

Nutrition News



Happy
Helpings

Georgia's Summer Food Service Program

January 2, 2025



Happy
Helpings

Georgia's Summer Food Service Program

Happy Helpings Sponsor Kick-off Call

January 15, 2025

10:00- 11:00 a.m.

Join Tamika Boone, Director of Nutrition Services for the Happy Helpings Kick-off Call for experienced sponsors on Wednesday, January 15

at 10:00 a.m. for updates on the upcoming summer meals season.

Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 287 437 089 366

Passcode: Q6qz69tj

[Download Teams](#) | [Join on the web](#)

Or call in (audio only)

+1 470-481-4462,,299325890# United States, Atlanta

Phone Conference ID: 299 325 890

Save the Date: Happy Helpings Summit

March 13, 2025

Boost your summer meals program by attending the one-day Happy Helpings Summit scheduled for Thursday, March 13, 2025, in Macon.

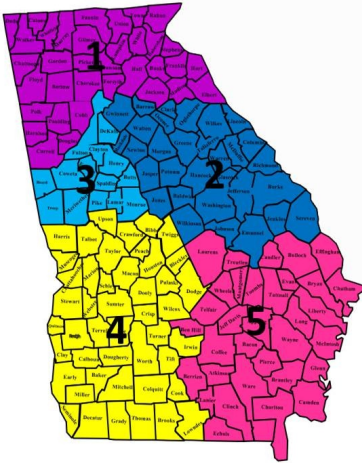
We'll cover topics ranging from the basics to rural non-congregate and creative menu ideas.

Have a topic suggestion? Please email Cindy.Kicklighter@decal.ga.gov.

Watch your email for more details and to register.

Attention Southeast Counties in Region 5

There has been a temporary change to your assigned TA Coordinator, but we will ensure the goal of the Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) Unit by providing continued user-friendly resources and guidance materials that result in



successful, sustainable Program administration and operation.

Therefore, sponsors that reside in the **Region 5** listed below, please contact our Nutrition TA mailbox at NutritionTA@dec.al.ga.gov with any needed technical assistance. You may also visit our **Training and Technical Assistance** webpage for Program resources and recorded webinars.

Target Counties 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 Target Counties: 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	



Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning
BRIGHT FROM THE START

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@decals.ga.gov.

Stay Informed: Revised Happy Helpings Memorandum

The following revised memorandum was recently issued by USDA's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS):

- [Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements](#) - The purpose of this memorandum is to provide State agencies and program operators of the Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), including the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program, with additional information and clarification on the State agency monitoring process regarding the: 1) Child Nutrition (CN) label, 2) Watermarked CN label, and 3) manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (PFS).

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

Upcoming Training and Technical Assistance

January 14, 2025– 1:30 - 2:00 pm

Tuesday Tip! Physical Activity in Small Spaces! Fun Games to Promote Movement in Limited Spaces

Is limited space a barrier to engaging in physical activity?

Join this micro session where we will discuss four physically active games you can play with young children (2-6 years old) in small spaces that promote early childhood development. Additional bonus topics of discussion will include family engagement and the provider's role.

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

[\[Register Now\]](#)

January 15, 2025 – 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Budget Readiness

Do you have the budget basics? Join this webinar to learn:

- the purpose of the budget package,
- the purpose of all budget line items in GA ATLAS, and
- how to prepare & develop a complete GA ATLAS budget package.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

January 28, 2025 – 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Procurement Readiness

Are you practicing proper procurement requirements? Join this webinar to learn:

- relevant procurement practices when procuring food & non-food items,
- how to develop formal solicitations, and
- how to incorporate local sourcing practices into a meal service.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

January 29, 2025- 1:00-2:00 pm

Physical Activity is Important in Early Childhood

Would you like to be introduced to the concepts of physical literacy and the fundamental movement skills of infants, toddlers, and pre-schooled aged children? Please join this session to recognize the importance of physical activity and how it supports child development, to include your personal physical activity practices.

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

[\[Register Now\]](#)

Upcoming Training Opportunities: February 2025

February 5, 2025 or February 26, 2025 - 9:00 am – 12:30 pm

FY 2025 HH Experienced Sponsors Training

Do you plan to serve summer meals during the FY 2024-2025 program year? If so, please plan to participate in **one (1)** of the upcoming HH *SFSP Orientation and Program Training* sessions.

All returning sponsors that plan to operate this upcoming summer must attend one of these training sessions to continue participation in the program. This training will include an instructor-led format to satisfy training requirements.

Happy Helpings SFSP Experienced Sponsor Training (1 Day- Virtual)

- February 5, 2025
- February 26, 2025

[\[Register Now\]](#)

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@decal.ga.gov or (404) 657-1779 for assistance.

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 [Local Procurement Standards & Sourcing Training](#) webinar. It discussed detailed information on procurement principles for acquiring local foods as a child nutrition program operator, along with updates on the final rule regarding geographic preferences.

Gardening with Children

The [Institute of Child Nutrition \(ICN\)](#) has developed Mealtime Memos and the July 2024 issue discusses how to engage children in gardening activities to increase their knowledge and acceptance of healthy, local foods.

- [July Mealtime Memo](#)



Nutrition Ed Nook

Greens Galore!

Collard, Mustard, and Turnip greens are the January Harvest of the Month (HOTM) ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) spotlight!

These dark green vegetables are packed with vitamins A, C, and K, fiber, and folate. They help protect bones and teeth, improve vision, and boost immunity.

Typically planted eight to ten weeks before the first frost, these green varieties are available year-round but have the best flavor in-season from December to March. Collard greens have a slightly bitter taste,

while mustard and turnip greens offer a spicy, peppery flavor.

Popular in southern cuisine, these greens are also enjoyed worldwide in places like Brazil, Kashmir, Kenya, Portugal, and Tanzania. They can be used in a variety of dishes, from green smoothies and salads to stir-fries, soups, and pastas. Share and celebrate these global culinary traditions with your participants!

Remember that it's a great southern tradition to eat your greens at the start of the new year.

Integration:

- **Smothered Greens**
- **Black-Eyed Peas and Greens**
- **Chicken and Greens Soup**
- **Butternut Squash with Collard Greens***
- **Greens & Beans Soup*** (Sopa de garbanzo y hojas verdes)

*You may substitute any of the HOTM greens for this recipe or include a combination of all of them.

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.
- **Greens Taste Test** Prepare small, bite-sized pieces of cooked collard, mustard, and/or turnip greens. Let program participants taste each one and describe the flavors. Encourage them to use words like "bitter," "spicy," or "peppery." Discuss which green they liked best and why, and talk about how these greens help keep us healthy.
- **Read *The Enormous Turnip (First Favourite Tales)*** with program participants. The old man wants the enormous turnip for his dinner. He pulls and he pulls, but the turnip is too big! Find out what happens when a very, very large turnip doesn't want to be pulled out of the ground!
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as swishing greens in a bowl of water to remove dirt.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate greens into their meals!
- **Want ECE greens-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's **Harvest of the Month toolkit** for more ways to engage ECE students.

Conversation:

- Have your participants eaten greens before? If so, which ones?
- How do participants think greens grow? What things do plants need to grow?
- How do participants think greens help our bodies stay healthy and strong?

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

Physical Activity Corner

Active Play in Cold Weather

As winter arrives and temperatures drop, we often stay indoors to keep warm. Parents and educators share concerns about children playing outside in the cold. Physical activity is crucial year-round in supporting and helping children and adults boost cardiovascular health, strengthen muscles and bones, and improve mental wellbeing.

Staying active, especially on gray, cold days, is essential. Winter's embrace offers a world of possibilities for indoor/outdoor exploration and play.

Here are fun and entertaining ideas to engage children, educators, and staff in physical activity as an everyday routine. Watch the temperature and wind chill, and limit outdoors to 20-30 minutes if it's extremely cold.



Indoor Winter Activities:

- **Color Painting:** Ignite creativity and sensory skills with color painting, where children can express their artistic side while learning about different colors. This activity is a fantastic way to explore their artistic expression and understand color, using the white bond paper as their canvas.
- **Toddler Snowstorm:** This activity from SHAPE America is a fun and engaging way for toddlers to develop social, emotional, and motor skills. It involves rolling and catching cotton balls, followed by creating a "snowstorm" by tossing the cotton balls into the air. This activity helps toddlers improve coordination and interaction with others.
- **Winter-Themed Crafts:** Enhance fine motor skills with winter-themed crafts. Crafting activities such as cutting, gluing and assembling various materials not only aid in developing hand-eye coordination, but also foster creativity, allowing children to create their own winter wonderlands.
- **Story Time:** Read aloud **"Winter is Here,"** by Kevin Henkes. A celebration of the sights, sounds, and smells of the season, this is perfect for young readers. Snow falls, animals burrow, and children prepare for the wonders winter brings.
- **Tummy Time:** An exercise for infants to 12 months, tummy time is an activity that needs supervised time when an infant is awake and alert, lying on her/his belly. Opportunities for tummy time should last as long as possible to help infants learn to enjoy it and build their strength. For infants who are not used to it or do not enjoy it, each period of tummy time can start at 1–2 minutes, and build up to 5-10 minutes over time.
- **Simon Says:** This is a fun classic game that encourages active play and helps in exercising listening skills. Although Simon Says is traditionally a child's game, kids of all ages can play and enjoy the game. The fun increases with the number of players!
- **Let's Get Moving:** Play "Moving Along with Elmo" and enjoy the moves together. Sing Along: Substitute "Elmo" with the kids' names. For example, if the child's name is Alex, you can sing "Alex's got the moves!" Have fun dancing and singing along!

Outdoor Winter Activities:

- **Winter Nature Walks:** Encourage the children to observe and describe what they see, hear, and feel. Bring along a small bag to collect interesting natural items like pinecones, acorns, or smooth stones. After the walk, you can discuss their findings and even create a nature collage with the items collected.
- **Sensory Bin Winter Scavenger Hunt:** Create a winter-theme scavenger hunt list with items like evergreen trees, stones, falling leaves, etc. Encourage children to use their five senses to experience the cold winter environment.
- **Snowball Toss:** Create "snowballs" using soft balls, lightweight materials like yarn. Set up targets, such as buckets or hula hoops, and let children practice tossing the item into the target, enhancing both coordination and motor skills.
- **Soft Balls Bowling:** Set up bowling pins using empty plastic bottles. Children can take turns rolling soft balls and knocking down the "pins." This game is perfect for promoting physical activity, coordination, and friendly competition among young children.

Education:

- **Read** aloud the book, **"Winter is Here,"** by Kevin Henkes.
- **Watch** the video on **"Move Your Way: Tips for Getting Motivated"**
- **Talk** with families about ways to integrate fitness into the cold winter season.
- **Bonus:** Send #ActivePlay, #ColdWinterActivities, #Outdoor/Indoor pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What is your favorite fitness activity to do during the winter season?
- How do you usually stay active during the colder months?
- Why is it important to exercise outdoors during the cold winter?
- How do you engage children in cold weather?

Physical Activity Resources

- Active Play in Cold Weather (**English & Spanish**)
- **Dressing Kids for the Winter**
- **Understand the Weather: Child Care Weather Watch**

When playing outside in cold weather, children should dress in layers to stay warm.

Encourage families to provide hats and gloves to wear, especially below 32°F. As educators, enjoy the winter fun and adventures. Always prioritize children’s safety during any physical activity. Let’s keep moving!

Share your #ColdWinterActivities, #Outdoor/Indoor stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@dec.al.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
January	Harvest of the Month: Collard, Mustard, and Turnip Greens
January 1	Holiday: New Year’s Day
January 14	Tuesday Tip! Physical Activity in Small Spaces Webinar
January 15	Happy Helpings Kick-off Call
January 15	Budget Readiness Webinar
January 28	Procurement Readiness Webinar
January 29	Physical Activity is Important in Early Childhood Training
February 5 & 26	FY 2025 HH Experienced Sponsors Training
March 13	Happy Helpings Summit

Decal Download

Legislative Preview

The New Year begins and on Monday, January 13th the 2025 Georgia General Assembly kicks off.



As the lawmakers prepare to head back to the state capitol, we're previewing some of the key issues, proposed bills, and political dynamics to watch. There will also be some new faces among the 236-member State Legislature.

Joining us on this episode of DECAL Download to talk about the upcoming legislative session is Liz Young, DECAL's Director of Government Relations and

Special Projects and Polly McKinney, the Advocacy Director with Voices for Georgia's Children.

We are also joined by Rian Ringsrud, the Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration here at DECAL and Ira Sudman, General Counsel for DECAL.

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?](#)
- [Budget Representatives Updated April 2024](#)
- [Identifying the Difference between Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds](#)
- [Make you Local Farmers Market a Meal Site Option](#)
- [FY24 Reimbursement Rates Released](#)
- [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**

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Nondiscrimination Statement: English

Nondiscrimination Statement: Spanish

FOLLOW US



Bright from the Start: DECAL | 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive | Atlanta, GA 30334 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!