



November 1, 2024

Second Harvest of South Georgia Offers Food Assistance during School Closures

Utilizing Unanticipated School Closures Waivers to Feed Children



After Hurricane Helene unexpectedly forced schools in Georgia to close, Second Harvest of South Georgia mobilized quickly to address the immediate needs of affected residents.

Recognizing that many families rely on school meals for nourishment, the organization set up emergency food distribution pickup locations. Volunteers and staff worked diligently to assemble and distribute food boxes, providing fresh produce, canned goods, and bottle waters to ensure that children and families had enough to eat. This response not only helped alleviate hunger but also fostered a sense of community, as local residents came together to support one another during a challenging time.

Second Harvest's efforts were crucial in mitigating the impact of the hurricane, ensuring that food insecurity did not worsen in the wake of the disaster. Their commitment to serving the community underscores the vital role of food banks in disaster response and recovery.

Thank you to all the Happy Helpings sponsors that served meals during unanticipated school closures caused by Hurricane Helene throughout the state and the BioLab explosion in Conyers:

SFSP Unanticipated School Closures:

Heart Filled Helping Hands, Inc.

Second Harvest of South Georgia, Inc.

The Family Y, Young Men's Christian Association/YWCO of the CSRA, Inc.

At-Risk Afterschool Unanticipated School Closures:

Bread of Life Development Ministries, Inc.

The Young Men's Christian Association of Rome and Floyd County

Happy Helpings Reconciliation is Past Due

Annual Year-End Reconciliation Requirement for FY2024

Institutions operating FY2024 Happy Helpings Summer Food Program (May 2024- Aug

2024) must complete an Annual Reconciliation Form. **The form was due October 31.**

If you haven't already done so, please submit the requested documents ASAP to avoid any delays in FY2025 Happy Helpings approval.

The reconciliation form and supporting financial documentation should be submitted together to nutritionbudget@decals.ga.gov. **Include the name of the institution and agreement number in the subject line of the email.**

Please review the [reconciliation form](#) and [instructions](#).
Contact the budget team at nutritionbudget@decals.ga.gov with any questions.

Commercial Recall: BrucePac Meat and Poultry

Beginning October 9, 2024, BrucePac (Est. 51205/P-51205) recalled nearly 12 million of ready-to-eat (RTE) meat and poultry products due to *Listeria monocytogenes* contamination. The ready-to-eat meat and poultry items were produced from June 19, 2024, to October 8, 2024. These products were shipped to other establishments and distributors nationwide then distributed to restaurants and institutions. **This recall does not involve USDA Foods.** A copy of the recall release can be found here: [USDA Food and Safety and Inspection Service \(FSIS\) Recall Release](#).

FNS was recently informed that schools located across seven states (IA, FL, MI, OH, KY, WV, and WI) received recalled product through commercial channels. Schools are encouraged to check their inventory for recalled products. Georgia DECAL recommends both schools and CACFP/SFSP facilities also check their inventory as a precaution.

For instructions on how to search product and label information specific to the recall, please click [here](#).

Get a Head Start on Planning for Summer 2025

Items to do in November and December

Providing summer meals is a year-round effort. At any point throughout the year, there are things you can do to prepare for next summer.

November:

- Take time to reflect on the summer with site administrators and determine what could be improved or what worked.
- Reflect on the service provided by your vendor. Ensure the food was well-received by the children.
- Revise menus as needed.
- Review unserved and underserved areas near current sites. Recruit sites to these areas of need.
- Compare participation from this year to that of prior years, as well as current participation for free and reduced-price meals in local schools.
- Consider providing non-monetary awards to recognize sites that excelled during the summer.
- Reach out to sites that were underutilized and offer support to increase participation for the coming year.
- Set participation goals for the next summer and plan how you will accomplish them.
- Look out for dates on mandatory sponsor training from DECAL.
- Begin developing a marketing and outreach campaign.

December:

- Begin to determine which sites are returning, explore new site options, and meet with community partners.
- Plan site staff training, meal production and delivery, and programs and activities.

- Begin exploring the potential for serving mobile meals.
- Continue developing a marketing and outreach campaign.

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:



Nutrition Services
DECAL



Happy Helpings
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

Unanticipated School Closure Waivers Available

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sponsors may only serve meals in a non-congregate setting, adjust the time of meal service,

allow parent pick up, and allow service of meals at non-school sites once the sponsors are approved for the waivers.

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

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

Upcoming Training and Technical Assistance

November 5, 2024- Tuesday Tips! Planning Tasty & Nutritious Menus 1:30-2:00pm

Are you ready to retire your routine recipes?

Join this webinar to learn tips, tools, and tangible resources for planning tasty and nutritious meals for your monthly menus.

Participants can earn one half [0.5] state-approved hour for attending this training in its entirety.

[\[Register Now\]](#)

NCA Webinar – Summer Meals Summit

The [National CACFP Sponsor Association](#) is hosting a summit on December 5, 2024, to discuss how your organization can advance access to healthy meals for communities when school is out of session by participating in USDA summer meal programs, learn from community members on the ground about their experience and get their advice on how to start or improve your experience as a sponsoring organization or service site.

Register to learn the basics of the program and get resources to transform summer nutrition in your neighborhood and help ensure no child goes hungry when school is out.

Earn up to 4.5 hours of CEUs for attending. Can't make it to a live session?

Registration includes on-demand viewing through December 12, 2024.

[\[Learn More\]](#)

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 Reconciliation Training](#) webinar. It discussed detailed information on the annual Year-End Reconciliation process, how to complete the Reconciliation Form, and documents required for submission and potential next steps.

[SUN Summer Meals, Summer Fun](#)

USDA [Team Nutrition](#) has developed this activity guide for families. Look inside for:

- Ways to get kids asking for more fruits & veggies
- Money-saving tips for any budget
- A fun and motivating family challenge

[See the Summer Guide](#): Available in English and Spanish



Sweet potatoes are November's Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) spotlight! Sweet potatoes are nutritional powerhouses packed with vitamins A & C, niacin, potassium, fiber, and other vitamins and minerals. Sweet potatoes are a root vegetable, and can be orange, purple or white.

Sweet potatoes grow underground and love hot, moist temperatures like our Georgia climate. August through November is sweet potato season in Georgia. They can be enjoyed mashed, baked, roasted, steamed, boiled, sautéed, or grilled. Versatile in cooking, sweet potatoes are a great way to add flavor and nutrition to all kinds of recipes.

Fun Fact: Ocilla, Georgia, is home to the annual Georgia Sweet Potato Festival that has been celebrated since the 1960s.

Integration:

- [Vegetable Chili](#)
- [Lentil Minestrone](#)
- [Holiday Cobb Salad](#)
- [Sweet Potato Pancakes](#)
- [West African Peanut Stew](#)
- [Chicken, Sweet Potato and Carrot Packets](#)

Education:

- **Watch** a short video on the [Harvest with Holly](#), which explores the Harvest of the Month spotlight, how these items grow, where they grow in Georgia, and how they get from the farms to school meals all across the state of Georgia.
- **Taste test** sweet potatoes. Create an observation chart and ask participants to describe how sweet potato sticks look, feel, smell, and taste. Provide each participant with two of [Zoe's Roasted Sweet Potato Sticks](#), asking them to wait to taste them until everyone has been served. On the count of 3, have all participants try their sweet potato sticks. Also, ask the participants to rate their liking of the sweet potato sticks, thumbs up or down.
- **Read**, "[Sweet Potato Pie](#)" by Kathleen D. Lindsey. Loosely based on Lindsey's memories of her great grandmother's stories, the book shares how a large loving family finds a delicious way to earn the money they need to save their family farm during a drought in the early 1900s. Sweet Potato Pie is a delicious affirmation of strong family ties and creative problem solving.
- **Explore** parsley and four other herbs (i.e., cilantro, thyme, mint, bay leaves among others). Create an observation chart for program participants to complete together. Have the participants to complete together. Have the participants describe how the herbs feel, look, taste and smell. Make sure your observation chart is in a centralized area where all participants can see it and participate in the discussion.
- **Talk** with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such as scrubbing sweet potatoes under cool running water or pricking whole sweet potatoes with a fork before baking or microwaving.
- **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate sweet potatoes into their meals and try with their families! Check [Pinterest](#) for recipe inspiration.
- **Want ECE sweet potato-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's [Harvest of the Month toolkit](#) for more ways to engage ECE students.

Conversation:

- Have your program participants eaten sweet potatoes?
- What is their favorite way to eat sweet potatoes?
- What are some examples of other root vegetables?

Squash is the November Harvest of the Month bonus spotlight!



Summer squashes are high in vitamins A & C, and fiber. They grow quickly and have thin skin; to retain the most nutrients, leave their skin on while eating. In Georgia, summer squashes are in season from around May through October. Zucchini, yellow, and scallop squashes are three primary summer squashes.

Winter squashes are an excellent source of vitamin A and provide many minerals. Winter squashes have hard, thick skin that allows them to be stored in a dry, cool location for several months. In Georgia, winter squashes are in season from around September through March. Edible pumpkins are one of many types of winter squash. Others

include acorn, butternut, and spaghetti squashes.

Integration:

- **Pumpkin Fruit Dip**
- **Three Sisters Soup**
- **Baked Zucchini Sticks**
- **Turkey Pumpkin Chili**
- **Butternut Apple Crisp**
- **Squash Blossom Quesadillas**

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

Physical Activity Corner

Stay Active during the Holiday Season

Power Up – The holiday season is here! It is the most celebrated and busiest time of the year. What is the key to holiday exercise? Make it fun!

The power of regular exercise is an important part of staying healthy, managing stress, and improving your mental health. Studies have found a strong connection between regular exercise and increased levels of movement to help with sleep, reduce fatigue, and improve concentration and learning. For overall health and wellness, it is recommended that children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day to stay healthy and fit, both mentally and physically.

We encourage families to spend quality time together in their garden — planting, raking, pruning, and watering the plants, take a walk together in your community, or walk to your local farmer's market to choose new fruits and vegetables to enjoy. Remember to keep your body hydrated daily and get eight (8) hours of sleep per night. Engaging in healthy eating habits and being physically active can help avoid holiday weight gain and get a great jumpstart to the holiday season.



Integration:

- **How to Have Healthier Holidays in 1-2-3!**
- **Ways to Stay Fit During the Holidays**
- **Holiday Events in Georgia**
- **Core Exercises for Preschoolers**

- [All Weather Activities](#)

Education:

- **Read** aloud the book, "[Turkey Goes to School](#)" by Wendy Silvano.
- **Watch** the video on "[Staying Active during the Holidays.](#)"
- **Talk** with families about ways to incorporate fitness into their daily lives.
- **Bonus:** Send home, #HolidayWalk, #HolidayGear, #Holiday5KRun, #HolidayMarathon, #HolidayExercise pictures and events that are happening in your community.

Conversation:

- What type of exercise can you do during the holiday season?
- How can I stay active and motivated during the holidays?
- What is a fun fitness activity to do as a family?

Share your #HolidayGear, #Holiday5KRun, #HolidayMarathon, and #HolidayMotivation stories and photos with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren, MPH at tina.mclaren@decal.ga.gov



Eat Healthy and Live Active

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 2024-2025 Calendar

The Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month is a collaborative campaign between Quality Care for Children, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Georgia Department of Human Services, and Georgia Organics. The campaign aims to encourage healthy eating habits by promoting a different local, seasonal fruit or vegetable each month.

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

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

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

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
November	Harvest of the Month: Sweet Potatoes and Squash
November 5	Tuesday Tips: Planning Tasty & Nutritious Menus
November 11	Holiday: Veteran's Day
November 28	Holiday: Thanksgiving Day
December 5	Summer Meals Summit Webinar

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- **Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At Risk Afterschool Meals**
- **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!