



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START

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Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EARLY CARE AND LEARNING (DECAL)
CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM
2026 RAMADAN WAIVER STATE REQUEST**

USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Child Nutrition Programs are expected to be administered in accordance with all statutory and regulatory requirements; waivers to the requirements are exceptions. However, Section 12(l) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA), 42 U.S.C. 1760(l), provides FNS authority to waive requirements for State agencies or eligible service providers under certain circumstances.

This optional form is designed to streamline the process for State agencies to request a waiver to provide non-congregate meal service during Ramadan in 2026. This waiver is available in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). In CACFP, this waiver is available in emergency shelters, adult day care centers, outside-school-hours care centers (OSHCC), and the at-risk afterschool component. This waiver may be used when participants observing Ramadan are fasting during typical meal service times.

State agencies that use this form must continue to provide notice and information to the public about their applications for a waiver in accordance with the requirements at Section 12(l)(1)(A)(ii) of the NSLA.

1. State agency submitting waiver request and responsible State agency staff contact information:

State Agency: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)

Date: 1/26/2026

Mailing Address: 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. DE, Suite 754 East Tower, Atlanta GA 30334

Name and title of person completing this form: Sonja Adams, Sr. Manager or Provider Services

2. Region: SERO

3. Affirmation that eligible service providers participating in the waiver(s) are in good standing:

Please check one: ☒ Yes ☐ No

4. Description of the challenge the State agency is seeking to solve, the goal of the waiver to improve services under the Program, and the expected outcomes if the waiver is granted. [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(iii) and (iv) of the NSLA]:

☒ Allow local Program operators to offer non-congregate meals to participants fasting during Ramadan. The NSLA, Child Nutrition Act, and Program regulations require school food authorities (SFAs) and institutions to operate congregate meal services at specific times. SFAs and institutions that serve meals to participants observing Ramadan often experience a drop in participation and would benefit from offering alternative meal service options. This waiver would allow SFAs and institutions to offer meals that participants in attendance can take off-site and consume after fasting, providing participants that observe Ramadan access to healthy and wholesome meals.

☐ **Other, please specify:**

5. Specific Program requirements to be waived. [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(i) of the NSLA] Please check only the requirements you are requesting to waive:

National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)

The waivers in this section are intended to provide needed flexibility to support SFAs in continuing to offer nutritious meals to participants fasting to observe Ramadan.

☐ *Non-Congregate Meal Service (NSLP and SBP)*

Under the NSLA, 42 U.S.C. 1753(b)(1)(A), and the Child Nutrition Act, 42 U.S.C. 1773(b)(1)(A), NSLP and SBP meals must be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site.

☐ *Meal Service Times (NSLP and SBP)*

Under Program regulations at 7 CFR 210.10(l) and 7 CFR 220.8(l), meals served in the NSLP and SBP must follow meal service time requirements.

☐ *Offer Versus Serve (NSLP)*

Under the NSLA, 42 U.S.C. 1758(a)(3), and Program regulations at 7 CFR 210.10(e), Program operators of senior high schools (as defined by the State education agency) must participate in offer versus serve at lunch.

Child and Adult Care Food Program

The waivers in this section apply to emergency shelters, adult day care centers, OSHCC, and the at-risk afterschool component of CACFP only. These waivers are intended to provide needed flexibility to support institutions in continuing to offer nutritious meals to participants fasting to observe Ramadan.

☒ *Non-Congregate Meal Service (CACFP)*

Under the NSLA, 42 U.S.C. 1766(f)(1)(A), and Program regulations at 7 CFR 226.19(b)(6)(iii), CACFP meals must be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site.

☒ *Meal Service Times (CACFP)*

Under Program regulations at 7 CFR 226.20(k), meals served in the CACFP must follow meal service time requirements.

6. Under the NSLA, 42 U.S.C. 1758(a)(3), and Program regulations at 7 CFR 210.10(e), Program operators of senior high schools (as defined by the State education agency) must participate in offer versus serve at lunch.

If granted a waiver, there will be no significant impacts on technology, state systems, or monitoring.

GA DECAL will implement the processes and procedures that are already in place for institutions that have participated in other types of CACFP waivers which offer non-congregate meal services and waivers of meal service times. Institutions will be required to request approval for these waivers in GA DECAL's ATLAS waiver module for the applicable meal service sites. Institutions' adherence to waiver requirements will be monitored through the State agency's compliance reviews.

7. Description of any steps the State has taken to address regulatory barriers at the State level. [Section 12(l)(2)(A)(ii) of the NSLA]:

☒ **No regulatory barriers expected at the State level.**

☐ **If regulatory barriers are expected at the State level, please list steps taken to address them in the box below:** N/A

8. Anticipated challenges State or eligible service providers may face with the waiver implementation:

☒ **No anticipated challenges are anticipated with waiver implementation.**

☐ **If the State or eligible service providers anticipate challenges implementing this waiver, please explain in the box below:** N/A

9. Description of how the waiver will not increase the overall cost of the Program to the Federal Government. If there are anticipated increases, confirm that the costs will be paid from non-Federal funds. [Section 12(l)(1)(A)(iii) of the NSLA]:

☒ **No anticipated increase of Federal Government costs. Participants in attendance would normally receive meals but are unable to consume meals at standard meal times because they are fasting as part of their religious observance. Therefore, providing a meal that participants can consume later, at a time that honors their religious principles, does not increase costs.**

☐ **Other, please specify:** N/A

**10. Ramadan is expected to take place from approximately February 17 – March 18, 2026.
Anticipated waiver implementation dates:**

Start Date: February 17, 2026

End Date: March 18, 2026

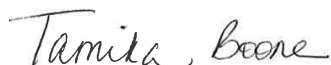
11. Proposed monitoring and review procedures:

Monitoring of institutions' performances under the requested waivers will follow administrative review regulations for the Program. This practice will be consistent with 7 CFR 226 requirements. DECAL will require institutions to indicate their desire to participate in the waiver within GA ATLAS' waiver module and make any revisions to site applications if required. Institutions will be required to maintain documentation supporting the non-congregate meal services. In addition, institutions will be required to document the number of meals served when utilizing these waivers. The proper use of the waivers will also be reviewed during institution compliance reviews.

12. Link to or a copy of the public notice informing the public about the proposed waiver [Section 12(l)(1)(A)(ii) of the NSLA]:

<https://www.dec.al.ga.gov/CACFP/WaiverRequests.aspx>

13. Signature and Title of Requesting Official:



Title: Director of Nutrition Services

Requesting official's email address for transmission of response: Tamika.Boone@dec.al.ga.gov

TO BE COMPLETED BY FNS REGIONAL OFFICE:

FNS Regional Offices are requested to ensure the questions have been adequately addressed by the State agency and formulate an opinion and justification for a response to the waiver request based on their knowledge, experience and work with the State.

Date request was received at Regional Office: _____

☐ **Check this box to confirm that the State agency has provided public notice in accordance with Section 12(l)(1)(A)(ii) of the NSLA**

• Regional Office Analysis and Recommendations:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a signature.

Signature from FNS Regional Office: