



July 1, 2025

Kick-off Events held with America's Second Harvest of Coastal GA & DeKalb County Recreation Department



DECAL's Nutrition Services Division hosted a Happy Helpings kick-off event on June 12, 2025, in partnership with America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia in Jesup.

This event, held at the Boys and Girls Club of the Altamaha Area, highlighted the importance of summer meals for kids, while also emphasizing the value of combining good nutrition with physical activity and staying hydrated.

During the events, the kids enjoyed nutritious meals, taste-tested Georgia grown fruits and vegetables, hydrated with fruit/vegetable infused water and played various games ranging from egg races, hopscotch and jump rope.



Special thanks to Kate Ginn, Director of Operations at the Boys & Girls Club of the Altamaha Area, and Angie Johnson, Kids Café Director at America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia for hosting an amazing event, as well as to special guest Phil Davis, DECAL Board Member.

DeKalb County Recreation Partners with Decal Nutrition for Fun-Fueled Kick-off Event.

On June 26, the DeKalb County Recreation Department teamed up with Decal Nutrition Services to deliver a lively day of food, fun, and fitness.

The event transformed healthy habits into hands-on experiences, as children explored the flavors of Georgia-grown produce through interactive taste tests and cooled off with refreshing fruit- and veggie-

infused water.



But it wasn't just about trying new foods—kids jumped into action with games like egg races, hopscotch, and jump rope, turning the playground into a hub of energy and engagement.

The blend of movement, hydration, and wholesome meals gave participants a full-circle experience in feeling good and staying active.

This collaboration brought wellness to life in a way that was vibrant, playful, and rooted in the joy of community connection.

Special thanks to Rose McGrue, Operation Coordinator for the Nutrition Services Program and her wonderful team of the DeKalb County Recreation Department for hosting an incredible event.



Happy Helpings Start-up Grant Awardees Announced

Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program, offers start-up grants of up to \$10,000 to new and experienced sponsors to expand meal access in underserved counties. These grants, provided by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), aim to address the gap in meal sites and feed more children during the summer.

The start-up grants are designed to encourage the establishment of new Happy Helpings meal sites in counties with limited or no existing sites, specifically targeting areas with high rates of childhood food insecurity.

The following sponsors were awarded the Happy Helpings Start-up Grant for summer 2025:

- 3rd Mile, Inc.
- Karing Hartz Community Development Corporation
- Real Talk, Let's Talk Reunited Counseling, Inc.
- Second Harvest of South Georgia, Inc..
- Small Treasures Learning Center
- Step of Faith Outreach, Inc.
- Students Seeking Outstanding Academic Results
- The Black Lotus Project
- Youth Science Academy

Excessive Heat and Air Quality Advisories

On May 30, 2025, USDA granted a Nutrition Services request to waive certain requirements in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) for summer 2025 operations. Specifically, Nutrition Services was approved to waive the requirement to serve congregate meals during times of excessive heat and air quality advisories.

Non-Congregate Meals during Excessive Heat Waiver

This waiver allows SFSP sponsors, in good standing, to operate approved outdoor meal sites without temperature-controlled alternative sites as non-congregate sites on days when the area is experiencing excessive heat. These waivers may only be used on days when the National Weather Service (NWS) has issued a Heat Advisory, an Excessive Heat Warning, or an Excessive Heat Watch for the area in which an approved outdoor meal site is located, as indicated at <https://www.weather.gov/>. These waivers are effective May 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025.

Non-Congregate Meals during Air Quality Advisories

This waiver allows SFSP sponsors, in good standing, to operate approved outdoor meal sites without alternative indoor sites as non-congregate sites on days when the area is experiencing certain air quality advisories. Sites may be approved for non-congregate meal service on days when the site's zip code has an Air Quality Index (AQI) "purple" flag or higher, as indicated at <https://www.airnow.gov/>. These waivers went into effective on May 1, 2025 and expire on September 30, 2025.

Additional Flexibilities Available

The following flexibilities are also available during times of excessive heat and air quality advisories.

These flexibilities are effective May 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025:

- Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-Up
- Meal Service Time Flexibilities

Guidance Available on Waivers and Approval Process

Nutrition Services has developed instructions and further guidance on applying for these waivers and flexibilities entitled Happy Helpings Excessive Heat and Air Quality Advisories Application and Instruction Guide. The guidance can be found [here](#).

All sponsors who desire to apply for these waivers are strongly encouraged to review this guidance as it offers information on required documentation to be maintained and submitted. In addition, the guidance contains instructions on how to report meals served during the utilization of these waivers.

Sponsors interested in utilizing these waivers and flexibilities must request approval via the Waiver Module in GA ATLAS. Sponsors must have approval to utilize these waivers and flexibilities prior to serving meals in non-congregate settings during excessive heat and/or air quality advisories.

For general questions on requesting a USDA approved waiver, please contact Tammie.Baldwin@dec.al.gov. For specific policy questions pertaining to waivers, please contact Sonja.Adams@dec.al.gov.

Have You Added New Sites After Application Approval?

If you have added new sites after your initial application was approved, expenses in your budget most likely have increased. This may require you to submit a budget revision to support the new sites.

Please be sure to submit all Add-A-Site information to your assigned Business Operations

Specialist and get approval before submitting a budget revision. Once your new sites have been approved, your updated budget costs will be reviewed and considered for approval.

For more information, please contact nutritionbudget@decal.ga.gov

Business Operations Representative	Institution Assignment	Email	Phone Number
Lavesia Ervin	o (zero)-C, H-P	Lavesia.Ervin@decal.ga.gov	(404) 293-5258
Joveta Watson	D-G, Q-Z	Joveta.Watson@decal.ga.gov	(706) 434-6831

Review Your Financials

Ensure Costs Align with Approved Budget

Annual Year-End Reconciliation Due October 31

Sponsors, we are halfway through the summer meals season. While you are busy feeding the kids, don't forget to take a moment to review your financials. At the end of the summer, you will need to prepare and submit your Annual Year-End Reconciliation documents. This is a great time to begin reviewing your records to ensure your costs align with your approved budget.

Here are some helpful tips to get you started:

Review the approved costs in your budget and compare them to your current spending for Happy Helpings.

- If you notice costs getting close to or exceeding the approved amount, let this be your cue to submit a budget revision to reflect updated costs or determine whether you need to utilize other program revenue.
- Ensure all transactions are accurately recorded throughout the duration of the program.

Get familiar with the reconciliation form early:

- Please review the [reconciliation form](#) and [instructions](#).
- Take some time to explore how the form works before the submission date on **October 31, 2025**. It will automatically calculate costs and funds as they are entered.
- Review your Management Plan and make sure you're following your organization's financial recordkeeping practices.

Ask Questions!

If you have questions about your costs or the reconciliation process, please contact NutritionBudget@decal.ga.gov. Include the name of the institution and agreement number in the subject line of the email.

Meet Melissa Stanley, Nutrition Policy Administrator

Nutrition Services is pleased to announce that Melissa Stanley has joined the Nutrition team in the role of Nutrition Policy Administrator. Melissa reports to Sonja Adams, Senior Manager of Provider Services.

With a remarkable background in legal policy, court systems, and public service including roles with the Georgia Department of Human Services, Fulton County Juvenile Court, and the Atlanta Police Department, Melissa brings a powerhouse of experience and dedication to detail.



What drives her most? Collaboration, creativity, and a passion for helping children. She's especially excited to dive into projects that support youth, and that allow her to contribute new ideas and to grow with the team.

Outside of work, Melissa is a Marvel-loving, binge-watching, concert-going wife and mom of two (fun fact: her kids share the same birthday!). She's also a proud pet parent to Curry, an energetic pup and Luna the sassy cat. Each pet matches perfectly with her children's personalities.

Melissa believes in the power of teamwork and the value of constructive feedback: "It helps me grow, rethink ideas, and push for positive change."

Upcoming Training and Technical Assistance

July 1, 2025

Tuesday Tip! Identifying Common Allergens on Food Packaging
1:30 - 2:15 pm

Do you need help with managing multiple food allergens in your program?
Join this webinar to learn:

- the top nine [9] food allergens and
- how to recognize what food products contain these allergens.

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

[\[Register Now\]](#)

July 21, 2025

Memo Monday
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Do you have unexpected unused funds in your Happy Helpings SFSP?
Please join this webinar for an in-depth look into the following policy memos:

- **Best Practices for Managing Unused Reimbursement in the Summer Food Service Program**
- **Use of SFSP Funds towards Farm to Early Care and Education Costs, with Questions and Answers**

[\[Register Now\]](#)

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@decals.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 [Product Formulation Statement \(PFS\) & CN Labels webinar](#). It discussed how Product Formulation Statements & CN Labels provide a way for a manufacturer to demonstrate how a processed food product may contribute to the meal pattern requirements in child nutrition programs (CNP).

Have a Plant

Have a Plant is the ultimate fruit & veggie hub that boosts appeal and inspires lasting behavior change by tapping into the emotional connection. The hub provides easy, simple prep ideas and recipes for fruits and veggies.

Read the Resource

Happy Helpings Summit Training Videos

Financial Management Training

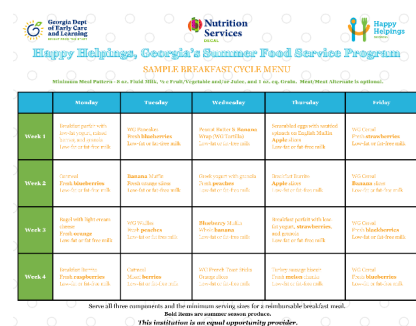
Happy Helpings Summit: Financial Management Training

In this video, Myers & Stauffer provides an overview of financial management to include best practices, allowable costs, budgets, payroll, etc., as well as documentation to support financial management, and common findings related to financial management.

Review Preparedness

Happy Helpings Summit: Review Preparedness

In this video, Myers & Stauffer reviews the goals of an administrative review, the general administrative review process, the Do's/Don'ts of an administrative review, common findings and best practices.



The screenshot shows the website for the Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program. It features a 'SAMPLE BREAKFAST CYCLE MENU' with a table of meal options for four weeks. The table has columns for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Each row represents a week, and each cell contains a list of meal options for that day. The website also includes logos for Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning, Nutrition Services, and Happy Helpings.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.
Week 2	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.
Week 3	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.
Week 4	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.	Grilled chicken with corn, black beans, and avocado. Served with rice and beans.

Fresh for Summer! New Cycle Menus Now Available

We're excited to share our newly created Happy Helpings Cycle Menu for breakfast, lunch/supper, and snack—just in time for summer! These menus are designed to highlight seasonal produce, helping you serve meals that are not only nutritious but also vibrant and appealing to children.

Whether you're looking for inspiration or a ready-to-use resource, these menus are a valuable tool to help refresh your offerings, streamline your planning, and support your summer operations.

We hope this new resource helps make your summer meal service smoother and more enjoyable for everyone involved.

Download the new cycle menu [here](#).

Summer 2025 Family Literacy Activity Guide is Now Available

Created for parents and early educators of children ages 0-8, Black Child Development Institute (BCDI) Atlanta is excited to



share the [Family Literacy Activity Guide](#).

This season's guide features engaging stories including "**Our Family is Growing**," "**The Great Ant Sleepover**," and "**Hey, Georgia**", all chosen to spark curiosity, creativity, and connection within Black families and communities.

Filled with fun, culturally responsive activities that promote early learning and literacy, this guide is the perfect summer companion for growing readers.



Nutrition Ed Nook

Sweet, Georgia Peaches!

Sweet, Georgia Peaches are the July Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) spotlight! Peaches are packed with essential nutrients, including vitamins A, C, and E, potassium, and water. The peels are a great source of fiber, which helps maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

Additionally, the antioxidants in peaches can support overall health and protect against chronic diseases.

In Georgia, peaches are in season from May through August, when they are at their peak quality and flavor. There are two main varieties: Freestone and Clingstone. Our state produces over 40 commercial varieties of peaches.

Enjoy peaches as a snack or add them to your favorite yogurt or cereal for extra flavor and nutrients. You can also blend them into smoothies, grill them for a unique and tasty treat, or mix them into a fresh fruit salad. Their versatility makes peaches a delightful addition to both sweet and savory dishes.

Fun Fact: Georgia, known as the Peach State, ranks third in the nation for peach production, following California and South Carolina.

Integration:

- [Peach Salsa](#)
- [Skillet Peaches](#)
- [Peach Yogurt Bites](#)
- [Peachy Oatmeal Bake](#)
- [Peach and Carrot Smoothie](#)

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.
- **Explore** peaches with program participants using their senses to describe how peaches look, feel, taste, and smell.
- **Read** [Each Peach Pear Plum](#) by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. Each Peach Pear Plum introduces favorite fairy tale characters, such as Tom Thumb and The Three Bears and, with a poem on each page hinting as to what is hiding in the picture, participants are encouraged to participate and follow the story themselves.
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as spooning peaches into the blender to make a peach smoothie.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate peaches into their meals!
- **Want ECE peach-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's

Conversation:

- Have your program participants eaten peaches before?
- What is their favorite way to eat peaches?
- What other fruits can you think of that are similar to peaches?

Share your Harvest of the Month stories and menu integration of peaches with Nutrition Education Specialist, Morgan Chapman, MPH, MCHc at morgan.chapman@dec.al.gov.

Physical Activity Corner

Beat the Heat: Indoor and Outdoor Activities in the Summer

Summer is here, and it's the perfect time to get kids moving! Children need at least one hour of physical activity each day—but it doesn't have to feel like exercise. Games, dancing, and playing all count!

Outdoor play is great for development, but rising temps can be risky. Young children are especially vulnerable to heat-related illnesses like dehydration and heat exhaustion.

Tips for Safe Summer Play:

- Head outside early, before it gets too hot.
- Use shade from trees, tents, or umbrellas.
- Offer plenty of water.
- Mix indoor play, when needed.

Here are some fun physical activity ideas for small spaces, both indoors and outdoors, to keep children active:

Indoor Activities:

- **Dance Party:** Turn on some music and have a dance-off. It's a great way to get moving and have fun.
- **Obstacle Course:** Use pillows, chairs, and toys to create an indoor obstacle course.
- **Yoga and Stretching:** Follow along with a kid-friendly yoga video or do some simple stretches.
- **Simon Says:** Play a game of Simon Says with active commands like jumping jacks, running in place, or hopping on one foot.
- **Scavenger Hunt:** Create a list of items for kids to find around the classroom. Add physical challenges like "hop to the rug" or "tip toe to the cubbies."

Outdoor Activities (in shaded or cooler areas):

- **Water Play:** Set up a small splash pad, sprinkler, or water table for some cool water fun.
- **Treasure Hunt:** Hide treasures around the play area and create clues for the children to find them. For example, "Look under the big tree" or "Find the red flower." This activity promotes problem-solving and exploration.
- **Sidewalk Chalk Games:** Draw hopscotch or mazes for active play.
- **Garden Planting:** Gather small pots, soil, seeds, and water. Let the children plant seeds in small pots and water them. This helps kids hone their fine motor skills and learn about plant growth.

Tips for Staying Cool:

- **Hydration:** Make sure kids drink plenty of water before, during, and after activities.
- **Cool Clothing:** Dress children in light, breathable clothing.



- **Shade:** Use umbrellas, tents, or natural shade to stay cool.
- **Timing:** Schedule outdoor activities for early morning or late afternoon when it's cooler.

Education:

- **Read aloud the book,** *Pete the Cat Rocking Field Day*.
- **Watch the video on,** *Move Your Way: Tips for Getting Motivated*.
- **Talk** with families about ways to stay indoors during the heat, stay hydrated and drink water in the summer or all year round, whether at home, outside, in their local community, at your childcare site, or at their local recreational areas.
- **Bonus:** Send #OutdoorFun, #SummerAdventures, #BeatTheHeat, #StayCoolInside, #Outdoor/Indoor pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What is your favorite indoor or outdoor activity to do during the summer season?
- How to keep children cool in the summer?
- What are some fun ways you keep children entertained during the summer?
- Why is it important to exercise outdoors during the summer?
- Why is it important to hydrate before, during, and after exercise?

Physical Activity Resource:

- **Summer Safety Tips**

No matter the weather, children can stay active, even in small spaces. Always adhere to Child Care Services Rules and Regulations regarding weather conditions affecting outdoor play. If temperatures get too high, bring children indoors for physical activity. Keep children safe, hydrated, and healthy by staying alert and prepared. Have fun, stay cool, and enjoy a safe summer of play!

Share your #SummerAdventures, #BeatTheHeat #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
July	Harvest of the Month: Peaches
July 1	Tuesday Tip! Identifying Common Allergens on Food Packaging-Webinar
July 4	Holiday: Fourth of July
July 9	Spike Event with Fannin County Recreation Department
July 21	Memo Monday: Summer Food Service Program Policy Memos-Webinar
September 30	Deadline to submit Happy Helpings Start-up Grant Results
October 31	Deadline to submit Happy Helpings Annual Year-End Reconciliation

Decal Download

CAPS Advisory Councils

In our latest episode of DECAL Download we discuss the new CAPS Advisory Councils. With a council for both parents and providers individually, these groups are here to share insights and feedback on the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program to help make it better and easier to access.



During this week's episode we're talking about how the new groups will make services better for families and childcare providers across the state. Joining us to talk about the CAPS Advisory Councils is Elisabetta Kasfir, the Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs, Amy Roys, CAPS Director for Development and Partnerships, and Melinda Knowles, the CAPS Manager for Development and Partnerships.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Resources to Promote Meal Sites](#)
- [No Kid Hungry GA Summer Webinar Series](#)
- [New Resources from No Kid Hungry](#)
- [New Supplier Change Request](#)
- [Advance Payment Requests Update](#)
- [Updates to SFSP Procurement Templates](#)
- [Procurement Methods At-A-Glance](#)
- [Have You Determined this Summer's Food Cost & Procurement Methods?](#)
- [2025 SFSP Reimbursement Rates](#)
- [Check you Email Messages in GA ATLAS](#)
- [And Justice for All Posters](#)

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](#)

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