



May 1, 2025

Up to \$10k Grant offered to Expand Meal Access in Unserved Counties

Last Chance to apply: May 12, 2025

Expanding access to nutritious meals and snacks in every Georgia county is a continuous priority for Nutrition Services. However, during fiscal year 2024, **56** counties in Georgia did not have a Happy Helpings meal site.

In order to address this gap and feed more children this summer, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is excited to announce the availability of start-up grants, offering up to \$10,000 to both new and experienced Happy Helpings sponsors.

These grants aim to increase the number of meal sites across the state and improve access to meals for children in underserved areas. DECAL encourages organizations and local community groups to apply for this funding to help meet the nutritional needs of Georgia's children.

To qualify, sponsors must complete the survey to apply for the grant by **Monday, May 12, 2025**.

Click [here](#) to apply.

Requirements:

- Must be an approved experienced Happy Helpings sponsor in good standing or an approved new sponsor prior to receiving funds.
- Must agree to operate a Happy Helpings meal site in one or more of the targeted counties. *Failure to serve meals in at least one of the designated counties during FY25 will result in returning the funds to DECAL.*
- Must complete the Happy Helpings start-up grant survey by 11:59 p.m. on May 12, 2025. Start-up grants will be evaluated using a point-scoring system. The higher number of points will result in a larger award amount.
- Applications must be approved by **June 23** to be eligible to receive a Start-up grant.
- Site(s) located in one or more of the target counties must be approved in your application before funds are distributed.
- Must sign a grant agreement amendment with DECAL.
- Must use grant funds on allowable Happy Helpings' costs.
- Must submit meal claims within 30 days.
- Must have the ability to share project outcomes including how funds were used along with photos by September 30, 2025.

Sponsors that receive the Start-up grant award will be notified individually. Grant awardees will be announced to all sponsors by June 16. Payments will be made on or before June 30, 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!

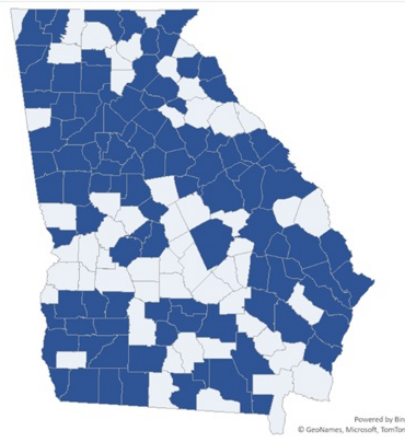
If your organization has the capacity to expand your meal service in 2025, please consider serving meals and snacks in any of the following target counties:



FY25 Areas of Need: 56 Counties

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. Dooley	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



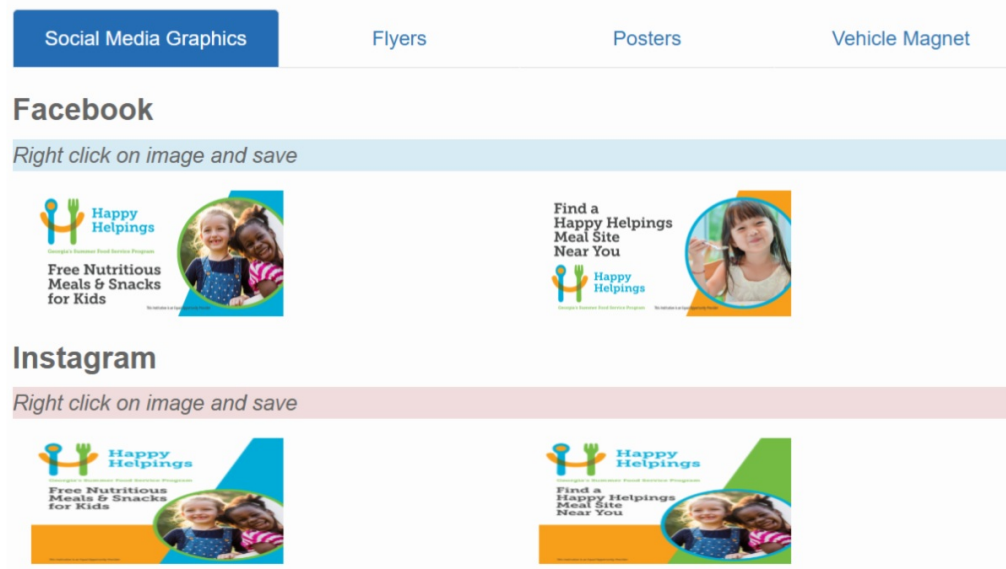
Resources to Promote Meal Sites

Ensuring families and guardians are aware of the availability of meals in their area is an important part of the Happy Helpings program. Nutrition Services has created several promotional resources to help sponsors gain exposure for meal sites this summer.

These resources include:

- Editable flyer
- Editable Poster
- Social Media Graphics
- Vehicle Magnet*

**To produce a vehicle magnet, print the artwork and take it to any sign company.*



To locate these resources, visit the [Nutrition Page](#) on Decal.ga.gov and locate "Happy Helpings Participant Information" on the menu. Expand the menu and scroll to "Posters and Flyers." Click on the link and it will take you to a password protected section. The password is "Flyer."

If you have questions, please contact Cindy.Kicklighter@decal.ga.gov

Tips for Completing the Application

- To minimize confusion and delays, only the program contact and/or authorized representative should be contacting the application reviewer. Keep in mind that the program contact is responsible for entering the information in the online application, GA ATLAS.
- Complete all forms in their entirety.
- The Food Service Permit Inquiry Form needs to be submitted/signed in every county where meals are being served prior to being submitted to DECAL.
- If utilizing a food service management company (FSMC) or acting as FSMC, ensure that numbers 42 & 43 are responded to correctly on the institution application.

Board of Directors Section:

- Ensure that all sections are completed for each board member.
- Any changes made to the Board of Directors (BOD) need to be supported with board meeting minutes.
- Ensure that the "delegation of authority" form is signed by an officer of the board (as defined on the form).

Management Plan:

- The plan should be updated annually.
- The percentage of time allocated to Happy Helpings for personnel/staffing should align with the allocation on the staff distribution report.
- Staff and duty allocations in the Management Plan must match the names of staff and duty time listed in Staff Distribution Worksheet.

Budget:

Specific Prior Written Approval (SPWA) submission and approval process

- Sponsors with an emergency request, are required to email the [SPWA request form](#) with supporting documentation to Gwendolyn.Howard@decal.ga.gov within 24hrs of purchase and then submit a budget revision to include the cost.

- For all other requests, sponsors are required to submit a budget revision to include the cost, upload the [SPWA request form](#) and supporting documents to the attachments list section in GA ATLAS and notify the budget team via email at Nutritionbudget@dec.al.ga.gov at least three days prior to making the purchase.
- DECAL will review the request and provide an approval or denial status in writing, including any special considerations or reasons. The SPWA will be signed and uploaded to the attachment list section in GA ATLAS.

Site Application:

- Site changes, including add-a-sites, need to be approved prior to making changes to an approved budget.
- Ensure to indicate days that the site will not serve meals during normal operating dates on #14.
- If site is outdoors (park, driveway, pool), please detail the plan if indicating that meals will be served indoors when answering #28.

Maximum Meal Count:

- The threshold for the maximum number of meals that can be served is 100.
- Sponsors that request a Maximum Meal Count (MMC) over the threshold prior to the initial approval of the site application must submit written justification to their assigned Application Specialist explaining why an increase is needed.
- Enrollment/registration information should be submitted to justify the increase for sites that are closed enrolled.
- Letters of authorization for sites located at unaffiliated schools and/or unaffiliated apartment communities can include information to justify the increase. A justification letter is not required for sites requesting the same MMC over the threshold that was approved the previous year. Additionally, if the request is over the MMC threshold, but under the approved MMC that was approved the previous year, no justification letter is required.
- If a request appears unreasonable/unsupported, then the MMC over 100 will not be approved.
- Sponsors that begin operations and later request a MMC over the threshold must submit written justification to their assigned Business Operations Specialist explaining why the increase is needed. Additionally, three consecutive days of daily meal count (DMC) forms must be submitted. If the request is unsupported, the MMC to provide more than 100 meals will not be approved.
- Sponsors requesting a MMC increase are required to indicate the additional children requesting a meal after all available meals were served on the daily meal count form. Sponsors do not have to serve any additional meals over the approved MMC in the site application. Note: If DECAL doesn't approve the requested MMC increase, then the cost of any additional meals served over the approved MMC will be the responsibility of the sponsor.
- All meal count increase requests must be reviewed and approved by DECAL prior to claim submission for the operating month.

Submit Your Happy Helpings Application

Federal Deadline: June 15

If you have not submitted your Happy Helpings (HH) application, please make sure to do so by the federal deadline on Sunday, June 15, 2025. Applications not submitted by the deadline date will not be reviewed; therefore, they cannot be approved.

If your organization still has plans to participate this summer, you are strongly encouraged to complete and submit the application before the deadline date.

For detailed instructions on completing the application, you may refer to the [FY 2025 HH Application Instruction Booklet](#)

Save The Date: Farm to Summer Week

June 23 – 27



DECAL's Nutrition Services will celebrate Farm to Summer Week June 23-27, 2025. Farm to Summer engages kids and families through fun, hands-on experiential learning activities, improves the quality and appeal of summer meals, increases access to fresh fruits & vegetables, & nourishment while school is out.

The themes for the week are as follows:

- Monday – What is Farm to Summer?
- Tuesday – Gardening & Physical Activity
- Wednesday – Cooking & Taste Testing
- Thursday – Locally Grown in Meals & Snacks
- Friday – Literacy, Music & Movement

Stay tuned to Nutrition Services' [Farm to Summer Week](#) webpage for updated materials and resources to plan your celebration.

Upcoming Training and Technical Assistance

May 13, 2025

Tuesday Tip! Farm to Summer: Incorporating Georgia's Bountiful Summer Harvest

1:30 - 2:00 pm

Are you ready to support farmers and serve fresh foods that are locally grown?

Join this webinar to learn:

- tips for increasing Georgia grown produce on your menus,
- ways to engage children through hands-on food & agriculture education, and
- ideas for increasing garden-based education.

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

[\[Register Now\]](#)

May 14, 2025, from

PALS Session 5: Goal Setting and Action Planning

1:00- 2:00 pm

Would you like to review your self-assessment, best practices note and identify some area for improvement on physical activity? Please join this session where we will, after setting a goal, develop action steps to meet the goal. Throughout this session, participants will leave with a plan to improve physical activity practices in their setting.

Objectives:

- Identify opportunities for change and develop an action plan.

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

[\[Register Now\]](#)

May 19, 2025

Memo Monday

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Do you have the latest information on training and monitoring in Happy Helpings SFSP? Please join this webinar for a review on the following policies.

- **SFSP Policy #6 – Training Requirements for the Summer Food Service Program**
- **SFSP Policy #16 – Monitoring Requirement for Sponsor Participating in the Summer Food Service Program**

[\[Register Now\]](#)

May 20, 2025

Tuesday Tip! The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood

1:30 - 2:00 pm

Are you coaching children on connecting the dots with physical activity and social-emotional intelligence?

Please join this webinar to learn:

- four [4] social emotional skills,
- how active play can encourage skill development,
- practices and activities to incorporate into a child's environment.

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

[\[Register Now\]](#)

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!

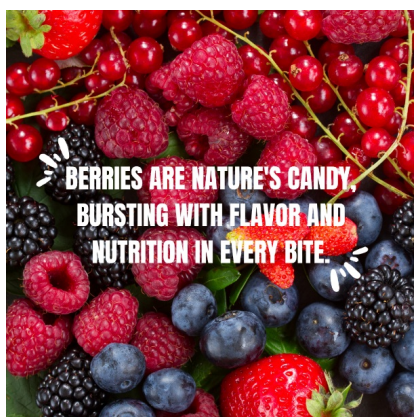
If you missed a webinar, please visit the [Training and Technical Assistance](#) webpage for previously recorded webinars. This month's training highlight is the [Happy Helpings](#)

It discussed 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.

New Resources from No Kid Hungry

Check out these updated tools to support summer sponsors in expanding non-congregate meal service—especially in rural areas. These resources offer practical guidance on implementation, staffing, gathering feedback, and more.

- **Successful Non-Congregate Meal Service Models for Rural Areas: Implementation Guide**
 - **The Summer Meals Student Workforce Toolkit**
 - **Gathering Feedback from Families: Using a Survey to Inform Meal Service**
 - **Sample Survey for Parents- Summer Grab & Go Programs**
 - **How to Offer Bulk Meals During the Summer Months**
 - **Staffing Up: Strategies for Working Through Labor Shortage Challenges**
-



Nutrition Ed Nook *Berry Delicious!*

Berries are the May Harvest of the Month (**English** and **Spanish**) spotlight. Berries are a powerhouse of nutrition, offering a wealth of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants in every bite. These antioxidants can help boost immune function, fight inflammation, and protect against cancer and heart disease. Additionally, berries are an excellent source of fiber, which helps you feel fuller longer and supports digestive health.

Among the many varieties of berries, blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries reach their peak during the summer months. This makes it the perfect time to incorporate them into your meals and snacks. Most berries are naturally sweet and require minimal preparation.

Enjoy berries in a bowl of whole grain cereal, low-fat yogurt, sprinkled on a salad, or blended with fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt for a refreshing smoothie. Take advantage of the season and enjoy the delicious and nutritious benefits of berries!

Fun Fact: The strawberry is the world's most popular berry – used in smoothies, shortcakes, ice cream and pie. But they're super-sensitive to cold weather. That's why March through July in Georgia is strawberry weather.

Integration:

- **Any Berry Sauce**
- **Crunchy Berry Parfait**
- **Cranberry Applesauce**
- **Raspberry Fruit Dip**
- **Whole-Wheat Blueberry Muffins**
- **Strawberry and Banana Fruit 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.
- **Compare and contrast** different types of berries. Explore differences in colors,

textures, shapes, smells, and tastes for each berry. Create an observation chart for your participants to complete together. Make sure your observation chart is in a centralized area where all participants can see it and share in the discussion.

- **Read *Blueberries for Sal***, by Robert McCloskey with your program participants. Kuplink, kuplank, kuplunk! Sal and her mother are picking blueberries to can for the winter. But when Sal wanders to the other side of Blueberry Hill, she discovers a mama bear preparing for her own long winter. Meanwhile Sal's mother is being followed by a small bear with a big appetite for berries! Will each mother go home with the right little one?
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as rinsing berries under cool running water to be served with a meal.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate berries into their meals!
- **Want ECE berry-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's [Harvest of the Month toolkit](#) for more ways to engage ECE students.

Conversation:

- What are program participants favorite berries to eat and why?
- Have participants ever picked berries themselves? If so, what was it like?
- If program participants could create a new berry flavor, what would it taste like?

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

Physical Activity Corner

National Physical Fitness and Sports Month

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month – a campaign to provide an opportunity to celebrate and promote physical activity, sports, and all of its many health benefits to all ages, communities, schools, and workplaces.

Move in May is about enjoying physical activity, exercise, and sports. There are lots of ways to be more physically active, and to find a form of physical activity that each person can enjoy.

Physical activity is key to maintaining health and well-being. Being active can improve fitness, reduce stress and risk for many chronic diseases, and support good mental health. Youth sports can help kids and teens get active and develop leadership, time management, and relationship-building skills.



According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition (ODPHP), here are the recommendation on all ages:

- Children ages 3 through 5 years need to be active throughout the day.
- Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 need to be active for 60 minutes every day.
- Adults get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination each week.
- Adults aged 65 and older need at least 150 minutes a week (for example, 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week) of **moderate-intensity activity** such as brisk walking. Or they need 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity such as hiking, jogging, or running.
- Adults with chronic health conditions or disabilities who are able should: Get at least 150 minutes (for example, 30 minutes 5 days a week) of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity a week.

How To Observe Physical Activity:

- At home: Break away from sitting less and **MOVE** more. Take a 15-minute walk early in the morning or during a lunch break. End a long day of work with a few stretches or a yoga session for quietness, tranquility, and peace of mind.
- To school (children/parents): As a family, go together with your children early in the morning to walk to and from school or after school in the afternoon.
- With the family: Walk in with your neighborhood or community – to the park, local mall, local farmer's market, or a grocery store in the day or on a weekend. Be safe!!!
- At work (colleagues): Invite a colleague to take a 10-minute walk (break) from the computer/office. Take the stairs, instead of the elevators.

Enjoy the outdoors this summer season and Let's Move It!

Integration:

- **Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition**
- **National Sports Youth Strategy**
- **BlazeSports (Youth)**
- **Physical Activity – Sesame Workshop**
- **Physical Activity Calendar for Infants, Toddlers & Preschoolers**
- **Move Your Way® Community Resources**

Education:

- **Read** aloud the book, ***Sports***, by Alyssa Liang.
- **Watch** the video on **Move Your Way: Tips for Getting Active as a Family**.
- **Talk** with families about ways to move more at home, in their community, at childcare and at adult care centers.
- **Bonus:** Share #MayFitness, #MoveInMay, #NationalPhysicalActivity&Sports #MoveYourWay pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

Conversation:

- What is your favorite physical fitness activity every day?
- Why is physical fitness important in sports?
- How do you stay motivated to exercise daily?
- What are the benefits of staying physically active?

Share your #DECALPhysicalActivity #NationalPhysicalActivityFitness&Sports #MayFitness, #MoveInMay, #BeActive, #MoveYourWay 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

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
May	Harvest of the Month: Berries
May 12	Deadline to complete the survey to apply for the HH Start-up Grant
May 13	Tuesday Tip! Farm to Summer: Incorporating Georgia's Bountiful Summer Harvest- Webinar
May 14	PALS Session 5: Goal Setting and Action Planning- Webinar
May 19	Memo Monday: SFSP Policy- Webinar
May 20	Tuesday Tip! The Connections Between Active Play and Social-Emotional Learning in Early Childhood- Webinar
June 15	Happy Helpings Application Due
June 16	HH Start-up Grant Awardees will be announced to all Sponsors
June 23	HH Start-up Grant: Applications must be approved to be eligible to receive grant funds
June 23-27	Farm to Summer Week
June 30	HH Start-up Grant Awardees: Payments will be made on or before June 30, 2025
September 30	Deadline to submit HH Start-up Grant Results

Decal Download

2025 Children's Mental Health Week

Next week, DECAL will celebrate Children's Mental Health Week in Georgia May 5th – 9th.

We have celebrated for the past five years in the first full week of May. This week reminds us that the early years in a child's life provide a key opportunity to establish safe and secure relationships and support healthy social and emotional development, also known as mental health.

Joining us on this week's episode to talk about Children's Mental Health Week is Laura Lucas, the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Director here at DECAL. We are also joined by Annie Stewart and Gloria Julio from Centerville's One Stop Program at View Point Health. Julia is a Child and Adolescent Clinician, and Gloria is the Director of the program.

Listen to the episode [here](#).



Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [No Kid Hungry GA Summer Webinar Series](#)
- [Advance Payment Requests Update](#)
- [Updates to SFSP Procurement Templates](#)

- [Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At Risk Afterschool Meals](#)
- [Unanticipated School Closure Waivers Available](#)
- [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?](#)
- [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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

[Nondiscrimination Statement: English](#)

[Nondiscrimination Statement: Spanish](#)

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