



## CHILDCARE AND PARENT SERVICES (CAPS) Georgia's Subsidy Program

<b>CAPS Policy – Overview</b>	<b>No.: CAPS/00-1</b>	Effective Date: 10/01/2016
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LEGAL AUTHORITY: CCDBG Act sec. 658A, O.C.G.A. Sec. 20-1A-1 et seq.; Federal Register: 45 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 98 and 99.

**Note:** Definitions of words or phrases in bold are located in [Definitions and Acronyms](#). Only the first occurrence of the defined words or phrases are bolded.

### 1 OVERVIEW

#### 1.1 Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)

##### 1.1.1 Description

Bright from the Start: Georgia **Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)** is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. The department administers the nationally recognized Georgia Pre-K Program, **child care learning center** and **family child care learning home** licensing program, Georgia's **Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)** program, federal nutrition programs, and quality enhancement programs. It 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. DECAL's mission and vision is located online at [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).

##### 1.1.2 DECAL Child Care and Education Program Information

DECAL is focused on helping to meet the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children ages birth to 18 and their families, with a strong emphasis on quality educational opportunities for children birth to five. It administers various programs and fulfills multiple responsibilities related to child care and early childhood education in Georgia. The following programs are administered by, or operate in collaboration with, DECAL:

- **Child Care Services**  
Child Care Services licenses and monitors child care **providers**. For additional information about Child Care Services, visit <http://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/About.aspx>.
- **Georgia's Pre-K Program**  
The Georgia Pre-K Program is a lottery-funded educational program for Georgia's four year olds to prepare them for kindergarten. For additional information about this program, visit <http://www.decal.ga.gov/Prek/About.aspx>.
- **Head Start State Collaboration**  
The purpose of the Head Start State Collaboration Office is to build collaborative partnerships between federally funded Head Start programs and state-funded early childhood programs to improve the quality of services to low-income children and their families in Georgia. For more information regarding Head Start State Collaboration, visit <http://www.decal.ga.gov/HeadStart/About.aspx>. To find more information about Head Start, or a Head Start location, visit <http://www.georgiaheadstart.org>.
- **Instructional Supports**  
DECAL also administers and coordinates services and support to help early education programs meet high quality standards and to help early education teachers improve their credentials. This includes:

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- Professional Learning: <http://dec.al.ga.gov/QualityInitiatives/ProfessionalDevelopment.aspx>
- Georgia Program for Infant and Toddler Care: <http://dec.al.ga.gov/QualityInitiatives/InfantToddlerCare.aspx>
- Inclusion Services: <http://dec.al.ga.gov/ChildCareServices/ProviderInclusion.aspx?r=QI>

- **Nutrition Services**

Nutrition Services administers the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in Georgia. These federal nutrition programs are funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and ensure that children and **adults** throughout Georgia have access to nutritious meals while they are in a day care setting and during the summer when school is not in session. For more information about Nutrition Services, visit <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/Nutrition/About.aspx>.

- **Quality Rated: Georgia’s Quality Rated Improvement System (QRIS)**

Quality Rated is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for other service related industries, Quality Rated assigns a quality rating of one, two, or three stars to child care providers that meet a set of defined program standards that go above and beyond minimum health and safety requirements. By participating in Quality Rated, early care and education providers embark on a path of continuous quality improvement. Child care providers who participate in and achieve a Quality Rated designation may be **eligible** for free technical assistance, teacher and **director** training, grants to purchase classroom supplies and educational materials, and/or higher CAPS reimbursement rates.

- Parents and families can find Quality Rated child care programs at <http://families.dec.al.ga.gov/>.
- Child care programs may apply to participate at <https://qualityrated.dec.al.ga.gov/>.
- For additional information about Quality Rated, refer to the Program Manual at [https://qualityrated.dec.al.ga.gov/Content/Documents/PM\\_ProgramManual.pdf](https://qualityrated.dec.al.ga.gov/Content/Documents/PM_ProgramManual.pdf).

- **Summer Transition Program (STP)**

Summer Transition Program is a six-week program during the months of June and July that offers high-quality instruction in language, literacy, and math for children from families with low incomes whose children have attended or are eligible to attend GA Pre-K and need additional supports. The program is designed to reduce the achievement gap by providing additional support and resources to targeted high needs populations. For additional information regarding STP, visit <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/Prek/SummerTransitionProgram.aspx>.

## 1.2 Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)

### 1.2.1 Description and Goals

The Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program is Georgia’s subsidized child care program administered by DECAL. CAPS assists low-income families with the cost of child care in order to support Georgia’s school readiness goals. CAPS is available in all 159 counties within Georgia.

### 1.2.2 Funding Source

Child care services provided through the CAPS program are funded by a combination of state funds and the **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)** under the administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and the Office of Child Care (OCC). Authorized by the **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** Act and Section 418 of the Social Security Act, the CCDF assists low-income families in obtaining child care so they can work or attend training/education.

### 1.2.3 Compliance with Federal Regulations

As the **lead agency**, DECAL is responsible for implementing a state plan that is compliant with federal regulations associated with CCDF. The CCDF State Plan serves as the agreement between DECAL, ACF, and OCC as to how programs are administered to comply with federal regulations; as well as, technical bulletins that are issued by ACF. Unless contrary to a federal law or regulation, DECAL has sole discretion on how the CAPS program is operated and how subsidy funding is allocated in Georgia. At any time, DECAL can make adjustments to CAPS program policies, procedures and funding allocations.

- The purposes of the CCDF as defined in the CCDBG Act sec. 658A are to:

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- Allow each state maximum flexibility in developing child care providers and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within the state;
  - Promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care services that best suits their family's needs;
  - Encourage states to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care services and to promote the involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings;
  - Assist states in delivering high-quality, coordinated early childhood care and education services to maximize parents' options and support parents trying to achieve independence from **public assistance**;
  - Assist states in improving the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing the health, safety, licensing, training, and oversight standards in state law, including state regulations;
  - Improve child care and development of participating children; and
  - Increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings.
- CCDF offers federal funding to states, territories, Indian Tribes, and tribal organizations in order to:
    - Provide low-income families with the financial resources to find and afford quality child care for their children;
    - Enhance the quality and increase the supply of child care for all families, including those who receive no direct assistance under the CCDF;
    - Provide parents with a broad range of options in addressing their child care needs;
    - Strengthen the role of the family;
    - Improve the quality of, and coordination among, child care programs and early childhood development programs; and
    - Increase the availability of early childhood development and before- and after-school care services.

## POLICY REVISION HISTORY

Date	Description of Change