



December 3, 2021

Updated CDC Guidance for Operating Early Care & Education/Child Care Programs

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its [COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#). Updates to the guidance emphasize the importance of universal masking for everyone ages 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status.

Additionally, this guidance provides more information on screening testing and updated guidance for fully vaccinated staff. Early Care Education (ECE) programs can promote vaccinations among staff and families, including pregnant women, by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices.

The updated version of the guidance outlines strategies for ECE programs to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and maintain safer operations. ECE programs include childcare centers, home-based programs and family child care, Head Start, and other pre-kindergarten programs.

While fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared with adults during the pandemic, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick, and spread the virus to others. CDC's [science brief on transmission in schools](#) includes scientific evidence about the spread of the virus among children and in school and ECE settings.

COVID-19 Resources for Sponsors

[FAQs: Serving Meals during Unanticipated School Closures](#)

Answers to frequently asked questions regarding serving meals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[SFSP: Providing Multiple Meals at a Time for Children During the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#)

Nationwide Waivers:

SFSP

[Serving Meals during Unanticipated School Closures](#)

Recent nationwide waivers allow flexibility for SFSP during unanticipated school closures. For the purposes of these waivers, unanticipated school closures only occur when instruction is not provided to children. If a school plans to offer virtual learning or a mix of in-person classes and virtual learning, then the school would be considered open and not in an "unanticipated school closure" status.

In the event of an unanticipated school closure, SFSP organizations must request/certify use of a waiver using the USDA waiver module in GA Atlas. SFSP organizations must use the **FY 2021-2022 Program Year** link when certifying. A list of available waivers in the event of an unanticipated school closure can be found [here](#) (see [Child Nutrition Waiver Update to Address Meal Service During Unanticipated School Closures and Supply Chain Issues - September 22, 2021](#) and Responses #101 through #105).

For additional information on unanticipated school closures, see DECAL memorandum, ["Meal Service During Unanticipated School Closures, March 13, 2020."](#)

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).
- [July Memo Monday Webinar](#) - Discusses procedure updates when requesting a waiver using the USDA Waiver feature in GA ATLAS.

For general questions on requesting a USDA Nationwide Waiver, please contact Tammie.Baldwin@decalf.ga.gov.

[DECAL Participation of Nationwide Waivers Due to COVID-19](#)

For full details, please click on the links to read the actual waiver memo, or [click here](#) for a complete list of the Nationwide Waivers due to COVID-19.

[Child Nutrition Waiver Update](#)

On September 22, 2021, the USDA issued the memorandum [Child Nutrition Waiver Update to Address Meal Service During Unanticipated School Closures and Supply Chain Issues](#). This memorandum announced a new set of Child Nutrition Program waivers for school year 2021-2022 for SFSP programs serving meals during unanticipated school closures.

(Note: the following waivers are only for sponsors operating during unanticipated school closures. We don't yet know whether these waivers will be available to all sponsors during the traditional SFSP months.)

[Area Eligibility](#)

Allows Program operators to locate Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) open sites in areas that do not meet area eligibility requirements. ****Waiver in effect through June 30, 2022****

[Meal Time Waiver](#)

This waiver allows program operators the flexibility to adjust the times meals and snacks are provided in order to streamline operations. ****Waiver in effect through June 30, 2022****

[Non-Congregate Feeding](#)

The requirement that meals be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site is waived during the public health emergency. ****Waiver in effect through June 30, 2022****

[Parent Pick-Up](#)

Under this waiver, program operators in a state with an approved waiver allowing non-congregate meal distribution during COVID-19-related operations may distribute meals to a parent or guardian to take home to their eligible children. ****Waiver in effect through June 30, 2022****

[Service of Meals at School Sites](#)

The requirement that limits the operation of SFSP during unanticipated school closures to non-school sites is waived. Program operators may serve meals at school sites during unanticipated school closures. ****Waiver in effect through April 30, 2022****

[Closed Enrolled Eligibility](#)

Under this waiver, for all States, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and National School Lunch Program Seamless Summer Option (SSO) closed enrolled sites during the COVID-19 public health emergency may determine site eligibility through area eligibility without collecting income eligibility applications. ****Waiver expired September 30, 2021****

First Week Site Visits

FNS waives, for all States, the requirement that Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors are required to visit each of their sites at least once during the first week of operation. (2) This waiver applies to State agencies administering and local organizations that have operated the SFSP successfully in the previous year, and SFSP sponsors in good standing that have successfully participated in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). ****Waiver expired September 30, 2021****

Onsite Monitoring Waiver for Sponsors

For sponsors only - FNS waives that SFSP monitoring requirements included at 7 CFR 225.15(d) be conducted on site. ****Waiver expired September 30, 2021****

Meal Pattern Flexibilities

The requirement to serve meals that meet the meal pattern requirements is waived during the public health emergency. ****Waiver expired June 30, 2021****

It's Never too Early to Start Planning for Summer 2022

Providing summer meals is a year-round effort. At any point throughout the year, there are things you can do to prepare for next summer! [Click here](#) for more information on proactive planning for sponsors.

Here's a guide for the new year:

January

- Begin to determine which sites are returning, explore new site options, and meet with community partners.
- Plan site staff training, meal production and delivery, and programs and activities.
- Begin exploring the potential for serving mobile meals.
- Begin developing a marketing and outreach campaign.
- Develop a plan for the Food Service Permitting process, if applicable.

Get Informed: Upcoming Training Opportunities

Upcoming Training and Technical Assistance

February 2, 2021 – Serving Milk in Happy Helpings with The Dairy Alliance Guest Speaker

Do you know the most common dairy myths? Join this webinar session to learn:

- a breakdown of dairy myths,
- fluid milk requirements for all age ranges, and
- identify ways to ensure milk remains cold during alternative feeding practices.

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 [December Memo Monday](#). It discusses requirements for obtaining a Food Service Permit, how to complete the Food Service Permit Inquiry Form and FAQs addressed by the Department of Public Health.

Integrating Local Foods into Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs)

Looking for local foods? Check out the new USDA fact sheet on integrating local foods. The opportunities for serving local foods in child nutrition programs are abundant. Not only can local foods span the plate, but program operators can also serve local foods in all types of

Nutrition Ed Nook

Lettuce Learn More!

Planted in early spring or late fall, lettuce enjoys cool temperatures and can endure a light frost.

With Georgia’s temperatures being what they are, we have now arrived at lettuce season as December’s Harvest of the Month (**English** and **Spanish**) produce item.



Lettuce comes in an assortment of varieties ranging from greens to purples with the most common types being Romaine, Loose Leaf, and Bibb. The beauty of lettuce is that you do not have to wait for the full head to grow; you can start harvesting lettuce leaves as soon as they are big enough to eat and enjoy. As an excellent source of fiber, iron, folate, and vitamin C, “lettuce see it” on your menu today for added nutritional value!

Integration:

- **Eagle Pizza**
- **Bean Tostada**
- **Vegetable Wrap**
- **Bok Choy Wrappers**
- **Chicken Caesar Salad**
- **Purple Power Bean Wrap**
- **Roasted Fish Crispy Slaw Wrap**

Education:

- *Grow* lettuce – not only is lettuce a great first item to test out your gardening growing practices, but it also serves as a delicious taste test item for participants.
- *Make* several vinaigrette recipes to pair with the harvested or purchased lettuce varieties. Tally up which recipe is the favorite and include it on your next menu cycle! To make a simple vinaigrette dressing, pair one-part vinegar to two-parts oil and add seasonings such as salt, pepper, garlic, or oregano. Test out using various vinegar varieties and consider adding Dijon mustard or lemon juice for an additional flavor.
- *Talk* with families about how participants can help with meal preparation including tearing up lettuce leaves for a salad. **Bonus:** send lettuce recipes home for families to try together!

Conversation:

- Have the participants you serve tasted lettuce before?
- If you try various vinaigrettes in a taste test, which one do the participants you serve like the best?
- What is their favorite way to eat lettuce? Do they eat it as a salad base, shredded on tacos, or topped on sandwiches?

December’s Harvest of the Month BONUS Item: Citrus

Have you ever tried or served citrus fruits? Satsumas, oranges, clementines, and mandarins – they taste like nature’s candy!

They are juicy, sweet, nearly seedless, and easy



to peel. According to University of Florida researchers, satsumas may have originated in China, but were first reported in Japan over 700 years ago. Satsumas were first grown in the U.S. by settlers in Louisiana in the early 1800s.

As a fruit that is low in calories and high in fiber and vitamin C, fruits in the citrus family serve as a nutritional option for your menus. Serve them as a fruit side with whole-grain pancakes and milk for breakfast or topped on a romaine lettuce salad with a turkey wrap and

milk for lunch.

Share your winter Harvest of the Month stories and menu integration of lettuce and citrus with Nutrition Health Educator, Diana Myers, MS, RD, LD at diana.myers@dec.al.gov.



DECAL's Nutrition Spotlight: *Meet Robyn Parham, Policy Administrator*

Robyn Parham recently joined the Nutrition Services Division as Policy Administrator. In this role, Robyn oversees policy development and implementation for the nutrition programs and testifies on behalf of DECAL in administrative proceedings. It is her goal to provide sponsors with the most up-to-date interpretation and guidance for USDA's policies. She also works closely with the Legal and Audit divisions to manage the Serious Deficiency (SD) process.

Robyn has worked with DECAL for 11 years. Most recently, she worked with the Audits & Compliance Division where she served for eight years, first as a Nutrition Compliance Examiner then as a Nutrition Compliance Administrator, and finally as a Nutrition Compliance Supervisor. Earlier in her career, Robyn served as a Licensing Consultant.

She earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a law degree from the University of Georgia, and she brings a wealth of knowledge to the Policy Administrator role from her experience in audits, licensing and her perspective on law.

Robyn lives in the Augusta area with her husband, Wayne. Fun fact: Their first grandbaby turns two this week, and she says he is "perfection personified."

Dates to Remember

DATE:	
February 2	• Serving Milk in Happy Helpings Webinar

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [COVID Resources for Sponsors](#)
- [After School Programs Required to Apply for License or Exemption to Participate in At-Risk](#)
- [Annual Year End Reconciliation Notice](#)
- [Nutrition Services announces New Brand Identity for the Summer Food Service Program: Happy Helpings](#)
- [Claim Deadlines announced for FY2022](#)
- [How to Submit a Waiver Request](#)
- [Transitioning from SFSP to CACFP At Risk Afterschool Meals](#)
- [Income Eligibility Guidelines for FY 2022](#)
- [Questions and Answers for Child Nutrition Program Operations in School Year 2021-2022](#)
- [What to do if you have lost or destroyed records](#)
- [SFSP Reimbursement Rates for 2021](#)
- [Updated SFSP Sponsor Monitoring Guidance during COVID-19](#)
- [Waiver to Claim Meals Prior to SFSP Approval](#)
- [How to File a SFSP Claim for Reimbursement](#)
- [Budgeting for SFSP](#)
- [Pre-Award Costs and Advance Requests](#)
- [USDA extends Flexibilities for Summer 2021](#)
- [Suspension and Debarment Certification Requirement](#)
- [Update: Procurement Templates \(Formal and Informal Documents\)](#)
- [Virtual Vendor Summit Replay](#)

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

Quality Rated Language and Literacy Endorsements

On the next ...

DECAL Download

New Episodes Every Wednesday!

This Week's Guests



Laura Wagner
Community Outreach and Partnerships Director with DECAL's Quality Innovations and Partnerships Division



Angela Shelton
Professional Learning Specialist from Georgia's Pre-K Program and Instructional Supports



Jessica Whitehead
Director of Rising Star Learning Center in Mableton



Beverly Johnson
Owner of Discovery Point in Conyers

This Week's Topic:

Quality Rated Language and Literacy Endorsements

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In October, Commissioner Jacobs and Governor Brian Kemp announced eight Georgia child care programs that received the inaugural Quality Rated Language and Literacy Endorsement.

These programs demonstrate a commitment to providing high-quality, language-rich environments for Georgia's youngest learners. In this week's DECAL Download we hear from two of those programs.

Joining us to talk about Quality Rated Language and Literacy Endorsements are Laura Wagner the Community Outreach and Partnerships Director in our Quality Innovations and

Partnerships Division and Angela Shelton who is the Professional Learning Specialist in Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Division. We are also joined by two of the

recipients of the Language and Literacy Endorsements, Beverly Johnson, the owner of Discovery Point in Conyers and Jessica Whitehead, the Director of Rising Star Learning Center in Mableton.

[Click here to listen.](#)



Nutrition Division

Marketing & Outreach Team

Cindy Kicklighter

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