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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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DECAL is seeking nonprofit organizations to serve as sponsors to help ensure children who have limited access to food at home get the nutritious meals they need during the summer.

Approved organizations receive federal reimbursement for providing meals and snacks.

Atlanta, GA (February 21, 2025) In Georgia, nearly 64% of public school students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Many children rely on the nutritious meals and snacks served during the school year through the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs.

When school is out for the summer, Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program helps fill the gap by providing free meals and snacks to children, ages 18 and younger, who might otherwise go hungry. Meals and snacks are also available to persons with disabilities, over 18, who participate in school programs for people who are mentally or physically disabled.

Happy Helpings is administered by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). DECAL is seeking nonprofit organizations to serve as sponsors to help ensure children who have limited access to food at home get the nutritious meals they need for optimal growth, development and overall well-being.

DECAL collaborates with public school units, charter and non-public schools, public and private non-profit organizations, government entities, faith-based organizations and camps to serve as program sponsors. Sponsors are eligible to receive federal reimbursement for all qualifying meals served to children.

The eligibility requirements for a private nonprofit to participate as a sponsoring organization include being a 1) have tax-exempt status with the IRS, 2) serving the community for 12 months in the area the organization intends to serve meals, and 3) being able to provide 12 months of financial documentation for your organization.

Of particular need are organizations in rural areas and areas with a concentration of migrant farm workers, where access to summer meal sites or transportation has been an issue. New federal regulations permit sponsors with a rural designation to apply for approval to allow meals for multiple days to be taken away from the meal site for children to enjoy throughout the week.

Last summer, DECAL approved 73 sponsors to provide meals and snacks for children. Through these community partnerships, community and school sites served over 3.2 million meals to hungry children at 1,026 sites across the state.

“Increasing the number of sponsoring organizations that participate in Happy Helpings allows DECAL to provide more meals and snacks to kids throughout Georgia,” said Tamika Boone, Director of Nutrition Services. “Our goal is to ensure that children in every Georgia county have access to a Happy Helpings meal site.”

To learn more about Happy Helpings and how your organization may become involved in providing summer meals to children in your community, please visit the Happy Helpings [website](#) or contact Cindy.Kicklighter@decalfga.gov

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Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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About Bright from the Start Bright from the Start:

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages the voluntary quality enhancement programs. The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decalfga.gov.