

No Kid Hungry Georgia Summer Summit

Innovating Rural Non-Congregate Together

*Please note: sessions with an asterisk are recommended for new sponsors not currently operating rural-noncongregate or SFSP.

Feb 4, 2026

Check-In and Breakfast

9:00 - 10:00

Check in with the No Kid Hungry team upon arrival to grab an agenda and a nametag, then head to the Anderson Ballroom for the Breakfast Grand Buffet to fuel up for the day!

Welcome Remarks and Keynote

10:00 - 10:30

*Anastasia Tsekeris, No Kid Hungry Georgia Campaigns Manager and Donna Martin, School Nutrition Professional
Anderson Ballroom*

Grab a seat and prepare to be inspired, as Donna Martin shares an important message on the impact of summer meals in Georgia communities.

Office Hours

10:30 - 10:45

Anderson Ballroom Lobby

Have a question about program requirements, No Kid Hungry grants, or strategizing for summer? Visit Office Hours with Taylor Unoki, No Kid Hungry Georgia Campaigns Associate, and Nkem Ijeh, DECAL Training Coordinator, for one-on-one support.

Session 1: Innovative Models

10:45 - 11:45

*Allison Lairscy, Burke County Schools Nutrition Director and Amanda White, YMCA of Rome and Floyd County Director of Anti-Hunger Initiatives
Boston Room*

Operating the rural non-congregate option comes with a slew of methods to provide meals to children in new, creative ways. Experienced sponsors Allison Lairscy and Amanda White will share models implemented to meet their community's needs, including implementing bulk meal distribution, leveraging school buses to distribute meals, and hiring students to work on the food program.

Session 1: What is Non-Congregate?*

10:45 - 11:45

Anderson Ballroom

Demetria Thornton, Leatha Bryant, Julie Edwards

Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) staff Demetria Thornton, Leatha Bryant, and Julie Edwards will present on the ins and outs of operating the rural noncongregate summer meals option in Georgia. Participants will leave this session with a clear understanding of program requirements, allowable models, and a general overview of the application and approval process with the state.

Office Hours

11:45 - 12:00

Donna Martin and DECAL staff

Session 2: Fueling Participation: Marketing and Outreach to Boost Participation

12:00 - 1:00

Kate Goodin, Senior Manager, No Kid Hungry State Campaigns

Boston Room

Gain invaluable insights into targeted marketing techniques designed to drive participation and ensure no child goes hungry during the summer break. From tailored outreach to social media utilization and community engagement, learn how to effectively promote your program and make a lasting difference in your community.

Session 2: Menu Planning*

12:00 - 1:00

Anderson Ballroom

Monica Griffin, Nutrition Education and Physical Activity Supervisor, DECAL

Aleta McLean, Open Hand Atlanta

Laura Lane, Rabun County Family Connection

Morgan Champan, Nutrition Education Specialist, DECAL

This panel-led session will guide new and experienced sponsors through the essentials of effective menu planning for rural non-congregate programs. Panelists will share their experiences meeting nutrition best practices, accommodating participant preferences, and leveraging partnerships to plan high-quality, non-congregate meals and snacks.

Lunch

Soup, Salad, Sandwich Lunch Buffet
Intentional assigned seating to encourage networking

1:00 - 2:00

Office Hours

DECAL Auditors and Share Our Strength

2:00 - 2:15

Session 3: Innovative Partnerships Across the Nation

Boston Room

No Kid Hungry State Campaigns Associate, Taylor Unoki

This session will highlight examples across the nation of innovative partnerships that strengthen and expand program impact. Attendees will explore how creative collaborations with schools, libraries, and other stakeholders can enhance service delivery, increase participation, and improve sustainability. The session will offer practical ideas participants can adapt to build or deepen partnerships in their own communities.

2:15 - 3:15

Session 3: Right from the Start: Mastering Financial Basics*

Anderson Ballroom

Nkem Ijeh, Training Coordinator, DECAL

This session will focus on effective financial management strategies to help non-congregate programs remain cost-sustainable over time. Attendees will learn best practices for budgeting and maximizing available resources while maintaining program quality and compliance. The session will also highlight practical tools that can inform sound financial decisions and achieve long-term sustainability.

2:15 - 3:15

Office Hours

DECAL Application Services and Share Our Strength table

3:15 - 3:30

Session 4: Overcoming Common Challenges with Practical Approaches

3:30 - 4:30

Donna Martin and Leah Pitt

Boston Room

Operating a meal program in the summer can be difficult, especially with the added complexities of providing non-congregate meals in rural communities. Experienced summer meals sponsors, Leah Pitts and Donna Martin, will share their expertise on overcoming these challenges by leveraging the right tools, resources, and partnerships. Join this session to learn about recruiting reliable staff, maintaining a sustainable budget, developing effective food packaging methods, and more!

Session 4: Keys to a Successful Summer with Non-Congregate*

3:30 - 4:30

Anderson Ballroom

Shannon Goff and Robyn Parnham, DECAL Nutrition Compliance

Join Happy Helpings Nutrition Compliance team to gain a greater understanding of Rural Non-Congregate requirements, meal service recordkeeping essentials, and SFSP compliance review processes and procedures.

Closing Remarks

4:35 - 4:50

Anderson Ballroom

Anastasia Tsekeris, Share Our Strength No Kid Hungry