



Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning

BRIGHT FROM THE START

2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE, Suite 754, East Tower, Atlanta, GA 30334
1-833-4GA-CAPS (1-833-442-2277)

Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

Memorandum

To: CAPS Child Care Providers, Families, and Stakeholders
From: Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs
Re: Update: Emergency CAPS Policy Waivers

In March and April 2020, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) waived certain Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) policies to support families and child care providers impacted by COVID-19.

Recently, we notified you that effective Monday, October 26, 2020, child care programs must be open for care to bill for CAPS scholarships, except in the event of a temporary closure. Below, we define “Open for Care” and “Temporarily Closed.” The child care provider must meet one of the following conditions to be eligible for payment from CAPS.

- **Open for Care:** Open for care means that a facility is currently serving children or is accessible to the public in an environment that is ready for operations and able to comply with all licensing regulations. The facility must be ready and available anytime during reported operating hours to participate in a licensing inspection.
- **Temporarily Closed:** Temporarily closed means that a facility is currently closed but is taking active steps to become “Open for Care” within 30 calendar days of the date of closure. If the facility is unable to open within 30 calendar days, the facility must get written approval from the Department of Early Care and Learning to maintain a status of “Temporarily Closed.”

The policy waivers detailed in the following table, except as noted, will continue until further notice. (Families or child care providers are not required to submit individual requests.) The date in **bold** is the official end date of the corresponding waiver. We may create additional waivers depending on information from the CDC and the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Policy Waiver	Begin Date	End Date	Impacted Policies
Emergency CAPS payment policies waiver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers can bill whether open or closed, if the child attended at least once since March 1, 2020. Active scholarships can be billed if the child is absent and attended at least once since March 1, 2020. 	3/16/2020	10/23/2020	<u>12.4.6.5</u> , <u>12.4.6.6</u>
	3/16/2020	To be determined	
Emergency CAPS state-approved activity policies waiver	3/16/2020	To be determined	<u>6.8.1</u> , <u>13.4.3</u>
Temporary suspension of family signatures on CAPS arrival and departure records	4/8/2020	To be determined	<u>12.4.5.1</u> , <u>12.4.5.2</u> , <u>12.4.5.9</u> , <u>12.4.5.10</u> , <u>15.3.3</u>

Emergency CAPS payment policies waiver

A provider may bill for any child with an active scholarship who received care at least once since March 1, 2020 through service period ending September 13, 2020. This applies to open and closed providers. When billing for absent children, or billing for a service week when the center is closed, providers should only bill on one scholarship per child using the scholarship with the highest payment rate (e.g., full-time opposed to before/after). **Effective September 14, 2020**, billing at the highest payment rate is no longer permitted, and providers will bill according to the school calendar or the type of care provided to the child.

Although CAPS will pay providers for all children with active scholarships who were in care at least once since March 1, 2020, providers must continue to maintain accurate attendance records (see *temporary suspension of family signatures on CAPS arrival and departure records* below).

The payment policy waiver is intended to enable providers to continue to operate or to pay teachers in the event of a closure. DECAL asks that providers pass along some of that benefit to families by reducing or eliminating rate differentials and family fees being applied to families during periods of closure or absence.

Effective October 26, 2020, the child care provider must meet one of the following conditions to be eligible for payment from CAPS.

- **Open for Care:** Open for care means that a facility is currently serving children or is accessible to the public in an environment that is ready for operations and able to comply with all licensing regulations. The facility must be ready and available anytime during reported operating hours to participate in a licensing inspection.
- **Temporarily Closed:** Temporarily closed means that a facility is currently closed but is taking active steps to become “Open for Care” within 30 calendar days of the date of closure. If the facility is unable to open within 30 calendar days, the facility must get

written approval from the Department of Early Care and Learning to maintain a status of “Temporarily Closed.”

Emergency CAPS state-approved activity policies waiver

Families who experience a permanent loss of employment or cannot attend an education/training program due to matters related to COVID-19 can continue child care services at the current level through the end of their current certification period. The family does not need to report this permanent loss in activity.

Families must complete the CAPS annual redetermination requirements before their current eligibility period expires. If state-approved activity requirements are not met at annual redetermination, as a result of circumstances related to COVID-19, the lack of an activity will not impact eligibility if the family provides documentation of COVID-19 related job loss or reduced hours.

Temporary suspension of family signatures on CAPS arrival and departure records

To help slow the spread of COVID-19, parents or other authorized representatives are not required to physically or electronically sign arrival and departure records while this waiver is in effect. However, providers are required to maintain attendance records that record each child’s arrival and departure times and the name of the parent or authorized representative who dropped off or picked up the child each day. Alternate methods that protect the health of families and staff, such as one staff person signing all children in and out, would be acceptable during this temporary policy suspension.

Expired Policy Waivers

The policy waivers detailed below have expired. CAPS has resumed regular practices as prescribed in the noted policy.

Expired Policy Waivers		
Policy Waiver	Period	Impacted Policies
Temporary suspension of provider rate changes	3/16/2020 – 7/3/2020	12.4.11.1
Emergency CAPS payment policies waiver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active scholarships can be billed at the CAPS highest rate if the child attended at least once since March 1, 2020 	3/16/2020 – 9/11/2020	12.4.6.5
Temporary suspension of disallowing billing for CAPS and another federal or state program during the same service period	4/8/2020 – 9/11/2020	12.4.9.2
Essential Services Workforce Priority Group	4/1/2020 – 9/30/2020	7.3.1

We will communicate additional information and updates as we adapt our policies to ensure the health and safety of all children, their families, and the child care workforce. Contact our office at

1-833-4GA-CAPS (1-833-442-2277) if you have questions or need additional information. To learn more about CAPS Policies and Procedures, visit <https://caps.dec.state.ga.us/en/>.