



## BRIGHT FROM THE START

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
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February 24, 2021

Dr. Ellen Wheatley  
Director, Office of Child Care  
Administration for Children and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Mary E. Switzer Building, Fourth Floor, MS 4425  
330 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Director Wheatley,

This letter describes the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's (DECAL) proposed plan for distributing funds from the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA). DECAL, the lead agency for CCDF, has received \$403,660,875 from the CRRSA to help 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. DECAL will use this historic investment in early learning to support child care programs, the early care and education workforce, and families with young children.

Given the large amount of funding and the spending timeline prescribed by the CRRSA, DECAL will distribute this funding in phases. Phase 1 will be comprehensive and broad supporting all open, licensed programs, the professional workforce who directly serve young children, and families who rely on the Childcare and Parent Services program (CAPS), Georgia's subsidized child care program, to pay for child care. Phase 2 (and subsequent phases) will be more strategic and targeted based on specific needs of the child care industry, the workforce, and families with young children as informed by feedback from providers, families, and stakeholders.

### **Direct Child Care Services (Subsidies)**

DECAL will use funds to help ensure that children in families eligible for subsidized child care will continue to receive high quality child care by reducing the financial burden for families.

Families receiving CAPS will not be required to pay any additional tuition charged by the provider or the family co-pay. DECAL will pay the provider the full published rate for 12 months, thereby significantly enhancing families' access to quality child care during this time when a family's ability to pay is compromised.

Also, DECAL will use funds to temporarily increase access to the CAPS program to more families with low incomes during phase 1 and to student parent families in phase 2.

### **Implementation of Virus Mitigation Policies and Practices**

Providers are encouraged to use funding from the CRRSA (particularly funding described in the following section) to implement policies and practices to mitigate the spread and the negative effects of the virus.

### **Grants or Assistance (Other than Subsidies) to Stabilize Child Care Providers**

The Short Term Assistance Benefit for Licensed Entities (STABLE) grant payments will be available to all open, licensed child care providers regardless if they participate in CAPS, Georgia's subsidized child care program. This will be the third round of STABLE grant payments offered by DECAL to providers during the public health emergency. Providers will have a measure of autonomy in determining how to use these STABLE payments to best meet the needs of their program. Funds may be used to pay for salaries and benefits for lead teachers, assistant teachers, and other employees; substitute teachers; tuition relief for families; lease or mortgage payments; utilities; cleaning supplies; classroom materials and supplies; unreimbursed food; and additional supplies required by CDC guidelines. This benefit payment will be based on program capacity, not on attendance, for open programs only.

Licensed child care providers who serve school age children and license-exempt providers who have served a child who has received CAPS within the last two years will be eligible to receive a competitive School Age Grant. \$5,000,000 will be allocated for the School Age Grant project.

The funds may be used to enhance technology to support students who attend school virtually during the school year and to support summer education activities to prevent learning loss. Funds can also be used for equipment, materials, and after school curriculum designed specifically for children 5 to 12 years old. Best Practices in School Age Care training will be available for all grant recipients, and school age technical assistance will be offered to a subset of grant recipients.

### **Assistance to Providers Not Participating in the Subsidy System Prior to the Pandemic**

As noted previously, the STABLE grant payments will be available to all open, licensed child care providers regardless if they participate in CAPS, the subsidized child care program. DECAL expects that a significant number of licensed child care centers and family home providers who do not participate in the subsidized child care program will take advantage of this funding opportunity.

### **Other**

DECAL will provide all Georgia Pre-K teachers, assistant teachers, child care teachers, and child care staff a one-time \$1,000 bonus. The Early Childhood Professionals Bonus will be available to Georgia's early care and education professionals (not just teachers but also directors, assistant directors, cooks, etc.) working in licensed child care programs, Department of Defense (DOD) programs, Early Head Start and Head Start programs, and Georgia's Pre-K lead and assistant teachers in public schools. This funding will help offset lost wages, ensure employee retention, and reward quality among early care and education professionals.

Sincerely,

/s/

Amy M. Jacobs  
Commissioner