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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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DECAL is seeking nonprofit organizations to 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 eligible meals and snacks.

ATLANTA, GA (February 4, 2026) Administered by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and federally funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Happy Helpings, Georgia's Summer Food Service Program, provides children with free nutritious meals and snacks during the summer when school is out.

DECAL is seeking nonprofits and government agencies, known as sponsors, to serve meals this summer. Eligible organizations include schools, faith-based organizations, camps, housing authorities, libraries, City or County government, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA's and other private or public non-profits.

Sponsors are responsible for administering the program and managing multiple feeding sites. They receive reimbursement for eligible meals served for children 18 years old and under or adults over 18 who participate in school programs for people who are mentally or physically disabled.

"Without sponsors in the community operating meal sites, children lose critical access to the meals they rely on during the school year," said Tamika Boone, Director of Nutrition Services for Georgia DECAL. "We need local leaders and organizations to step up and become the bridge between federal resources and the children who need them most."

While new sponsors are sought across Georgia, there is a critical need for organizations willing to serve meals in rural communities where access and transportation may be an issue. Under federal guidelines, USDA-approved rural sites are permitted to offer flexible meal delivery methods such as grab and go and parent pick-up, ensuring children have consistent access to nutrition at home.

The eligibility requirements for a private nonprofit to apply for Happy Helpings 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.

Last summer, DECAL approved 65 sponsors to provide meals and snacks for children. Through these partnerships, community and school sites served more than 2.9 million meals to hungry children at 993 sites across the state.

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@dec.al.ga.gov

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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.dec.al.ga.gov.
