



July 1, 2026

Help Us Feed More Kids This Summer

Every child deserves access to nutritious meals during the summer months. If your organization has the capacity to expand meal services, now is the perfect time to consider adding an additional Happy Helpings meal site or serving a new community.

By opening another site, you can help ensure that more children across Georgia have access to healthy meals when school is out. Even one additional site can make a meaningful impact for families in need.

If you are interested in expanding your current operations, please complete the [Site Update Form](#), upload into ATLAS and email your business operations representative.

Together, we can reach more children, strengthen our communities, and make this summer healthier for Georgia's youth.

Happy Helpings Kicks Off Summer Meals Program Across Georgia



YMCA of Rome and Floyd County

DECAL Nutrition Services partnered with the YMCA of Rome and Floyd County on June 11 to kickoff the summer meal season. The event welcomed more than 100 children and families.

Children enjoyed a nutritious lunch while learning about healthy eating habits and the importance of staying active throughout the summer months.

"Every organization represented around that circle plays an important role in scaffolding these efforts year-round. Together, they help ensure that children and families have access to food, resources, and support throughout the year." said Stephanie McElhone, Community Development Director for the YMCA. "I hope you all got a chance to see how our community partners come together to support children and families through the YMCA's anti-hunger initiatives."

As part of the celebration, participants sampled local and fresh blueberries, cucumbers, and fruit-infused water with citrus and berries. The blueberries and peaches were proudly grown by Georgia farmers, highlighting the importance of supporting local agriculture and introducing children to fresh, seasonal produce.

Physical activity was also a key component of the day. Children participated in fun activities that reinforced the connection between healthy eating and active living—two important building blocks of overall health and wellness.



Karing Hertz Community Development Corporation

Karing Hertz Community Development Corporation hosted the second Happy Helpings Kickoff event of the season held on June 25, 2026.

Families gathered at the Clayton County Headquarters Library for a fun-filled afternoon focused on nutrition, learning, and community.

A Happy Helpings Sponsor since 2021, Nahesa Davis, Founder and CEO of Karing Hertz says, "Parents are so grateful for the meals. We are changing lives one Karing Heart at a time."



Farm to Summer Week was celebrated during the kickoff Kids enjoyed tasting local fruits and vegetables throughout the day.



Children enjoyed free, nutritious meals while participating in engaging activities designed to encourage healthy habits and active lifestyles throughout the summer.



Officers with the Clayton County Sherriff's Office came to the event to engage with the kids as part of their community service efforts. The kids got an opportunity to see the patrol cars and to try out the siren and PA system.

YMCA of Rome and Floyd County Expands Meal Access Through Rural Non-Congregate Sites

This summer, the YMCA of Rome and Floyd County is operating four rural non-congregate meal sites, helping bridge the hunger gap for families who may face transportation or accessibility challenges.

They are distributing seven-day meal boxes containing 14 meals per child to more than 600 children each week. That translates to approximately 8,400 meals weekly.



In addition, families receive more than 10,000 pounds of fresh produce each week to supplement the shelf-stable meal boxes, ensuring children have access to healthy and nutritious food throughout the summer.

Rural non-congregate meals require a large team of committed volunteers to package, organize, and distribute meals to families throughout the region each week.

The YMCA's rural non-congregate meal program is also made possible through strong community partnerships and dedicated support from organizations committed to fighting childhood hunger. "The success of this work is only possible because of extraordinary community partnerships," said Stephanie McElhone, Community Development Director for the YMCA.

"The Atlanta Community Food Bank helps us bring thousands of pounds of fresh produce into our community each week, ensuring families receive not only shelf-stable rural meal packs, but also nutritious fruits and vegetables that support healthy growth and well-being. No Kid Hungry has been instrumental in helping us build and strengthen a sustainable rural non-congregate meal program, providing both funding and strategic support as we continue to expand our reach.

Together with our friends and partners at Happy Helpings, these incredible organizations are helping us create a summer nutrition network that removes barriers, expands access to healthy food, and ensures more children have the nourishment they need to learn, grow, and thrive."

The YMCA's 2026 rural non-congregate sites include:

- Cave Spring Baptist Church – Cave Spring (3rd year serving as a rural meal site)
- YMCA Grizzard Park – Rome (3rd year serving as a rural meal site)
- Pepperell High School – Lindale (new site for 2026)
- Ridge Ferry Park – Rome (new site for 2026)

By expanding services to new locations while continuing at established sites, the YMCA of Rome and Floyd County is reaching more children and families than ever before.



Amanda White, Director of Hunger Initiatives for the YMCA highlights the importance of the rural non-congregate model in meeting the needs of local families.

"Our rural non-congregate sites have been instrumental in ensuring families in our community have access to nutritious meals all summer long. For many of our families, transportation and distance are some of the biggest barriers to accessing resources.

The rural non-congregate parent/guardian pickup model helps remove those barriers by bringing meals closer to where families live, allowing caregivers to carpool, and by providing the option to pick up a seven-day meal kit in one visit rather than requiring multiple trips each week.




This flexibility meets families where they are and creates a more realistic, sustainable way for children to receive consistent nutrition throughout the summer. In just the first four weeks of summer, we have registered more than 500 households and provided meals to more than 1,500 unique children through our rural pickup sites, demonstrating the incredible need and impact of this model in our community."

Send Us Pictures of Happy Helpings Meal Sites In Action

We love seeing the impact Happy Helpings Sponsors make while feeding kids nutritious meals across Georgia.

As summer meal service continues, please share photos on social media and tag us at #HappyHelpingsGA so we can celebrate your efforts statewide.



Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program

SAMPLE BREAKFAST CYCLE MENU

Minimum Meal Portion: 8 oz. fluid milk, 1/2 a fresh vegetable and/or fruit, and 1 oz. dry cereal. *Milk must always be unflavored.

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--------|---|----------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Week 1 | Eggert parfait with fresh blueberries 8oz milk | WD Pancakes Blueberries 8oz milk | Peanut butter & banana 6oz WD cereal 8oz milk | Egg Protein Bars 2oz fresh berries 4oz orange slices 8oz milk | WD Cereal Blueberries 8oz milk |
| Week 2 | Strawberry Smoothie w/ potatoes 8oz milk | Custard Blueberries 8oz milk | Egg Breakfast Pancakes 2oz fresh blueberries 2oz fresh kiwi 2oz milk | Strawberry Smoothie 2oz fresh berries 4oz orange slices 8oz milk | WD Cereal Banana slices 8oz milk |
| Week 3 | WD Bagel Fresh orange 8oz milk | WD Waffles Fresh peach 8oz milk | WD French toast slices Banana 8oz milk | Strawberry and Lemon Fruit Cakes w/ WD Toppings 8oz milk | WD Cereal Blueberries 8oz milk |
| Week 4 | Strawberry egg 8oz cereal 2oz fresh potatoes 8oz milk | Fresh Custard 2oz milk | Lemon Blueberry Muffin 2oz milk | Fresh orange blend 2oz fresh berries 8oz milk | WD Cereal Banana slices 8oz milk |

WD = Whole Grain

Serve all three components and the minimum serving sizes for a reimbursable breakfast meal.

Italic items are summer season produce. Underlined items link to a recipe.

This notification is an equal opportunity provider.

Explore Updated Cycle Menus for Summer

We're excited to share our newly created Happy Helpings Cycle Menus for breakfast, lunch/supper, and snack—just in time for summer. These menus highlight seasonal produce and connect you with nutritious, standardized recipes.

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.

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

Review Your Financials

Annual Year-End Reconciliation Due October 31, 2026

Sponsors, we are halfway through the summer meals season. While you are busy feeding children, don't forget to take a moment to review your financial records. At the end of the summer, you will need to prepare and submit your Annual Year-End Reconciliation documents. Now is a great time to review your records and 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, consider submitting a budget revision to reflect updated costs or determine whether you need to use other program revenue.
- Ensure all transactions are accurately recorded throughout the duration of the program.

Get Familiar with the Reconciliation Form

- Review the [reconciliation form](#) and [instructions](#).
- Take time to explore how the form works before the submission deadline of October 31, 2026. The form automatically calculates costs and funds as they are entered.

- Review your Management Plan and ensure you are following your organization's financial recordkeeping practices.

Ask Questions

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

Program Integrity Updates for Happy Helpings Rural Non-Congregate Sites

In its commitment to support state agency efforts to combat fraud, waste, and abuse, USDA issued the guidance, **Ensuring Integrity in Non-Congregate Meal Service in the Summer Food Service Program** on June 9, 2026.

This memorandum emphasizes statutory, regulatory, and administrative requirements for the SFSP (Happy Helpings) rural non-congregate meal service. State agencies have been charged to increase oversight in the SFSP rural non-congregate meal service through various strategies outlined in the guidance involving:

- Parent or guardian pick-up
- Site Caps
- Site Proximity
- Home Delivery

To access the guidance, click [here](#)

For questions or for additional information, contact Melissa Stanley, Policy Administrator, at Melissa.Stanley@decals.ga.gov.

Farm to Summer Week Highlights Local Foods and Hands-On Learning

DECAL Nutrition Services recently celebrated Farm to Summer Week, highlighting how child nutrition programs can connect children to Georgia's agricultural abundance through fresh, locally sourced foods and hands-on learning experiences.

Throughout the week, programs across the state engaged children in activities such as gardening, cooking, taste testing, physical activity, and agriculture-based learning. These experiences help children build healthy habits, learn where food comes from, and develop an appreciation for fresh fruits and vegetables while supporting Georgia farmers and local communities.

Farm to Summer activities don't have to end when the week is over, as Happy Helpings operators are encouraged to continue gardening projects, taste tests featuring Georgia-grown produce, cooking activities, and farm-themed literacy and movement opportunities throughout the summer.

Popular Georgia-grown summer produce includes fruits like peaches, blueberries, and melons, and vegetables like tomatoes, sweet corn, cucumbers, squash and zucchini, bell peppers, okra, and eggplant. Many items remain in season throughout the summer and can be easily incorporated into meals and snacks like fresh salads, fruit bowls, and simple side dishes.

Thank you to all the sponsors and sites that participated in Farm to Summer Week and helped make healthy eating fun, engaging, and educational for children across Georgia.



We would love to see how your program is connecting children to local foods this summer.

Share your photos on social media using #GAFarmtoSummer or email them to DECAL.Marketing@decals.ga.gov for a chance to be featured.



Move of the Month

Watch the Video and Join the Patriotic Parade



**The Nutrition Education and
Physical Activity Team
Presents
July's Move of the Month**



This month's Move of the Month celebrates Independence Day with a patriotic parade.

Follow-the-leader games are a great way to incorporate structured, adult-led physical activity into the day. Lead children through different movements, such as marching, tip-toeing, and sliding as you parade around your play space. Add flags or homemade crafts to help celebrate America's birthday.

[Click](#) to watch this month's Move of the Month video.

Grushan Blake Reaches 10-Year Service Milestone

This month, the Nutrition team is proud to celebrate a major milestone. Grushan Blake achieved 10 years of dedicated service to the State of Georgia.

As the Nutrition Training Manager, Grushan manages the Training Coordinator and Technical Assistance Team. She oversees specialized training materials and designs guidance to help program partners comply with USDA regulations.

Pictured L to R: Tamika Boone, Director of Nutrition Services and Grushan Blake, Training Manager.



DECAL Nutrition Welcomes Kayla Moss

Join us in welcoming Kayla Moss to the Nutrition Services team.

Kayla joins us as the newly created Financial Reconciliation Specialist, where she will play a key role in processing weekly CACFP and SFSP claims, assessing viability screenings for organizations applying to participate in our programs, reviewing annual reconciliations, and managing the division's vendor management process.

Kayla has more than 12 years of accounting experience and a strong background in financial management. Before joining DECAL, she worked in payroll accounting at Georgia Tech and held several accounting positions with Fulton County Schools. Her professional experience also includes seven years in government accounting with Auburn University.



Originally from Loachapoka, Alabama, a small town she proudly calls home, Kayla relocated to the Metro Atlanta area in 2015. Family is very important to Kayla. She is the proud mother of three adult children: Terrell, a teacher; Niya, a paraprofessional and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) technician; and Ashley, a banker.

She is also a proud grandmother to her two-year-old grandson, Kaysen. When she's not working, Kayla enjoys watching her favorite television show, *The Walking Dead*. In fact, she has watched the entire series nearly 10 times.

We are excited to have Kayla on the team and look forward to the expertise, dedication, and collaboration she will bring to Nutrition Services.

Physical Activity Corner

From Sun to Shade: Plan, Protect and Play All Day

Active play supports children's growth, development, and school readiness, but hot weather requires extra planning to keep children safe.

Tips for Safe Outdoor Summer Play:

- **Hydration:** Make sure kids drink plenty of water before, during, and after activities.
- **Shade:** Use playground shade structures. Also, use umbrellas, tents, or natural shade to stay cool.
- **Timing:** Schedule outdoor activities for early morning or late afternoon when it's cooler.
- Stay cool with **water play** (sprinklers, splash pads) with constant supervision.

Indoor Ideas When It's Too Hot:

- **Dance parties:** Turn on some kid-friendly music and have a dance-off.
- **Obstacle courses:** Use pillows, chairs, and toys to create an indoor obstacle course.
- **Yoga/stretching:** Follow along with a kid-friendly yoga video or do some simple stretches.



Physical Activity Resource:

- [Child Care Weather Watch](#)
- [What Is Weather-Permitting](#)
- [Summer Safety Tips](#)
- [Go Outside! The Benefits of Outdoor Play](#)

Plan ahead, prioritize safety, and always adhere to CCS's **Rules and Regulations** regarding **weather conditions** to ensure children remain active, safe, and engaged year-round. Have fun, stay cool, and enjoy a safe summer of play. ☀️💧

We'd love to feature your class in our next newsletter or on social media.

Share your stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren at tina.mclaren@dec.al.ga.gov.



Turnip the Beet Award

Recognizing Excellence in Summer Meals

The Turnip the Beet Award is a national recognition from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that honors outstanding summer meal program sponsors who go above and beyond to serve high-quality, nutritious, and appealing meals to children during the summer.

This award highlights programs that provide well-balanced meals that are nutritious and enjoyable, help encourage participation, and support child nutrition when school is not in session. Strong programs often include a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and locally sourced foods when available.

Winning programs often feature:

- Serving fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables
- Incorporating feedback from children through taste tests
- Hosting educational and physical activities alongside meal service

All summer meal sponsors in good standing are eligible and may self-nominate or be nominated. Stay tuned for upcoming application details.

To learn more about the Turnip the Beet Award, visit [here](#).

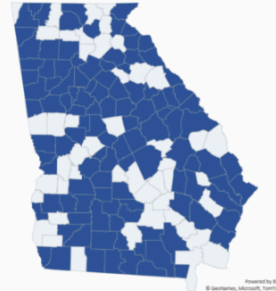
Target Counties for Summer 2026

One of Nutrition Services' goals is to have a meal site in every county of the state. Last summer, you played a crucial role toward meeting that goal by expanding meal service to 109 counties in 2025. Thank you.

If your organization has the capacity to expand your meal service in 2026, consider serving meals and snacks in any of the following target counties:

FY26 Target Counties: 50 Counties

| | | | | |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. Bacon | 11. Dawson | 21. Johnson | 31. Pickens | 41. Towns |
| 2. Banks | 12. Dodge | 22. Jones | 32. Pierce | 42. Treutlen |
| 3. Berrien | 13. Early | 23. Long | 33. Pike | 43. Troup |
| 4. Brantley | 14. Evans | 24. Marion | 34. Pulaski | 44. Union |
| 5. Calhoun | 15. Forsyth | 25. Meriwether | 35. Quitman | 45. Webster |
| 6. Camden | 16. Gordon | 26. Miller | 36. Schley | 46. Wheeler |
| 7. Charlton | 17. Grady | 27. Montgomery | 37. Screven | 47. White |
| 8. Coffee | 18. Hall | 28. Murray | 38. Stewart | 48. Wilkes |
| 9. Crawford | 19. Jeff Davis | 29. Oconee | 39. Taylor | 49. Wilkinson |
| 10. Dade | 20. Jenkins | 30. Oglethorpe | 40. Telfair | 50. Worth |



Blue: Counties where HH meals were available in FY25;
White: Counties where meals were not available in FY25



Working Together to Feed Georgia's Children

Upcoming Training

July 20, 2026

Memo Monday: New/Updated Nutrition Policies

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

This training will provide an overview of new and/or revised Nutrition Program policies and memos.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

Registration 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 have an issue with registering, contact Leslie Truman before the day of training.
- [Click here](#) if you need a refresher on how to register for training in GA ATLAS.

Note: Only the program contact can self-register in GA ATLAS. If an additional person will be attending, contact Leslie Truman, Administrative Assistant, at (404) 657-1779.

Training Videos Help Set Up Your Program for Success

The following training video series will equip you with the latest insights, tools, and best practices for a successful and impactful summer program. Start today and set your program up for excellence.

[Financial Management Training \(2025\)](#)

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

[Review Preparedness \(2025\)](#)

In this video, Myers & Stauffer review 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.

Training Resources

In Case You Missed It: Webinar Recordings Now Available!

If you missed a webinar, visit the [Training and Technical Assistance](#) webpage for previously recorded webinars.



Eat Healthy and Live Active

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 2025-2026 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 encourages healthy eating habits by promoting different local, seasonal fruits or vegetables each month.

Visit [EatLearnGrowGA](#) to access 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](#).

And Justice for All Posters

Happy Helpings Sponsors are required to display the “And Justice for All” poster at meal sites where it can be viewed by the public.

You can download the poster [here](#), and display it in the specific size of 11” width x 17” height. The cost for printing posters is an approved Happy Helpings expense and should be allocated to the publication, printing, and reproduction budget line item.



Dates to Remember

| DATE | EVENTS |
|------------|---|
| July | Harvest of the Month: Peaches |
| July 3 | State Holiday Observed: Independence Day |
| July 4 | Independence Day |
| July 20 | Memo Monday: New/Updated Nutrition Policies - Webinar |
| October 31 | Annual Year-End Reconciliation Due |

DECAL Download

Decal Interns



On this week's episode we're joined by a remarkable group of college interns who have spent the semester working with us.

Throughout their time here, they've contributed their talents, learned new skills, and become a valued part of the DECAL team.

Let's meet Gabrielle Banks- Communications- Kennesaw State; Kiersten

Harris- Pre-K- GA Military College; Tanvi Kattula- IT -University of Georgia; Zeniya Lukonde- Legal- Spelman College; Ana Onofre- Communications- Kennesaw State; and Shreya Shankar- QIP - Emory University.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Adding New Sites After Application Approval](#)
- [Updated Income Eligibility Guidelines Released](#)
- [Determining The Correct Form To Use For Excess Funds](#)
- [2026 Reimbursement Rates](#)
- [Requesting Advance Payments](#)
- [Happy Helpings Summit Training Videos](#)
- [Resources to Promote Meal Sites](#)
- [New Supplier Change Request](#)
- [Have You Determined this Summer's Food Cost & Procurement Methods?](#)
- [Check you Email Messages in GA ATLAS](#)
- [And Justice for All Posters](#)
- [Resources to Market Meal Sites](#)

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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