Due to the COVID-19 impact, we are constantly reviewing and amending our policies and procedures to ensure care is provided in a safe and healthy space with respect to family choices and provider needs. This information will continue to be updated.

**REIMBURSEMENT AND CLAIMS**

**Will I receive my February reimbursement?**

February 2020 reimbursements have been sent to all homes and centers eligible for a claim the week of March 23rd. Please check your account or mail. If your claim was not submitted, you have already been notified; your claim will be submitted in April with the March claim.

If a statewide mandate was issued requiring child care centers and homes to close, would the USDA provide financial relief or advancement to relieve the impact to sponsors?

At this time, Bright from the Start is not aware of any plans for the USDA to provide funding during times in which child care centers or homes are closed and not serving meals to children. If we receive any additional information from USDA, we will provide this information to all of our sponsored sites.

**Will QCC help reimburse me for food I bought and spoiled later since my enrollment has dropped?**

No.

**What will happen to my March claim?**

If your facility has closed for the remainder of March, please submit your claim (online and/or mail) as soon as possible in order for us to start processing your claim. Please continue to mail documents to our Atlanta office as normally done.

We will process March claims as quickly and efficiently as possible; however, travel restrictions by the Governor may hinder us from doing this according to our normal
schedule. We are doing everything possible to follow appropriate social distancing rules while minimizing our staff exposure.

**Due to the DeKalb County shelter-in-place order, QCC staff has limited access to the office. This order is in place until further notice.** “Individuals are permitted to leave their places of residence only to provide or receive certain essential services or engage in certain essential activities and work for essential businesses and essential governmental functions,” the order reads in part. We will do whatever we can do to process your claims in an efficient manner to honor our original claim schedule.

**Centers/ARAS:** You are still required to mail your entire claim packet to the office as scheduled. If necessary, we may make temporary changes to our claims process that may require you to submit “essential” parts of your claim packet to your office Program Coordinator by email. **Because of the county restriction, please anticipate a delay in your reimbursement from 1-3 weeks in the event staff in unable to retrieve your packet from the office.**

**Homes:** Please anticipate a 1-2 week delay in your reimbursement in case the county restriction prevents us from completing your claim on time. For those who receive checks, we can assist you with getting your payment sooner with a direct deposit. To switch to direct deposit, complete our form ([https://bit.ly/3ax0K8K](https://bit.ly/3ax0K8K)) and send directly to carmen.barton@QCCGA.org.

**Can I still drop off my March claim at the Atlanta office? Will someone be there to accept my claim?**

**MAIL:** Follow the procedures for mailing complete and accurate claim packets to the office.

**DROP-OFF:** Our claims staff works remotely from the office now. If you are dropping off a claim packet, make arrangements with your Program Coordinator to ensure a member of our team will be there when you arrive. **Do not leave claim packets at the front desk.**

**CLOSURES, CAPACITY AND PARENT ENTRY**

**Should I remain open?**

The decision to close or remain open during this uncertain time is one that must be made by each site in light of local circumstances and with the guidance of DECAL. At the time of the writing of the FAQ, Governor Kemp did not announce an enforceable closing of child care programs. Please read the latest information on the Bright from the Start website: [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov) daily for the latest information.

The health and safety of your employees and the children in your care is a top priority for QCC and DECAL. While it is ultimately your decision to make, the Department of Public Health (DPH) is not recommending widespread school closures. If necessary, DPH
may advise communities on mitigation measures including the closure of schools and childcare programs. DECAL is in regular contact with DPH and will inform centers/day care homes if their recommendations change. Programs are also advised to follow any direction from their local board of health.

**Since schools are out and we follow the school schedule, do I need to let you know that we are closed?**

Yes. A deviation of schedule is (1) closing your site for any amount of days, (2) discontinuing a meal or snack on any day, (3) changing your meal times (permanent or temporary) or (4) taking meals offsite for a field trip. **A deviation of schedule is susceptible to a noncompliance or serious deficiency finding and a loss of meal reimbursement. According to official policy, QCC must be notified of schedule deviation in advance.**

New information is available daily that may affect your business decisions. You must keep QCC informed of closures or other adjustments to your schedule or procedures. Contact your program coordinator in the QCC office. Since most staff are working from home be sure to leave a message if you do not reach anyone by phone, or you may send an email.

**We are not allowing parents into the center. Is it okay for staff to sign children in and out?**

**Rule Suspension**

**DECAL is suspending the following rules** in part in accordance with O.C.G.A. 38-3-51(d)(1). The suspension of the specified rules will apply until the Governor lifts the Public Health State of Emergency.

- **Restricting Access** – This suspension will give programs the option for restricting families’ access to parts of the program. Specifically, families may be restricted to the front door of the facility or the door of the classroom. The current rules are stated as follows:

  - **CCLC-591-1-1.22** - The custodial parent(s) of the child in attendance be permitted access to all child care areas of the Center and shall make his or her presence known to Center Staff prior to removing the child from the Center.

  - **FCCLH-290-2-3-.06** - The Parent(s) of a Child shall be permitted access to all child care areas of the Home at all times a Child is in attendance, unless otherwise ordered by a court of proper jurisdiction.

Also, review the following DECAL document for guidance:

May I claim more children and exceed my licensed capacity for any meal or snack service?

No, you may not exceed your licensed capacity. Exceeding your licensed capacity and not following ratio guidelines is putting the health and safety of children at risk. Contact your Child Care Service Licensing Consultant for more information about ratios.

What are the new capacity restrictions?

To align with executive orders issued by the Governor on March 23, 2020, the following now applies immediately (via DECAL):

Child Care Learning Centers: Georgia’s licensed Child Care Learning Centers (CCLC) may remain open if classrooms are limited to 10 or less individuals (including staff), and classrooms are self-contained. Current ratios for infants (1:6) and toddlers (1:8) must be maintained. DECAL is asking child care providers to update their open/close status on KOALA.

Family Child Care Learning Homes: Georgia’s licensed Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH) may also continue to operate. FCCLHs are permitted to serve up to 6 children for pay. To comply with the Governor’s Executive Order, FCCLHs must ensure that their program does not have, at any time, groups of more than 10. This includes staff, family members, and children enrolled in the program.

DECAL is providing this guidance as soon as possible to help providers make decisions in a timely manner. As DECAL receives more information, additional guidance will be provided. Providers should also reference DECAL’s COVID-19 F.A.Q.s found at: http://www.decal.ga.gov/BFTS/Covid19.aspx. These are updated daily.

Also, review the following DECAL document for guidance: http://decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SupportsforEarlyLearningProgramsCCSOp enSuggestionsandRules.pdf

FOOD AND PURCHASING

We are having difficulty finding milk. Will we lose reimbursement for these meals without the right type of milk?

Yes, but there is a way to avoid losing reimbursement. You may encounter shortages of food or supplies in your area. You may be able to make substitutions for milk and food components with permission from DECAL and/or the USDA. It requires a waiver we must request on your behalf.

Is it allowable to freeze milk and use it after the expiration date?

Although unopened milk is safely stored in the freezer at 0°F for up to three months, freezing milk is not recommended. Freezing milk, specifically high fat milk (whole milk), causes changes that will deteriorate the texture, preventing it from being used as fluid
milk. Additionally, the CACFP Crediting Handbook provides guidance that foods past the expiration date are not creditable. Therefore, if the milk expires, the milk will need to be discarded even if it has been frozen.

What milk substitutions are allowed?

The meal pattern for milk served to children 2 years and older is either lowfat (1%) or non-fat (skim). Be sure to look for skim milk before requesting a waiver for milk substitutions. Lactose-free and shelf-stable milks are allowable milks to serve without a waiver.

In the event that whole milk and/or 1%/skim milk is unavailable to purchase, or to purchase in the quantity that you require, you may submit a waiver request for the substitution of your choice. Substitutes to consider could be 2% milk, powdered milk (reconstituted), or a non-dairy beverage such as 100% juice or water.

Does this waiver include modifications/substitutions because I am unable to find certain types of food such as whole grain-rich components?

Yes, but you still have to request a waiver after you have made an honest effort to find allowable substitutions first.

How do I request this waiver?

To request a waiver, complete this form: https://qualitycareforchildren.wufoo.com/forms/q1fa98rb0fmir6m/

After completion of the form with the type of substitution you will make, you will receive conditional approval for the substitution while we seek official written approval from DECAL or the USDA. If the substitution is not approved, you may not be reimbursed for those meals. We will do everything to advocate on your behalf.

Whom do I call about meal pattern substitutions and purchasing issues?

Contact Compliance Manager Caitlin Vadini for more information on this waiver at caitlin.vadini@QCCGA.org or call 404-479-4253,

What should I do to avoid a future milk shortage?

We recommend that you purchase shelf-stable milk to keep on hand for emergency use should there be a shortage of fresh milk in your local area. If you are unable to locate adequate milk or milk types, you may be able to claim meals without milk with proper documentation and approval by QCC and DECAL.

Is there a food service management company (FSMC) that could help me with vended meals temporarily during this COVID-19 pandemic?
Yes. A FSMC can help a center that is struggling to find food components and keeping a full-time experienced cook. Choosing a FSMC requires informal procurement by most facilities (total projected annual cost under $250,000 or less) and formal procurement for some (total projected annual cost over $250,000). If you desire to find a FSMC to serve your community, you may get quotes from 2-3 vendors of your choice. DECAL has a Vendor List on their website (http://decal.ga.gov/CACFP/Procurement.aspx).

To follow proper procurement procedures, review and use our Procurement Guidelines and Form for Kitchen Equipment, Food Service Management Companies and Food Distributors on our website (www.qualitycareforchildren.org/forms).

If you are in metro Atlanta, The School Gourmet is a Farm to Early Care and Education partner with QCC. The School Gourmet has a goal to serve child care centers and afterschool programs with high quality Scratch Made meals using harvested produce from and close to Georgia. For quotes and a taste test, call 404-371-4566 or email info@eatgourmetexpress.com.

Can you explain the new waivers by the USDA to address the COVID-19 pandemic?

Starting Saturday, March 20, 2020, the USDA released a series of CACFP-related waivers that will allow CACFP operators flexibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The directions below are for facilities under QCC’s sponsorship:

- **Waiver #1: CACFP Meal Times for Homes, Centers and At-Risk Afterschool Programs** – USDA recognizes that in this public health emergency, waiving the meal service time requirements will support streamlined access to nutritious meals. **As a result, meal service times may vary in the CACFP during the public health emergency.**
  - During this period, it is expected that sites under QCC’s sponsorship who vary their meal service times do this to improve services to children. **There is no requirement to request permission.**
  - This is effective immediately as of March 20, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or upon expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier. QCC requests that all of its sponsored sites contact us immediately to make us aware of any changes to meal times.

- **Waiver #2: Non-congregate Feeding in CACFP** - Child Nutrition Program meals must be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site. However, USDA recognizes that in this public health emergency, waiving the congregate meal requirements is vital to ensure appropriate safety measures for the purpose of providing meals and meal supplements. **Therefore, meals do not have to be served in a congregate setting. Enrolled children at centers and homes may**
take sack meals and snacks (Grab-and-Go meals) that meet the CACFP meal guidelines home. All At-Risk participants may also take meals and snacks home.

- Sites sponsored by QCC must inform us that you are participating in non-congregate (Grab-and-Go) feeding prior to beginning service by contacting your Nutrition Program Consultant (monitor).
- Your child care program is not required to be open for the purpose of child care to provide Grab-and-Go meals.
- Meals are only for enrolled children at child care centers and homes. Enrollment is not required for official At-Risk Afterschool Sites.
- Proper documentation must still be kept using official QCC/Minute Menu/KidKare forms and software only.
- Duplicate meals are not distributed to any child.
- See “Waiver #5” for related details.
- See “Waiver #4” for meal pattern flexibility.
- Meals should be distributed in clean, new, disposable packaging – no recycling of containers.
- This is effective immediately as of March 20, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or upon expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

- **Waiver #3: At-Risk Afterschool Programs Activity** – ARAS sites will be allowed to operate CACFP without an educational or enrichment program.
  - There is no requirement to request permission.
  - This is effective immediately as of March 20, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or upon expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

- **Waiver #4: Allow Meal Pattern Flexibility in CACFP** – In this public health emergency, appropriate safety measures are necessary. **Therefore, you are not required to serve meals that meet the meal pattern requirements during the public health emergency.**
  - QCC expects and strongly encourages every family child care home, center and emergency shelter under its sponsorship to maintain and meet the nutrition standards for each Program to the greatest extent possible.
  - Sites sponsored by QCC MUST use the online waiver form to inform us of their effort and proposed substitutions: [https://qualitycareforchildren.wufoo.com/forms/q1fa98rb0fmir6m/](https://qualitycareforchildren.wufoo.com/forms/q1fa98rb0fmir6m/). (Programs without internet capability may call our Compliance Manager at 404-479-4253.)
  - This waiver is effective as of March 25 and remains in effect until April 30, 2020 or until expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.
• **Waiver #5: Allow Parents and Guardians to Pick Up Meals for Children – CACFP sites may distribute meals to a parent or guardian to take home to their children.**
  - See “Waiver #5” for non-congregate feeding requirements.
  - Distribution of meals does not require the CACFP site to be open for the operation of child care or afterschool care. CACFP sites will receive reimbursement for these meals even if closed due to COVID-19 closure.
  - Meals are distributed only to parents or guardians of eligible children.
  - **QCC sites must have accurate documentation of meals taken:**
    - Documentation of the names of parents or guardians who took the meals and the names of the enrolled*** children the meals are for (e.g. sign-in sheets, parent notes dropped into a basket, documentation recorded by staff, etc.) - **Do whatever you can to prevent parents from using shared writing instruments.**
    - Number of meals and snacks taken
    - Duplicate meals are not distributed to any child.
    - *** At-Risk Afterschool Programs children do not have to be enrolled but must be age eligible.
  - Bundle meals to serve multiple days of meals at one time to limit exposure and maximize resources.
  - Proper food safety protocols must be utilized. These meals should contain **printed** instructions regarding reheating and refrigeration.
  - Family child care homes and centers can claim no more than two meals and one snack or two snacks and one meal per participant per day.
  - Claim no more than one meal and one snack under the At-Risk Afterschool Program.

**How can I learn more about Grab-and-Go Meal Service?**

QCC will conduct two webinars on Wednesday, April 1 at 10 am and 1 pm. Please check your email for registration instructions. Attending the webinar is not required to participate in non-congregate feeding, but it is highly recommended. If you miss the training, please contact your Nutrition Program Consultant (monitor) for more details.

**MONITORING BY QCC**

**Will I still receive monitoring visits?**

Onsite monitoring visits will be suspended through June 30 for the time being. QCC sites will receive offsite monitoring and technical assistance calls in the interim. New programs will still receive a 30-day desk audit review.
AT-RISK AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Are at-risk afterschool centers allowed to continue serving meals and snacks during unanticipated school closures?

Yes. At-risk afterschool centers may continue serving meals and snacks as part of the At-Risk Afterschool Meals component of CACFP. When operating during unanticipated school closures, afterschool centers must continue to meet At-Risk Afterschool requirements, including the requirement that programs must offer education or enrichment activities. On days when schools are closed, at-risk afterschool centers that normally offer a snack and supper after school may instead choose to offer either lunch and a snack, or a breakfast and a snack. These meals and snacks would be reimbursed through CACFP at the free rate.

Additionally, CACFP sponsors may serve a snack and/or a meal at a site that has been served meals earlier in the day by SFSP sponsors.

Can I claim reimbursement for meals served to children who did not typically attend my At-Risk afterschool program (e.g., siblings of enrolled children whose schools are closed due to coronavirus concerns)?

Yes, as long as the child is eligible to receive meals and all required records are maintained, which include but are not limited to, meal count records, attendance records, and menus. See CACFP Policy 18 for recordkeeping requirements. [http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CACFP_policy18.pdf](http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CACFP_policy18.pdf). Additionally, institutions should ensure the ATLAS application reflects current operations including the current average daily attendance and the types of meals served.

Can you explain the new waivers by the USDA to address the COVID-19 pandemic?

On Saturday, March 20, 2020, the USDA released three CACFP-related waivers that will allow the following:

- **At-Risk Afterschool Programs** – ARAS sites will be allowed to operate CACFP without an educational or enrichment program. DECAL has opted to adopt the waiver. This is effective immediately as of March 20, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or upon expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

- **CACFP Meal Times for Homes, Centers and At-Risk Afterschool Programs** – USDA recognizes that in this public health emergency, waiving the meal service time requirements will support streamlined access to nutritious meals. As a result, meal service times may vary in the CACFP during the public health emergency. DECAL has opted to adopt the waiver. This is effective immediately as of March 20, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or upon expiration of the federally declared public health emergency.
declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier. QCC requests that all of its sponsored sites contact us immediately to be aware of any changes to meal times.

- **Non-congregate feeding in CACFP** - Child Nutrition Program meals must be served in a congregate setting and must be consumed by participants on site. However, USDA recognizes that in this public health emergency, waiving the congregate meal requirements is vital to ensure appropriate safety measures for the purpose of providing meals and meal supplements. **Therefore, meals do not have to be served in a congregate setting.** Enrolled children at centers and homes may take sack meals and snacks that meet the CACFP meal guidelines home. All At-Risk participants may also take meals and snacks home. Proper documentation must still be kept. QCC will provide you guidance on this shortly to ensure you are in compliance. DECAL has opted to adopt the waiver. This is effective immediately as of March 20, 2020 and remains in effect through June 30, 2020, or upon expiration of the federally declared public health emergency, whichever is earlier.

**May my CACFP program deliver meals?**

Yes, creative service methods including meal delivery are welcome and encouraged during the public health crisis. QCC-sponsored sites must contact Nutrition Program Consultant to inform sites on plan to drop off meals. Keep a travel log with delivery dates, times and drop off locations.
COMMUNICATION BY QCC

How do I stay informed on all of the CACFP changes?

We will send emails as often as possible. Also, go to our COVID-19 website for the latest updates as we expect additional guidance from federal, state and local authorities: <<< QCC WEBSITE FOR COVID-19 COMING SOON >>>

Where can I find the latest information?

Be sure to sign up for our texting program if you haven’t already for the most current information. Text HOME or CENTER to 8772554254 depending on your program type.

CACFP TEXT ALERTS
FOR PROGRAMS UNDER QCC’S CACFP SPONSORSHIP

Get urgent text message alerts regarding your CACFP participation.

CENTER DIRECTORS & ADMINISTRATORS
Text CENTER to 8772554254

HOME PROVIDERS
Text HOME to 8772554254

MILK AUDIT REMINDER TEXTS FOR CENTERS!
Text MILK to 8772554254 to get 2 monthly reminders to check your Minute Menu CX milk audit for potential shortages before the month ends.

AVOID MILK SHORTAGES AND LOSS OF REIMBURSEMENT!

This is an optional and complimentary service to QCC providers. Message and data rates may apply.

CACFP ORIENTATION AND NUTRITION TRAINING

Centers/ARAS/Shelters only: What do I do if I have new staff that must attend orientation training?

We will still conduct our 2-day CACFP orientation training for April 9-10 at our Atlanta office as scheduled. However, we ask that active sites only send one person for each site in order for you to maintain compliance. We will seat one participant at each table separated by at least 6 feet. However, if your site is performing adequately, we may allow you to attend the May 14-15 training.

Centers/ARAS/Shelters only: Do I still attend orientation training in April?

For new applicants who wish to start CACFP on May 1, 2020, one person from your site must attend training on April 9-10 at our Atlanta office. This person should be the person who has ultimate responsibility over CACFP at your site. We will seat one participant at each table separated by at least 6 feet.
Have nutrition trainings been canceled? How do I know if a scheduled one is canceled?

All scheduled trainings for March and April are postponed at this time. You will receive a refund and cancelation email from Eventbrite and Nutrition ECE Specialist Gina Cook.

FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE)

Will I receive technical assistance?

Yes, however, in-person technical assistance is suspended until further notice. All technical assistance will be done via phone or email.

How does this situation impact my Farm to ECE goals and action plans?

The health, safety, and well-being of the staff, families, and children are priority. We understand that implementing Farm to ECE may need to be put on hold to insure a healthy environment. Please contact us to let us know if you will be closed.

Can I still make Farm to ECE mini-grant purchases?

Yes, you can still make purchases during this time. You can either purchase yourself or send order requests to Gina. If you purchase items, please send invoices to Gina Cook to reimburse you as quickly as possible.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

No Kid Hungry

No Kid Hungry is offering real time funding and assistance for schools, early child care centers and community organizations that are making sure kids have access to the meals they need as schools close due to coronavirus. No Kid Hungry is providing emergency grants to support these local efforts like home delivered meals, grab and go meals programs, school and community pantries, backpack programs, and other steps to help reach children and families who lose access to meals. We’re providing $1 million in emergency grants on a rolling basis.

If your organization needs funding to support these efforts, please submit your interest in receiving emergency grant funds: https://www.nokidhungry.org/coronavirus-grant-request

Waldron Charitable Fund

The application deadline is this Friday, March 20 at 5:00 p.m. Grant awards can range from $10,000 to $50,000.

The intent of the funding is to “support local nonprofit organizations serving the health, nutrition, and special education needs of underserved children impacted by school closures nationwide.” Local community organizations throughout the US that serve children ages 12 and under are welcome to apply. Applicants must represent 501(c)(3) organizations, and faith-based organizations are eligible.
The Waldron Charitable Fund today announced that it will make $1 million in grant funding available for community organizations serving the critical needs of the nation's underserved children. As more and more schools close in response to the spread of COVID-10, this initiative will directly fund those who serve critical health needs (both physical and mental), provide nutritional assistance, and support special education for underserved school children. The application window for grant funding will be open until Friday, March 20, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

To apply, please email a document no longer than two pages in PDF form to WaldronFund@gmail.com that addresses the following:

- Briefly describe the 501(c)(3) organization.
- What problem are you working to solve?
- How many underserved children will be positively impacted by your efforts?
- How will you distribute your solution while keeping children safe during the COVID-19 crisis?
- How quickly can your service be provided?

NATIONAL NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by mail:

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

This Institution is an equal opportunity provider.