

ACCESS

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*The Frequently Asked Questions below are a compilation of questions received from child care providers, families, and the public regarding CAPS ACCESS (Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements) initiative. The new and revised questions and answers are at the beginning of the document in **red**.*

This document will be updated as questions and answers are added or revised OR as new information becomes available.

How does the ACCESS program impact Quality Rated (QR) tiered reimbursement?

Programs who participate in CAPS and are Quality Rated will continue to receive tiered reimbursement. Tiered reimbursement will be applied to the full CAPS reimbursement rate as published in the [CAPS Reimbursement Rates \(Appendix C\)](#) table of the CAPS Policy Manual. Previously, tiered reimbursement would have been applied to the CAPS rate minus the family fee. **Tiered reimbursement is not applied to the registration fee.** You should see your tiered reimbursement payment amount increase.

For example, the CAPS rate for a toddler in Zone 1 is \$144 per week. If the family was assessed a family fee, the net payment from the state would have been decreased before the tier was applied. Therefore, a family fee of \$15 would mean that the tiered rate was applied to the net amount of \$129 (\$144 minus \$15). Now the tiered rate will be applied to \$144.

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General Questions

1. What is the CAPS program's new ACCESS initiative?

ACCESS — Awarding **C**hild **C**are **E**ducation **S**cholarship **S**upplements is an initiative funded through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), to mitigate the negative financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Georgia's child care industry and to help eligible Georgia families (also negatively impacted by the pandemic) pay for child care. The purpose of ACCESS is to temporarily support CAPS families by paying for child care. Through ACCESS, CAPS will pay **the** provider their full published rate for the type of care provided, including the family fee, **from May 17, 2021 through service period ending October 2, 2022**. CAPS families will not pay the provider any tuition related fees or co-payments for child care.

2. Do I have to apply for ACCESS?

No, families enrolled in the CAPS program will automatically qualify for ACCESS.

3. Who is eligible for ACCESS?

Newly approved and current families with CAPS scholarships.

To receive CAPS, families must submit a CAPS application online at www.gateway.ga.gov. If a family needs help submitting the online application, they can contact CAPS at 1-833-4GA-CAPS (1-833-442-2277). If families are not able to submit an online application, they can visit the CAPS website at <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/> and select [Contact Us](#) to submit a paper application.

4. What type of child care providers can receive ACCESS funding?

CAPS eligible providers can participate in the ACCESS initiative. **Licensed child care programs** and **two categories of license-exempt programs** (government owned and operated child care programs and day camps) are eligible to participate in CAPS. When a child care program is licensed by or receives a qualifying license exemption from DECAL, the program is automatically added to the CAPS provider management system as an eligible provider. To learn more about enrolling as a CAPS provider, visit the CAPS website at <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/> and select "[Become a CAPS Provider](#)."

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5. Will ACCESS cover tuition cost for school-age children attending a private institution or charter school for their primary education needs?

No, CAPS subsidies are only authorized to cover the cost of care for school-age children when school is not in session and before/after care while school is in session.

6. Who do I contact if I have questions about ACCESS?

You can contact CAPS directly at 1-833-4GA-CAPS (1-833-442-2277) or submit your question online at <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/> and select [Contact Us](#).

7. How long is the ACCESS initiative in effect?

ACCESS will be in effect from **service period beginning May 17, 2021** and continue through service period **ending October 2, 2022**.

8. How does CAPS typically pay for scholarships and what is different with ACCESS?

CAPS requires families to share in the cost of child care expenses by paying the provider the difference between what the provider charges and what CAPS pays. ACCESS will expand access to high-quality child care for families participating in the CAPS program by removing financial barriers for child care services. Through ACCESS, CAPS will pay the provider's full published rate for any tuition related fees or co-payments for child care.

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Families

9. Will I be responsible for any child care fees?

CAPS will pay your child care provider's full published rate, including the family fee for any tuition related fees or co-payments. However, your provider may charge for costs outside of child care services, such as transportation or meals fees. You will be responsible for paying additional fees not related to your child's tuition or co-payment for child care.

Note: If your provider is charging you tuition related fees or co-payments for child care, contact CAPS at 1-833-4GA-CAPS (1-833-442-2277) to report the charge.

10. Why does my scholarship still say I have a family fee?

Your family fee will continue to be calculated as required in [CAPS Policy 9.3.1](#) and [CAPS Policy 9.3.2](#). When your child care provider requests payment from CAPS, your co-payment will be waived, and CAPS will pay your provider's full published rate for the type of care provided to your child, including the family fee.

11. Will I be required to complete my annual redetermination while the ACCESS initiative is in effect?

Yes, families currently participating in CAPS must complete the program's annual redetermination requirements before their current eligibility period expires. The family fee and co-payment will be waived through **service period ending October 2, 2022**, for families determined eligible for continuous services.

12. Will my family fee change between now and the end of the ACCESS program?

Your family fee (if applicable) will continue to be calculated at your annual redetermination and reflected on the scholarship as required in [CAPS Policy 9.3.1](#) and [CAPS Policy 9.3.2](#). However, CAPS will continue to pay your provider's full published rate through **service period ending October 2, 2022**.

13. If I change child care providers will my family fee still be paid at the new provider?

Yes, CAPS will pay all CAPS eligible child care providers their full published rate, including the family fee, while the ACCESS initiative is in effect.

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14. Can I select any child care provider I want?

Yes, CAPS eligible families can choose any CAPS eligible provider, although we encourage CAPS families to select a Quality Rated provider. All child care providers participating in Quality Rated — having earned one, two, or three stars — have gone beyond state health and safety requirements to provide a high-quality experience to children in their programs. To find a Quality Rated provider in your community, visit www.qualityrated.org or call 1-877-ALL-GAKIDS (1-877-255-4254).

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Providers

15. Does ACCESS impact how I bill for CAPS scholarships?

ACCESS does not impact how you will bill for CAPS scholarships. CAPS will pay your full published rate for the type of care provided to the child. This rate was confirmed through the STABLE 3 application process or has been confirmed by a representative from CAPS reaching out directly to your program.

The family fee (if applicable) will continue to be calculated and reflected on the CAPS scholarship as required in [CAPS Policy 9.3.1](#) and [CAPS Policy 9.3.2](#). While the ACCESS initiative is in effect, your payment will be automatically adjusted by the system to pay your published rate for the type of care provided, including the family fee.

16. How does ACCESS impact Georgia's EHS-CCP?

ACCESS will greatly benefit Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership grantees. As Early Head Start–Child Care Partner programs are not able to charge families the family fee or co-payment, many partner programs had to simply cover those costs. ACCESS will make up for any losses with the family fee and increase the CAPS rate paid for children who are EHS and CAPS eligible.

DECAL, the Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership grantee in Georgia, has agreements with each child care partner that may vary. To understand the impact of ACCESS on their program, EHS-CCP partners should consult their grant agreements and talk to the appropriate DECAL staff.

17. What do I do if I have a billing issues when receiving ACCESS?

You can report billing issues to CAPS State Provider Management Agent (Maximus) by calling 1-877-755-6522.

18. Will I be able to increase my rates for the families who have a CAPS scholarship?

No, CAPS will reimburse child care providers in accordance with their published rate as verified by CAPS staff or at the time of enrollment with CAPS for new providers.

Your published rates were confirmed through the STABLE 3 application process or were confirmed by a representative from CAPS reaching out directly to your program. CAPS will use these rates when calculating your payment until October 2, 2022. While the

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ACCESS initiative is in effect, you are prohibited from charging families enrolled in CAPS any tuition related fees or co-payments for child care. CAPS will not process any provider rate changes until October 3, 2022.

19. Will I be able to change my rates for families not subsidized by CAPS?

Yes, participating CAPS providers may charge a different rate for children **NOT** subsidized by CAPS than the rate charged for children subsidized by CAPS **beginning May 31, 2021 through service period ending October 2, 2022**. This allows CAPS to predict costs and thereby maintain funding for ACCESS, to safeguard against unintended influence on market rates, and to allow providers financial flexibility.

20. How does the ACCESS program impact Quality Rated (QR) tiered reimbursement?

Programs who participate in CAPS and are Quality Rated will continue to receive tiered reimbursement. Tiered reimbursement will be applied to the full CAPS reimbursement rate as published in the [CAPS Reimbursement Rates \(Appendix C\)](#) table of the CAPS Policy Manual. Previously, tiered reimbursement would have been applied to the CAPS rate minus the family fee. **Tiered reimbursement is not applied to the registration fee.** You should see your tiered reimbursement payment amount increase.

For example, the CAPS rate for a toddler in Zone 1 is \$144 per week. If the family was assessed a family fee, the net payment from the state would have been decreased before the tier was applied. Therefore, a family fee of \$15 would mean that the tiered rate was applied to the net amount of \$129 (\$144 minus \$15). Now the tiered rate will be applied to \$144.

21. Will the rate differential waiver apply to child care provider's published registration fee?

No, CAPS will continue to pay up to \$65.00 for registration fees. If the provider's published registration fee exceeds \$65.00, the parent will be responsible for paying the difference.

22. What if there is a change in ownership?

ACCESS will not affect how change of ownerships are processed. Newly licensed providers must still complete a CAPS enrollment packet after permission to operate has been granted by Child Care Services. Families who have children with CAPS scholarships may choose to remain at the facility under the new ownership; however, the scholarships must be transferred from the previous owner to the new owner in order for the new owner to bill CAPS for services.