



October 1, 2026

October is Farm to School and Farm to Early Care and Education Month

Every October, schools, ECE programs, farmers, and communities celebrate National Farm to School and Farm to Early Care and Education Month. This year's campaign is "Taste the State," and we're encouraging all Georgians to add local, healthy foods to their meals and nutrition education activities.

Visit our [Farm to ECE Month Webpage](#) to find resources to help you celebrate:

- Book List with Local Food Resources
- Farm-Themed Active Games
- Partner resources to incorporate into your child, family, and community programming



Transitioning from Happy Helpings to CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals

Many existing Happy Helpings sites are well-positioned to offer afterschool meals during the school year through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Organizations and communities benefit when meals are offered to children in low-income communities year-round.

The opportunity for sponsors to transition to At-Risk Afterschool Meals, a component of CACFP, is upon us. Here are a few things to consider:

- An application for Happy Helpings sponsors transitioning to CACFP is required upon initial entry to the CACFP. General updates and annual renewal will be required thereafter.
- As part of the current ATLAS CACFP application process, Happy Helpings sponsors are required to sign a multi-program agreement.
- Sponsors are required to adhere to all monitoring requirements.
- Sponsors are required to attend training.

If you have questions or are interested in registering for training, contact Leslie Truman at 404.657.1779.

Important Update: New GA@WORK Supplier Portal

The State Accounting Office (SAO) has implemented GA@WORK, a new supplier management system for State of Georgia vendors. This system is now used for new supplier registrations and for updating supplier information, including:

- Banking information
- Mailing address
- Email address

- W-9 information

As a result, **Supplier Change Request (SCR) forms are no longer required.**

New Happy Helpings (SFSP) sponsors must register in GA@WORK before claim payments can be issued.

If you participated in **Happy Helpings (SFSP) before July 1, 2026**, and were already set up to receive payments, you should have received two emails from GAatWork@sao.ga.gov. The first email contains your supplier portal link and username, and the second contains your temporary password. We encourage all sponsors to log in now, even if no updates are needed, to ensure you have access to your account.

If you did not receive these emails, contact the **State Accounting Office Help Desk (SAO)** at 770-357-5555 (**Option 2, then Option 2**) or email Supplier@sao.ga.gov for assistance.

Sponsors who update their supplier profile must submit an updated W-9 to Finance.Nutrition@dec.al.ga.gov and specify the changes made to their account to ensure ATLAS is updated accurately.

We encourage sponsors to plan ahead when submitting supplier updates. Processing and approval times may be lengthy, and DECAL does not have access to the State Accounting Office's approval process, because SAO is a separate state agency.

Share Your Feedback about Summer Meals

Respond by October 9

DECAL's Nutrition Services Division appreciates your participation in Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program.



To better understand your experience as a Happy Helpings Sponsor, we have created an end-of-the-season survey. **Your feedback is important to us, and we encourage all sponsors to participate.** Your responses will help us better understand your experience and identify ways we can continue to support a successful summer meals program.

You may respond anonymously or include your name with the survey.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to participate in the survey.

Please respond by October 9, 2026. Thank you for your commitment in serving free and healthy meals during the summer months.

Health Permit Verification Requirements

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is updating its health permit verification requirements for institutions and sponsors participating in the Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

Because Department of Public Health (DPH) permits do not list a specific expiration date—stating instead that they remain valid until "suspended, revoked, or expired," DECAL cannot continuously research individual permit statuses.

DPH guidance confirms that permits remain active and in good standing if the annual fees are paid, provided there is no change in ownership, location, or a formal revocation.

What is Changing

Initial Application: Sponsors applying to participate in HH must submit proof of payment for the current year's annual health permit fee invoice.

Approved Sponsors: Approved HH sponsors must submit this proof when adding new sites or making updates.

This requirement applies to both self-operating entities and Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs). Application reviewers will verify proof of payment during the application approval process.

Official Notice

It is the sole responsibility of the sponsor or institution to ensure continuous health permit validity. Any meal service operations conducted under an invalid permit may result in DECAL disallowing reimbursement for the associated meals.

USDA Food and Nutrition Administration

New Name, Same Commitment

As of June 1, 2026, what was formally known as the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is now known as the USDA Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA).

Along with the name change, USDA is transitioning from seven regional offices to five functional hubs. This new structure is designed to strengthen customer service, enhance program oversight, and create a more balanced distribution of workload across the hubs.

The Child Nutrition hub overseeing our work in Georgia will be located in Dallas, Texas and will support the administration of USDA Child Nutrition Programs, including the Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).

What Does This Mean for Georgia SFSP Participants?

For Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors, DECAL will continue to maintain business as usual. At this time, the organizational changes at USDA do not change how Georgia SFSP participants work with DECAL or administer the program.

Nutrition Services will keep program participants informed about this transition as additional information becomes available.

Budget Enhancements Effective October 1

Beginning October 1, 2026, several enhancements to the budgeting process will take effect in Atlas. These updates improve budget accuracy, strengthen financial oversight, and make it easier for sponsors and DECAL staff to review required budget information.

What's Changing?

Sponsors can expect several updates to the budget process, including improved budget validations, enhanced tracking of excess funds, a new budget attachment section, and updated procurement requirements.

Budget Validation Improvements

New validations will help ensure information entered in the Budget Detail aligns with approved application information. The system will identify inconsistencies and provide error messages when corrections are needed.

Excess Funds Tracking

A new Excess Funds section will allow sponsors to separately identify and track prior-year excess funds. Sponsors will be able to identify multiple sources of excess funds. These funds will be tracked for informational and reporting purposes but will not be included in approved budget amounts.

Budget Attachments

A new Budget Attachment section will be added to the Budget Detail. Supporting budget documentation will be uploaded directly within this section rather than through the general Attachments List. Sponsors will be responsible for uploading required budget documentation each fiscal year.

Budget Cost Category forms will also be available in Atlas under Resources > Forms and Documents.

Procurement Updates

Procurement information will also be strengthened as part of the enhancements. Sponsors should be aware of the updated procurement thresholds:

Procurement Method:

- Micro-Purchase - Up to \$15,000
- Small Purchase - Up to \$349,999
- Formal Procurement - \$350,000 and above

These enhancements will improve data accuracy, compliance, financial transparency, audit readiness, and the overall budgeting experience for sponsors.

ATLAS System Updates Information Session

Join us for an ATLAS System Updates Information Session to review upcoming enhancements designed to improve the budgeting and application process.

The session will be held on October 14, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Registration is now available. Participants are encouraged to register in advance using the link below.

Register for the ATLAS System Updates Information Session

Please be watching and prepared for these changes beginning October 1, 2026.

It's Time to Prepare Year End Financials

Annual Year-End Reconciliation Due October 31, 2026

The summer season has ended, and we appreciate your participation in Happy Helpings. It is now time to prepare your financials for reconciliation submission. You must submit your Annual Year-End Reconciliation documents by October 31st.

Helpful tips to get you started:

- Review the approved costs in your budget and compare them to your actual spending for Happy Helpings.
- Ensure all transactions are accurately recorded for the duration of the program.
- Review claims to ensure all meals are accurately accounted for.
- Review your Management Plan and make sure you're following the organization's financial recordkeeping practices.

Review the [reconciliation form](#) and [instructions](#). Take time to explore how the form works before the submission deadline on October 31, 2026. Enter your current financials on the form to see what ending balances will look like and to double check any discrepancies.

Sponsors are required to submit financial documentation that corresponds to and supports the ending balance reported on the sponsor's Annual Year-End Reconciliation Form. Please ensure that the documentation submitted accurately reflects the ending balance reported on the form.

The form will automatically calculate costs and funds as they are entered.

Effective immediately, all reconciliation documents should be submitted to Finance.Nutrition@decal.ga.gov.

Ask Questions!

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

Target Counties for Summer 2027

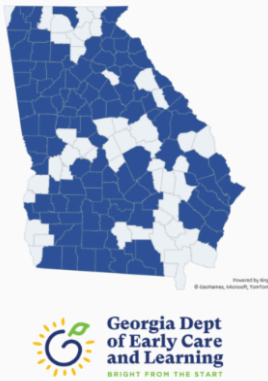
One of Nutrition Services' goals is to have a meal site in every county of the state. Last summer, you played a crucial role in our significant progress toward that goal by expanding meal service to 111 counties in 2026. Thank you!

If your organization has the capacity to expand your meal service in 2027, please consider serving meals and snacks in any of the following target counties:



FY27 Target Counties: 48 Counties

1. Appling	11. Crawford	21. Lumpkin	31. Quitman	41. Twiggs
2. Atkinson	12. Dade	22. Marion	32. Schley	42. Union
3. Bacon	13. Dawson	23. McDuffie	33. Screven	43. Upson
4. Baldwin	14. Early	24. Miller	34. Seminole	44. Ware
5. Berrien	15. Forsyth	25. Montgomery	35. Stewart	45. Washington
6. Bleckley	16. Gilmer	26. Murray	36. Tattnall	46. White
7. Brantley	17. Gordon	27. Oconee	37. Taylor	47. Wilkes
8. Camden	18. Jenkins	28. Peach	38. Toombs	48. Wilkinson
9. Candler	19. Johnson	29. Pickens	39. Towns	
10. Charlton	20. Jones	30. Pierce	40. Treutlen	



*Blue: Counties where HH Meals were available in FY26.
White: Counties where meals were not available in FY26.*

Upcoming Training

October 8, 2026

**Physical Activity Learning Sessions - PALS: Digging In: Active Play in ECE Gardens
1:00 - 2:00 p.m.**

How can physical activity and Farm to ECE strategies transform gardens into spaces for moving, learning, and skill development?

Join Nutrition Services for a free webinar to explore how recommended physical activity practices and Farm to ECE strategies can turn garden spaces into vibrant hubs for movement and playful learning.

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

[\[Register Now\]](#)

October 14, 2026

**ATLAS System Updates Information Session
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.**

Join us for an ATLAS System Updates Information Session to review upcoming enhancements designed to improve the budgeting and application process.

Participants are encouraged to register in advance using the link below.

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 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 2026-2027 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](http://EatLearnGrowGA.org) 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](#).

Dates to Remember

DATE	EVENTS
October	Harvest of the Month: Apples
October 6	Tuesday Tip! Building Healthy Habits from the Start with Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) - Webinar
October 8	Physical Activity Learning Sessions - PALS: Digging In: Active Play in ECE Gardens - Webinar
October 9	HH End-of-the-Season Survey Due
October 12	State Holiday: Columbus Day
October 14	ATLAS System Updates Information Session - Webinar
October 31	Annual Year-End Reconciliation Due

DECAL Download

Georgia's Pre-K Week 2026



Each year, Georgia's Pre-K Week gives state leaders, local officials, community partners, and families a chance to step inside Pre-K classrooms and see firsthand what quality early learning looks like. This year's observance is October 5-9, 2026.

Joining us to talk about Georgia's Pre-K Week is Judy Fitzgerald, Executive Director of Voices for Georgia's Children, our longtime partner in Pre-K

Week; Amy Browder, Director of Business Operations for Georgia's Pre-K Program, and Devon Porter, Summer Transition Program and Outreach Manager.

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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