



Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning

BRIGHT FROM THE START

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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
Date: May 6, 2020
Re: Update: Emergency CAPS Policy Waivers in Response to COVID-19

We are re-sending this memorandum to let you know that we have extended the end date on the policy waivers enacted March 16, 2020 and April 8, 2020.

In response to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is issuing emergency waivers for certain policies in the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program. These comprehensive policy waivers do not require families or child care providers to submit individual requests.

The waivers and policies detailed in this communication include:

	Policy/Waiver	Begin Date	End Date	Impacted Policies
1	Emergency CAPS payment policies waiver	3/16/2020	5/22/2020	12.4.7.4 , 12.4.7.5
2	Emergency CAPS state-approved activity policies waiver	3/16/2020	5/22/2020	6.8.1 , 13.4.3
3	Temporary suspension of provider rate changes	3/16/2020	5/22/2020	12.4.11.1
4	Essential Services Workforce Priority Group	4/1/2020	To be determined	7.3.1
5	Temporary suspension of family signatures on CAPS arrival and departure records	4/8/2020	5/22/2020	12.4.5.2 , 12.4.6.1 , 12.4.6.9 , 12.4.6.10 , 15.3.3
6	Temporary suspension of disallowing billing for CAPS and another state or federal program during the same service period	4/8/2020	5/22/2020	12.4.10.2

Because the COVID-19 situation is fluid, and DECAL's responses to the situation evolve rapidly based on information from the CDC and the Georgia Department of Public Health, we may extend these emergency policy waivers or create additional waivers. We will issue updates as we adapt our policies.

1. Emergency CAPS payment policies waiver

A provider may continue to bill for any child with an active scholarship who received care at least once since March 1, 2020. This waiver 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).

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 #5 below).

DECAL is committed to supporting child care providers and families during this public health emergency. 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.

2. Emergency CAPS state-approved activity policies waiver

Parental authorities who permanently lose their employment or stop attending 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 parental authority does not need to report this permanent loss in activity.

If the parental authority is not meeting state-approved activity requirements at their annual redetermination as a result of circumstances related to COVID-19, the lack of an activity will not impact eligibility.

3. Temporary suspension of CAPS provider rate changes

To better meet the needs of the families and child care providers impacted by COVID-19, CAPS will suspend the processing of all provider rate changes from March 16, 2020 to May 22, 2020, except in limited situations. If a provider feels an exception is needed, contact CAPS at 1-833-4GA-CAPS (1-833-442-2277).

4. Essential Services Workforce Priority Group

DECAL has established a new priority group for CAPS to address Georgians' needs during the current public health emergency by helping the essential services workforce pay for child care. For more information go to [the Essential Services Workforce priority group document here](#) or view the document on the CAPS website update page at <https://caps.decals.ga.gov/en/Updates>.

5. 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.

6. Temporary suspension of disallowing billing for CAPS and another state or federal program during the same service period

During the current crisis, CAPS is temporarily allowing *layered funding*. This means that a provider may bill for children with an active scholarship who received care at least once since March 1, 2020 even when another federal or state program, such as Head Start or Georgia's Pre-K, has paid for the child's care for the same service period. This authorization applies to open and closed providers.

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.decal.ga.gov/en/>.