



November 3, 2025

Happy Helpings Reconciliation Past Due

Annual Year-End Reconciliation Requirement for FY2025

Institutions operating the FY2025 Happy Helpings Summer Food Program (May 2025- Aug 2025) must complete an Annual Reconciliation Form. The form was due October 31.

If you haven't already done so, please submit the requested documents As Soon As Possible to avoid any delays in FY2026 Happy Helpings approval.

The reconciliation form and supporting financial documentation should be submitted together to nutritionbudget@dec.al.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 Nutrition Budget Team at nutritionbudget@dec.al.ga.gov with any questions.

Get a Head Start on Planning for Summer 2026

Items to do in November & 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 2026

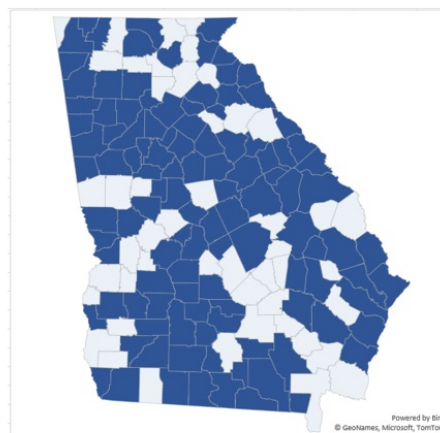
One of Nutrition Services' goals is to have a meal site in every county of the state. Last summer, you played a crucial role in our significant progress toward that goal by expanding meal service to 109 counties in 2026. Thank you!

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



FY26 Areas of Need: 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*

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.



Nutrition Ed Nook

The Healthy Potato

Sweet potatoes are November's Harvest of the Month ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)) feature. They are root vegetables that grow underground and come in a variety of colors, including orange, purple, and white. Sweet potatoes are nutritional powerhouses. They're rich in vitamins A and C,

niacin, potassium, fiber, and other essential nutrients that support eye health, immunity, and digestion.

Sweet potatoes thrive in Georgia's hot, moist climate. August through November is sweet potato season in Georgia.

Sweet potatoes are incredibly versatile in the kitchen. They can be mashed, baked, roasted, steamed, boiled, sautéed, or grilled. Add them to soups, casseroles, salads, or even desserts for a flavorful and nutritious boost. Try mashed sweet potatoes with a sprinkle of cinnamon or baked sweet potato fries as tasty finger food.

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

Integration:

- [Candied Yams](#)
- [Sweet Potato Hash](#)
- [Sweet Potato Patties](#)
- [Sweet Potato Pancakes](#)
- [Sweet Potato and Orange Muffins](#)
- [Black Bean and Sweet Potato Quesadillas](#)

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.
- **Read** [Little Sweet Potato](#) by Amy Beth Bloom. When Little Sweet Potato rolls away from his patch, he is forced to search for a new home. He stumbles upon some very mean plants on his journey and begins to wonder if maybe he is too lumpy and bumpy to belong anywhere. Will Little Sweet Potato ever find a home that's just right for him?
- **Taste test** mashed sweet potatoes. Offer each participant a plate with three taste-test-size scoops of plain mashed sweet potatoes. Add a dash of a different spice to each scoop: one with cinnamon, one with nutmeg, and one with ginger. Ask participants to wait to taste until everyone has been served. On the count of 3, have all the participants try each version one at a time. Create an observation chart to help participants record their ratings and select their favorite.
- **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 that incorporate sweet potatoes home for families to try together! Check [Pinterest](#) for recipe inspiration.
- **Want ECE sweet potato-themed resources?** Check out Quality Care for Children's [Harvest of the Month toolkit](#) and [Eat, Learn, Grow Georgia](#) for more ways to engage ECE students.

Conversation:

- What are participants' favorite ways to eat sweet potatoes?
- If participants could make a new sweet potato dish, what would they add to it?
- Have any participants ever helped cook sweet potatoes at home? If so, what did they make?

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

Physical Activity Corner

Move, Groove, and Be Merry This Holiday Season

Power Up. The holiday season is here, and it is a time full of celebration and activity. The key to staying active during the holidays is to make it fun.

Regular physical activity is essential for maintaining

health, managing stress, and boosting mental well-being. Research shows that consistent movement improves sleep, reduces fatigue, and enhances focus and learning.

Did You Know? Children should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily to support both physical and mental health.

Here are some festive ways to stay active as a family:

- Spend time in the garden — plant, rake, prune, or water together.
- Take a walk around your neighborhood or visit a local farmer's market to pick out seasonal fruits and veggies.
- Turn up your favorite holiday tunes and host a family dance party.
- Bundle up for a winter nature walk and observe seasonal changes.
- Create an indoor obstacle course using pillows, chairs, and blankets.

Tips:

- Stay hydrated.
- Aim for eight hours of sleep each night.
- Remember — cold weather doesn't mean physical activity has to stop. Staying active and eating well can help prevent holiday weight gain and set a healthy tone for the season.

Integration

- [How To Have Healthier Holidays in 1 – 2 – 3!](#)
- [Holiday Events in Georgia](#)
- [Stay Healthy During the Holidays](#)
- [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



Stay Active and Joyful
This Holiday Season!

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 aims to encourage healthy eating habits by promoting different local, seasonal fruits or vegetables each



month.

Visit [EatLearnGrowGA](https://www.eatlearnGrowGA.org) to access a variety of 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](https://www.gadoe.org/Early-Childhood/Early-Learning-and-Development-Standards/Harvest-of-the-Month).

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
November	Harvest of the Month: Sweet Potatoes
November 11	Holiday: Veterans Day
November 27	Holiday: Thanksgiving Day
November 28	State Holiday

On the next ...

DECAL

Download

New Episodes Every Wednesday!

Rachel Lee
Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Business Operations

This Week's Topic:
Quality Rated Workforce Bonuses

Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning

Decal Download

Quality Rated Workforce Bonuses

Today we're discussing a topic that's bringing well-deserved recognition—and financial support—to the educators who are the backbone of our child care system: the Quality Rated Workforce Bonuses.

Funded by DECAL, this annual \$500 bonus is a way to say "thank you" to the teachers and staff who go above and beyond in serving children and families.

Joining us with an update on the Quality Rated Workforce Bonuses is Rachel Lee, Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Business Operations for Quality Innovations and Partnerships.

Listen to the episode [here](#).

Happy Helpings Resources:

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- [Added New Sites After Application Approval](#)
- [Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals](#)
- [Happy Helpings Summit Training Videos](#)
- [Resources to Promote Meal Sites](#)
- [Excessive Heat and Air Quality Advisories](#)

- [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?](#)
- [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

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