainer.

A proud Georgia State University graduate, Nkem earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology before completing a Master in Public Health at Mercer University School of Medicine. Her career spans maternal and child health, education, and promotion—including leadership positions—all rooted in her commitment to serving families and supporting the health and wellness of children.

"Nkem is passionate about learning, sharing knowledge, and empowering providers to make meaningful connections that improve community health and family well-being. Her dedication to child advocacy and her ability to turn information into practical, impactful training make her an incredible asset to our team," says Grushan Blake, Nutrition Services Training Manager.

We are excited to welcome Nkem into this new role and confident that her expertise, energy,

and passion will continue to strengthen our mission and our impact.

## Leatha Bryant promoted to Lead Technical Assistance Coordinator & Trainer

We are delighted to announce the promotion of Leatha Bryant from Technical Assistance Coordinator & Trainer to Lead Technical Assistance Coordinator & Trainer.

Leatha has been with Nutrition for three years, consistently exceeding expectations in customer service, teamwork, training, and providing high-quality technical assistance to both internal and external stakeholders.

Bringing more than 20 years of management experience, Leatha has a strong background in leading teams, implementing quality improvement systems, and coaching and mentoring key personnel.

She holds an associate's degree in organizational management and a Bachelor of Science in psychology from Troy University. In 2024, she served on the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) Task Force, where she played a vital role in re-designing training modules. In addition, she is a certified trainer for the State of Georgia.

"Leatha is passionate about helping others, sharing new policies and techniques, and equipping providers with the tools they need to meet program expectations while staying in compliance. Beyond her professional expertise, she is also deeply committed to mentoring youth and young adults, supporting their personal and professional growth," says Grushan Blake, Nutrition Services Training Manager.

We are proud to promote such a dedicated and talented team member and look forward to the transformative contributions Leatha will continue to bring to Nutrition in her new role.

### **Upcoming Training Dates:**

October 7, 2025

Tuesday Tip! Building Healthy Habits from the Start: Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE)

1:30 - 2:15 pm

Are you ready to grow your Farm to ECE program with gardening tips and Georgia grown foods?

Join this webinar to learn:

- ideas to incorporate local foods,
- hands-on food & ag education activities, and
- tools to increase garden-based education.

Bonus: Participants will learn about this year's October Farm to School & Farm to Early Care and Education Month campaign and how your program may participate.

Participants can earn one [0.50] state-approved hour(s) for attending this training in its entirety.

#### [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 or email leslie.truman@decal.ga.gov for assistance.

#### **Plan Now for Farm to CACFP Week**

October 12-18, 2025



Farm to CACFP Week is a national education campaign hosted annually during the third week of October by the National CACFP Association. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the benefits of connecting child and adult care sponsors and operators with local foods.

Through local food procurement, gardening activities and agriculture education, Farm to CACFP leverages CACFP funding to help incorporate local foods into the nutritious CACFP meal pattern thus strengthening community food systems and

supporting positive health outcomes for those in care.

To celebrate the week, the CACFP Association has new resources, a fun webinar and a social media challenge. Find everything you need by clicking **here**.

## Training Opportunities Available Through the National CACFP Association

Farm to CACFP Bootcamp Wednesday, September 24, 2025 11:00 am – 5:15 pm

Get ready to grow your program from the ground up! Getequippedwith the tools you need to successfully implement and growFarmto CACFP initiatives. National CACFP Association willdive into the heart of Farm to CACFP with real stories, handsonstrategies and creative ideas to bring local food and



learning into your care setting. From navigating procurement tosparkingcuriosity through agriculturaleducation, you'llgain the tools and inspiration to make a lasting impact in your community.

#### Topics Include:

- Rooted in Purpose: What is Farm to CACFP?
- Cultivating Funding for Farm to CACFP: Strategies and State Support
- Find Your Farmer: Enrich Farm to ECE Through Producer Relationships
- Sowing Success: Real Stories & Strategies in Farm to CACFP
- Cooking Up Local Goodness
- Little Sprouts, Big Lessons: Farm to Early Education

Learn More: Click here

Registration: Click here



that ties into Farm to CACFP!

Registration: Click here

#### Sprouting Success Webinar Wednesday, October 15, 2025 2:00 - 2:30 pm

To discover ways to grow your participation and access fresh ideas and resources for inspiration.

Participation can be as simple as sharing a newsletter with parents, planning an educational activity with your kids or creating an interactive experience like starting a garden. Chances are, you're already doing something

## **FREE Choking Prevention Training**

Register today for Super Saturday: September 27



September 27, 2025 Super Saturday Training: Choking Prevention in Child Care session 8:30am- 4:45pm

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is excited to announce an upcoming FREE Super Saturday Training: Choking Prevention in Child Care session designed to strengthen safety practices and emergency preparedness for child care professionals.

Register here

### 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.

#### Snack Attack New Recipes!

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

- Bell pepper and yogurt dip
- Jicama and watermelon
- Avocado and whole grain-rich crackers
- Animal crackers and cheddar cheese
- Pancakes and peaches

#### Meal Pattern Minute New!

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.

- Sour Cream & Cream Cheese New!
- Frozen Fruit Juice Bars New!
- Jicama New!

- Potato Chips New!
- Crediting Popcorn New!

#### Go, Slow, Whoa

The **National CACFP Sponsor Association** has developed this handout that includes some quick tips for caregivers and a coloring activity for kids to understand what foods are good for their bodies.

[Share the News]

#### **Tips for "Picky Eating"**

The **Dr. Yum Project** has shared eight [8] tips to help encourage "picky eaters" to try new foods.

**Get the Tips** 



# **Nutrition Ed Nook** *It's a Pepper Party!*

The September Harvest of the Month (English and Spanish) feature is peppers! These vibrant fruits come in many shapes, sizes, colors, and flavors, and they are used in cuisines all over the world. Scientifically, peppers are considered fruits because they contain seeds and grow from flowering plants.

Bell peppers & hot peppers are excellent sources of vitamins C and B6. A single bell pepper provides about 169% of the recommended daily intake of vitamin C, while a hot pepper provides around 72%. As peppers ripen, their levels of vitamins A and C increase. This means sweet peppers become sweeter, and hot peppers become hotter. You can tell a pepper is ripening when its color changes from green to red, yellow, orange, or even purple.

There are many types of peppers to explore. Bell peppers are sweet and come in colors like green, red, yellow, orange, and purple. Banana peppers are mild and often used in salads or pickled. Poblano peppers have a mild to medium heat and are great for roasting or stuffing. Jalapeños are medium in heat and commonly used in salsas. Serrano peppers are hotter than jalapeños and are often used in sauces. Habanero peppers are very hot and have a fruity flavor, while the Carolina Reaper is currently the hottest pepper in the world.

In Georgia, bell peppers are harvested in both the spring and fall. They are typically available from mid-June through October. Locally grown peppers are often fresher, more flavorful, and more affordable than those transported from other regions.

**Fun Fact:** Jalapenos are one of the most common peppers found around the world! Did you know that they are the only peppers to have ever been to space? In the 1980s, astronauts on the Columbia space shuttle took Jalapenos into space!

#### **Integration:**

- Fiesta Wrap
- Bell Pepper Pizza
- Chunky Black Bean Dip
- Eggplant and Pepper Dip
- Stuffed Peppers with Turkey and Vegetables

#### **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!
- **Taste Test** a variety of colorful peppers. Provide slices of sweet bell peppers in colors such as red, yellow, orange, and green. Encourage children to use their senses to

explore the different peppers. Create an observation chart in a centralized area where children can share their descriptions of the peppers.

- **Read** aloud *Armadilly Chili* by Helen Ketteman. Miss Billie Armadilly is hankering to make a pot of chili! Only she has to make it by herself because Tex the tarantula, Mackie the bluebird and Taffy the horned toad are too busy to lend a hand. But then the smell of chili brings all of her friends back to Miss Billie's door. What's an armadillo to do?
- **Talk** with families about how children 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! Check Pinterest for recipe inspiration.
- Want ECE pepper-themed resources? Check out Quality Care for Children's Harvest of the Month toolkit for more ways to engage ECE students.

#### **Conversation:**

- Have the children you serve 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**

Tips for Play, Games, and Movement

Physical activity, exploration, and play are critical for all ages, especially our youngest learners. Through this, children develop coordination and strong, healthy bodies and exercise their minds through sensory play including touching, reaching, grasping, and exploring.

Play is one of the main ways that children learn, develop, and grow. Each new phase of physical activity development brings new opportunities for learning and development. An infant might explore by touching, grasping, banging something, or crawling. A toddler might explore by walking or climbing. Young children are naturally curious and excited to learn about their surrounding environment. According to CDC, physical fun such as free unstructured games during playtime helps develop children's motor and coordination skills, prevent childhood obesity, and build social and emotional intelligence. A child builds their confidence in a safe enjoyable environment.

Enjoy these fun ideas to get our younger children moving:

- Provide child-friendly sports equipment, like **balls**, poly spots or throwable beanbags.
- Make time for outdoor play at a park or playground, in the backyard, on a beach or at a football field. Moving around on various surfaces develops strength, balance, and coordination.
- Make an obstacle course ortreasure hunt.
- Provide chalk to draw outside with a child.
- Go for a **nature walk.** This gets a child moving, and they can also collect leaves, sticks, or pebbles for crafts or pretend play when you get home.
- Younger children can practice coordinating the small movements of their fingers through playdough, blocks, and drawing activities.

Providing children plenty of opportunities to play is one of the best ways to help them grow into curious, creative, healthy, and happy adults equipped with the skills they need today.

#### **Integration:**

• Georgia's Early Care and Learning Standards (GELDS) -Songs, movement,



#### and play

- Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS)
- Playgrounds in Georgia
- Active Play: Healthy Habits Start Early
- CDC Making Physical Activity a Part of a Child's Life

#### **Education:**

- Read aloud, Are You Ready to Play Outside?, by Mo Willems.
- Watch the video on Movement and Play: "Play-based Learning with Dr. Peter Gray."
- **Talk** with families about ways to bring parents, educators, and communities promote physical activity on movement and play all year round, whether at home, outside, in their local community, at your childcare site, or at their local community recreational areas.
- **Bonus:** Share #ActivePlay, #OutdoorGames, #MovementandPlay, #MoveYourWay, and #LovePlay pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

#### **Conversation:**

- What is movement and play in early childhood?
- How do you engage parents, educators, and staff to engage in physical activity (indoor/outdoor)?
- How do you play with children of different ages?
- Why family engagement, movement, and play are important in physical activity?

Share your #ActivePlay, #OutdoorGames, #MovementandPlay, #MoveYourWay and #LovePlay stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@decal.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@decal.ga.gov or tina.mclaren@decal.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** 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.

### **CACFP Resources:**

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- FNS Issues Guidance on Using Federal Funds to Purchase Local Foods
- 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
- Updates to Child and Adult Care Food Program Procurement Documents
- Stay Informed: At-Risk Afterschool Waivers Available during Unanticipated School Closure
- Check your Email Messages & Update Your Email Address in ATLAS
- Nourishing Healthy Eaters
- CACFP Policy 41 State Agency Monitoring Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Reimbursement Rates for CACFP Providers
- Updated Procurement Forms to include Civil Rights Assurance Statement
- Updated Agreements for DCH and Administrative Sponsors
- Updated Suspension & Disbarment Certification Information
- How to File a CACFP Claim for Reimbursement

You can find archived CACFP Newslettershere.

### **Dates to Remember**

DATE	EVENTS
September	Harvest of the Month: Peppers
September 18	Preparing for CACFP's Sugar Rules-Webinar
September 24	Farm to CACFP Boot Camp- Webinar
September 27	Choking Prevention Training- Super Saturday
September 30	Deadline to complete 2026 CACFP Annual Training and Assessment  Deadline to complete 2026 CACFP Application  Deadline to Submit Original or Annual Budget Amendments
October 1	New Sugar Rules effective
October 7	Tuesday Tip! Building Healthy Habits from the Start: Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Webinar
October 12-18	Farm to CACFP Week
October 15	Sprouting Success Webinar

#### Join Us for a NEW DECAL Download!

Quality Rated Family Support Call Center



This week we're talking about a significant development that promises to enhance support for families in our community.

DECAL has created the Quality Rated Family Support Call Center that can be reached through the popular 877-ALL-GA KIDS phone number the agency created many years ago.

Joining us to talk about the new Quality Rated Family Support Call Center is Sonja Steptoe, Assistant Director of Business Supports and Operations; Katrina Bernard, Quality Rated Family Support Call Center Manager; and Anna Buchmann, the Lead Specialist in the Family Support Call Center.

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.

#### Cindy Kicklighter Joann Kilpatrick



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