



February 3, 2025

Register Today: Happy Helpings Summit for Experienced Sponsors

March 13, 2025

Date: Thursday, March 13, 2025

Location: Anderson Conference Center at 5171 Eisenhower Parkway, Macon, Georgia, 31206.

Time: Registration: 8:00 a.m. Conference starts: 9:00 a.m. Conference ends: 4:00 p.m.

Attendees: Experienced Sponsors Only

Experienced Sponsors: Get ready to connect with other seasoned sponsors, share insights, and learn from each other's experiences. This in-person event is the perfect opportunity to network and gain valuable knowledge about Happy Helpings. Don't miss out!

Click [here](#) to register!

Make your Local Farmers Market a Meal Site Option

Partnering with Local Farmer Markets

Offering a Happy Helpings meal site at a farmers market is a unique way to increase access to healthy food for children in both rural and urban areas throughout the state. Fresh, nutritious foods, along with existing events and activities, make farmers markets ideal partners in helping kids and teens stay active and nourished while school is out.

By creating a partnership with local farmers markets, a Happy Helpings meal site can help children get access to food options that they may not otherwise have in both rural and urban areas.

Farmers markets also provide a safe place for children to gather and may offer the additional benefits of providing access to the freshest ingredients, connecting children with the sources of their food, increasing foot traffic to the market, and raising community awareness about Happy Helpings.

Setting up a meal site at a farmers market also allows sponsors to leverage existing activities that are associated with the market, giving kids an enjoyable experience in addition to a healthy meal, and removing the burden of coordinating activities from scratch.

Locally Grown Produce

Locally grown, fresh produce is abundant at farmers markets, especially during Georgia's peak summer growing season. When buying from farmers markets, food is transported directly from farm to table to ensure freshness, sustainability, and seasonality. A community garden is another way to introduce people, especially children to fresh, locally grown foods.

At a farmers market meal site, families may bring their children to get meals, purchase locally-grown produce, and try new seasonal items. In turn, these sites support local farmers, local economies, and increase exposure to unfamiliar produce items. This can increase healthy food choice options for families and connections with their own community.

Diana Myers, DECAL's Nutrition and Physical Activity Supervisor understands the importance of various avenues to feed children across the state. "With food insecurity rates rising across Georgia, Happy Helpings sites serve as critical food access points for children during the summer months. Hosting meal sites at farmers markets can increase food access for families by serving meals alongside fresh, local produce, connecting families to their local farmers, and educating children on the origins of food."

Here are some reminders to keep in mind if you would like to operate a meal site at a local farmers market or community garden:

- Identify the nearest farmers market or community garden in your area. Here's a link to the [USDA Local Food Directory](#)
- Ensure the site meets area eligibility requirements and that it is not within 1/4 mile of another meal site.
- If the farmers market is a for-profit organization, the site must be open to all children.
- Gather the necessary information and complete the SFSP application.
- Submit a Food Service Permit Inquiry Form to the county's environmental health office.
- Distribute a media release to your local media and promote the site to gain awareness.
- Train staff and designate a site supervisor.
- Prepare for a sponsor's pre-Op visit.

If you aren't able to operate a meal site at a farmers' market, here are some tips to incorporate local foods into summer meals:

- Identify which local foods are currently being served.
- Contact a local farmer to find out which fruits and vegetables are in-season.
- Substitute food items you are eating with locally grown and harvested foods.
- Start a "Harvest of the Month" program in your community.
- Develop new recipes using local Georgia Grown foods.

Check out the following resources to help understand the importance of farmers markets and where to find a farmers' market in your area:

- [FarmToSummerSheet.pdf](#)
- [USDA Local Food Directories](#)
- [5 Reasons to take your kids to a Farmers Market - Ready Set Gwinnett](#)
- [8 Things to Know About Community Gardens](#)

Updates to SFSP Procurement Templates

Nutrition Services recently updated its SFSP Procurement templates used for Food Service Management Company and Vendor agreements/contracts. Changes include:

- Civil Rights Assurance Statement (new)
- Clause on action taken for failure to maintain adequate records or lack of integrity by the SFSP Sponsor and/or the Food Service Management Company/Vendor (new)
- Minor wording adjustments

Click [here](#) for all updated SFSP agreement/contract templates, as well as procurement federal regulations, instructions and guidance.

Click [here](#) to access the updated SFSP agreement templates.

HH Sponsors are required to use these documents moving forward when procuring foods.

Areas of Need for Summer 2025

One of Nutrition Services' goals is to have a meal site in every county of the state. Last summer, you played a crucial role in our significant progress toward that goal by expanding meal service to 103 counties in 2024! Thank you!

If your organization has the capacity to expand your meal service in 2025, please consider serving meals and snacks in any of the following target counties:

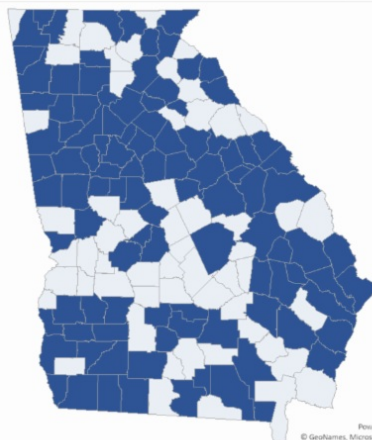


Georgia's Summer Food Service Program

FY25 Areas of Need: 56

1. Atkinson	13. Crisp	25. Jeff Davis	37. Oglethorpe	49. Twiggs
2. Bacon	14. Dade	26. Jenkins	38. Pierce	50. Upson
3. Banks	15. Dawson	27. Jones	39. Pulaski	51. Webster
4. Berrien	16. Dodge	28. Lincoln	40. Quitman	52. Wheeler
5. Bleckley	17. Dooly	29. Long	41. Schley	53. Wilcox
6. Brantley	18. Echols	30. Lumpkin	42. Screven	54. Wilkes
7. Brooks	19. Forsyth	31. Madison	43. Stewart	55. Wilkinson
8. Camden	20. Gilmer	32. Marion	44. Sumter	56. Worth
9. Charlton	21. Gordon	33. Miller	45. Taylor	
10. Chattahoochee	22. Grady	34. Montgomery	46. Telfair	
11. Cook	23. Haralson	35. Murray	47. Towns	
12. Crawford	24. Harris	36. Oconee	48. Treutlen	

Blue: HH meals were offered in these counties: White: Areas of Need



FY25 Reimbursement Rates Released

Maximum Rate per Meal (In Whole or Fractions of U. S. Dollars)

All States except Alaska and Hawaii		
Per Meal Rates in whole or fractions of U. S. dollars	Self-prep or Rural Sites	Other Types of Sites
Breakfast	3.0875	3.0300
Lunch or Supper	5.4025	5.3150
Supplement (Snack)	1.2800	1.2500

Start Preparing your Happy Helpings Budget

As the 2025 summer meals season quickly approaches, there is no better time to get a head start on budget planning for Happy Helpings. Once you have identified your potential sites for the 2025 program year, start planning your budget projections.

Identify your 2025 Revenue:

- Examples of revenue: Potential Reimbursement (# of meals x Rates), prior year excess funds, donations, other grants, and revenue producing activities

Determine Upcoming Costs:

- Review historical data such as previous years serving sites and meals and prior year reconciliation documents.
- Determine how many staff will be required to operate efficiently.

- Assess projected costs that are necessary and reasonable for the 2025 program.
- Start gathering your supporting documents for requested costs.

For questions regarding your 2025 Happy Helpings budget, please email nutritionbudget@decal.ga.gov.

Stay Informed: New and Revised Happy Helpings Memoranda

The following revised policies and memoranda were recently issued by USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS):

- **NEW! Policy 21 – State Agency Monitoring Requirements in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):** The purpose of this policy is to explain and clarify State Agencies' monitoring requirements under the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).
- **Meal Service Requirements in the Summer Meal Programs, with Questions and Answers (Revised):** This memorandum was revised to include information on the ineligibility of meals served outside approved operating dates and days.
- **Meal Disallowances for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) :** This memorandum was revised to include information on the ineligibility of meals served outside approved operating dates and days and additional information on rural non-congregate meals.
- **Ensuring Sponsors Implement Adequate Oversight and Internal Controls of SFSP Operations:** This memorandum was revised to make updates to the performance standards (financial viability, administrative capability, and program accountability).
- **Mobile Feeding Options in Summer Feeding Programs :** This memorandum was revised to include information on rural non-congregate mobile meal routes and the mobile route maker.
- **Policy 4 – 30/60 Day Claim Procedure and Revised Claims Limitation for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):** This policy was revised to include information regarding combined claims.
- **Policy 11 – Audit Reports for Nonprofit Sponsors Participating in the Summer Food Service Program:** This policy was revised to update the single audit threshold.
- **Policy 15 – Serious Deficiency Process for Sponsors in the Summer Food Service Program:** This policy was revised to include additional required regulatory language regarding agreements and corrective actions.
- **Policy 16 – Monitoring Requirements of Sponsors Participating in the Summer Food Service Program:** This policy was revised to include FNS recommendations on the number of monitors needed based on the number of sponsored sites.
- **Policy 18 – Advance Payments in the Summer Food Service Program :** This policy was revised to include language on certification processes for second advances.
- **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Appeal Procedures :** This policy was revised to include fines issued to school food authorities (SFAs) as appealable adverse actions.

For questions, please contact Robyn Parham at Robyn.Parham@decal.ga.gov

Unanticipated School Closure Waivers Available

On August 5, 2024, Nutrition Services received USDA approval for statewide waivers for Happy Helpings sponsors to utilize during unanticipated school closures.

The following waivers are available during unanticipated school closures when meal service operations are limited due to natural disasters, unscheduled major building repairs, court orders relating to school safety or other issues, labor-management disputes, or when approved by the State agency for similar unanticipated causes.

The following approved waivers are available when schools are closed with no virtual learning/classes:

- **Non-Congregate Meal Service**
- **Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-up**
- **Meal Service Times**
- **Service of Meals at School Sites**

The waivers listed above are available through **June 30, 2025**.

Once approved by Nutrition Services' Applications Unit to operate during unanticipated school closures, Happy Helpings sponsors interested in applying for the above-mentioned waivers must submit waiver requests via the Waiver Module within GA ATLAS.

Sponsors may only serve meals in a non-congregate setting, adjust the time of meal service, allow parent pick up, and allow service of meals at non-school sites once the sponsors are approved for the waivers.

Waivers cannot be approved for more than 10 consecutive operating days without approval from Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). In situations that may warrant longer approval periods, the FNS Southeast Regional Office (SERO) will work closely with Nutrition Services to determine if an extension is needed.

For questions, please reach out to Robyn Parham at robyn.parham@dec.al.ga.gov.

Upcoming Training and Technical Assistance

Happy Helpings Experienced Sponsor Training (1 Day- Virtual)

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Do you plan to serve summer meals during the FY 25 program year? If so, please plan to participate in **one (1)** of the upcoming Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program Orientation and Program Training sessions:

- February 5, 2025
- February 26, 2025
- March 26, 2025 -**New Program Contacts only**

[\[Register Now\]](#)

February 17, 2025 – Memo Monday

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Are you interested in learning more about rural non-congregate meal service? Do you know the regulatory guidance for a meal site to be eligible and approved for SFSP? Please join this webinar for an in-depth look into the following memo:

- [Rural Non-Congregate Meal Services in the SFSP](#)

[\[Register Now\]](#)

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 leslie.truman@dec.al.ga.gov or (404) 657-1779 for assistance.

Training Resources

In Case You Missed It: Webinar Recordings Now Available!

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 [It's Snack Time!](#) webinar. It discussed tips, tools, and tangible resources for serving snacks in the CACFP & SFSP.



Nutrition Ed Nook *Cruciferous Vegetables*

Cruciferous vegetables are the February Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) spotlight. These vegetables come in a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes.

Most cruciferous vegetables are considered cool weather vegetables, rich in vitamins and minerals such as folate, vitamins A, C, E and K, and fiber. Vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage also contain antioxidants that help reduce the risk of developing many cancers.

In Georgia, cabbage is in season from October through July, while broccoli and cauliflower are in season in late fall through spring if protected properly in the winter months.

Cabbage varieties include green, red, savoy, Napa, and Bok choy. Sauté cabbage for a quick and tasty stir-fry or use in a hearty cabbage soup with other vegetables.

Broccoli varieties include broccoli florets, which are the most common type seen at grocery stores. Other varieties include Chinese broccoli, broccolini, and broccoflower. Steam or roast broccoli as a side dish and season with spices to add additional flavor.

Cauliflower comes in a variety of colors, including white (the most common), green, orange, and purple. Enjoy mashed or finely chopped cauliflower to mimic mashed potatoes or rice.

Fun fact: The cruciferous vegetables family includes collard greens, mustard greens and turnip greens which are the January Harvest of the Month spotlight.

Integration:

- [Cabbage Salad](#)
- [Creamy Coleslaw](#)
- [Chinese Style Vegetables w/Tofu](#)
- [Cheesy Broccoli Tots](#)
- [Baked Cauliflower Tots](#)
- [Roasted Cauliflower Steaks](#)

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 small, bite-sized pieces of raw or cooked broccoli, cabbage, and/or cauliflower. Children love dips so if served raw, pair them with a creamy dip to increase acceptability. Let program participants taste each one and describe the flavors. Also, discuss the importance of eating vegetables.
- **Read** [The Vegetables We Eat](#), by Gail Gibbons with your program participants. Peppers, beans, corn, and peas! Learn how they grow, how they get to stores, and how many kinds there are!
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as rinsing broccoli or cauliflower florets or peeling the outer leaves from a head of cabbage

- to be cooked in a dish.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate cruciferous vegetables into their meals!
- **Want ECE cruciferous vegetable-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's [Harvest of the Month toolkit](#) for more ways to engage ECE students.

Conversation:

- Have the participants eaten cruciferous vegetables? If so, how do they eat them at home?
- Which cruciferous vegetable do they enjoy the most: cabbage, broccoli, or cauliflower?
- What other cruciferous vegetables (Bok choy, Brussels sprouts, arugula, kale, etc.) do participants like to eat?

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

Physical Activity Corner

Heart Health – Love, Hugs, and Kisses

Love is in the air! The American Heart Association (AHA) observes February as American Heart Month; a time when all people can focus on their cardiovascular health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States. One person dies every 33 seconds in the United States from **cardiovascular disease** (CVD). This is a startling statistic that DECAL's physical activity program seeks to combat through preventative measures within child nutrition programs.

Did you know that physical activity is a lifestyle change you can make to decrease your risk of CVD? According to 2018 data, approximately 1 in 4 U.S. adults reported achieving adequate aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities to meet the physical activity guidelines.

Being physically active is one of the best ways to keep our heart, body, and brain healthy. One of the many activities to keep the heart healthy and strong is cardiovascular exercise which improves the pumping and circulation of the blood and helps reduce the chances of developing blockages or clots in the arteries. Activities such as walking, running, dancing, swimming, yoga, and gardening are a few examples of fun and enjoyable activities that promote heart health. Take extra care of your heart and help your loved ones, or those who already suffer from heart diseases.

Integration:

- [American Heart Month 2025](#)
- [Heart Disease & Stroke Statistics \(2024 Update\)](#)
- [National Wear Red Day](#)
- [American Heart Association: Physical Activity 2024](#)
- [Staying Motivated: Fitness](#)

Education:

- **Read** aloud the book, [In My Heart: A Book Of Feelings](#), by Jo Witek.
- **Watch** the video on [I Heart Exercise S E16](#)



- **Talk** with families about ways to keep your heart healthy and strong daily.
- **Bonus:** Share #HeartWalk, #OurHearts #MoveToTheBeat, #PumpItUp, #LoveFitness pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What physical activity promotes heart health?
- How can you keep your heart strong and healthy?
- Why is fitness important for your heart health?
- Why is it important to keep our children active and heart healthy?

Share your #DECALPhysicalActivity, #MoveToTheBeat, #PumpItUp, #LoveFitness, #OurHearts, #HeartWalk stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@dec.al.ga.gov.



Eat Healthy and Live Active

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 2024-2025 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 Quality Care for Children's Farm to ECE [webpage](#) to access a variety of classroom resources, including activity ideas linked to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), recipe ideas, a book list, and family

newsletter to help you promote a new vegetable or fruit each month.

For school-age children resources, visit the Georgia Department of Education's Harvest of the Month [webpage](#).

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
February	Harvest of the Month: Cruciferous Vegetables
February 5	Happy Helpings SFSP Experienced Sponsor Training
February 17	Memo Monday: Rural Non-Congregate Meal Services in the SFSP
February 26	Happy Helpings SFSP Experienced Sponsor Training
March 13	Happy Helpings Summit
March 26	Happy Helpings SFSP Experienced Sponsor Training- New Program Contacts only

Decal Download

Inclusive Early Learning Week

February is known for Black History Month, Valentines Day, and even Super Bowl Sunday. However, it's also known for Inclusive Early Learning Week here in Georgia.

Children in inclusive high-quality childcare programs learn to be accepting of others and knowledgeable about the unique abilities of others.

When childcare providers offer inclusive care, they meet the educational needs of each child allowing everyone to thrive. Inclusive Early Learning Week is a celebration of inclusive learning practices in early childhood education.



Joining us on this episode of DECAL Download to talk about the importance of inclusion in early childcare and Inclusive Early Learning Week are Inclusion and Behavior Support Supervisor, Margaret Freeman and Specialist, Esther Whitaker. We are also joined by Rachel Robertson, who is one of our Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year from Oconee Preschool in Watkinsville and parents Jim and Lauren Tiller.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At Risk Afterschool Meals](#)
- [Commercial Recall: BrucePac Meat and Poultry](#)
- [After School Programs Required to Apply for License or Exemption to Participate in At-Risk](#)
- [And Justice for All Posters](#)
- [Notify DECAL When Updating Your Bank Information](#)
- [Procurement Methods At-A-Glance](#)
- [Have You Determined this Summer's Food Cost & Procurement Methods?](#)
- [Identifying the Difference between Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds](#)
- [2025 SFSP Reimbursement Rates](#)
- [Check you Email Messages in GA ATLAS](#)

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 Division

Marketing & Outreach

**Cindy Kicklighter
Joann Kilpatrick**

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