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## **Board of Early Care and Learning**

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**Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting**  
Thursday, November 10, 2016, 9:00 a.m.  
Bright from the Start  
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive SE – East Tower, Oak Room  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
Amy Jacobs, Commissioner

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### **Meeting Minutes**

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#### Board Members

Victor Morgan, Board Chair  
Susan Harper, Board Vice Chair  
Phil Davis  
Kathy Howell  
Jerri Kropp

Luann Purcell  
Carlene Talton  
Melissa Boekhaus  
Tangela Johnson  
Dawn Henderson

#### Public Guests

*Hanah Goldberg*  
*Maria Claudia Ortega*  
*Tyese Lawyer*  
*Britta Hallberg*  
*Joy Hawkins*  
*Joe Perreault*  
*Patricia Sullivant*  
*Pam Runkle*  
*Jessica Woltjen*  
*Emily Pelton*

*Heather Denny*  
*Henry Liebling*  
*Lynn Manfredi/Petitt*  
*Brian Lipton*  
*Evelin Hicks*  
*Carolyn Lloyd*  
*Angelique Thomas*

#### Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner  
Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and  
Instructional Supports  
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System  
Reform  
Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal  
Programs  
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer  
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer  
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer  
Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and  
Administration  
Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care  
Services  
Jennie Couture, Director of PSS  
Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director  
Janice Haker, Head Start Collaboration Director

Jackie Shivers, Director for Quality Improvement  
Bentley Ponder, Research and Policy Analysis Director  
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator  
Jakeise Moody, Financial Analyst  
Jim Keith, Data Services Manager  
Falita Flowers, Nutrition Services Director  
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director  
Sharon McPherson, Director of Finance  
Laura Wagner, E3Z Director  
Rian Ringsrud, Director of Audits and Compliance  
Lisa Rambhajan, Information Technology Assistant  
Mark Waits, Special Assistant to the Commissioner  
Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Policy Analyst  
Jessie Bruno, Data and Research Coordinator  
Liz Young, Government Relations and Special Projects  
Titus Dyson, Helpdesk Supervisor  
Faith Duncan, Regional Manager Central  
Brian Griffin, Quality Support Coordinator  
Ben Appling, Audit Project Coordinator  
Pam Stevens, Quality Rated Director  
Robin Stevens, Human Resources Director

## 1. Call to Order

Board Chair Victor Morgan called the meeting to order. He welcomed board members, Department of Early Care and Learning staff, guests, and new board member Melissa Boekhaus.

## 2. Approval of 11/10/16 Agenda and 8/18/16 Minutes

Susan Harper moved to accept the day's agenda. Phil Davis seconded. The agenda was unanimously accepted. Davis moved to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2016 meeting of the board. Dawnn Henderson seconded. Minutes were unanimously approved.

## 3. Inspiration

Dawnn Henderson provided the inspiration. She shared a Thanksgiving poem and talked about what it means to give thanks.

## 4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities:

- New board member Melissa Boekhaus introduced herself. She attended Emory University, has worked at Wellstar for the past four years, lives in Mableton, and is a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Dawnn Henderson attended the Atlanta All Staff meeting. She thought it was warm and inviting. She was impressed by and appreciated the commissioner's talks on relationships and creating connections.
- Jerri Kropp announced that Channie Frazier, an educator in Statesboro, was awarded the Pre-K Teacher of the Year award. Dr. Kropp also attended the Statesboro All Staff meeting, and thought it was well run and informative.
- Tangela Johnson attended the Atlanta All Staff meeting. She appreciated the great energy, and that people are passionate about work.
- Carlene Talton attended the Atlanta All Staff Meeting, and said it was engaging and enjoyable. She reported that there is only one more All Staff meeting.
- Phil Davis attended the Stone Mountain All Staff meeting. It was his first time meeting with field consultants, and he really enjoyed the level of energy. He reported that the field consultants he spoke to are smart, knowledgeable, resourceful, and a great testament to the spirit of DECAL.
- Kathy Howell went to the Atlanta All Staff meeting. She said it was amazing to see the talent and personalities come through. She also had an opportunity to read to a Pre-K class in her district.

## 5. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of DECAL staff provided updates on their program areas.

### a. Commissioner's Update:

Commissioner Jacobs thanked the board for their hard work and for attending the All Staff meetings. She recognized Janice Haker, who will be retiring at the end of the calendar year, and thanked her for her service. She introduced Allison Setterlind as the new Head Start State Collaboration Director, who will work alongside Haker until her retirement. Commissioner Jacobs reported on the two Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year: Channie Frazier (private Pre-K program) and Connie Ellington (public Pre-K program). Stephanie Blank's foundation funded this initiative and plans to continue it next year and explore the possibility of recognizing birth to 3 teachers as well. Frazier and Ellington will serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program. The Commissioner's Spirit of DECAL award is given to those who display DECALs values. This year 29 nominations for the award were scored by DECAL's Employee Advisory Group. Commissioner Jacobs chose the top five scores. The fifth winner will be announced at the Macon All Staff meeting. The first four winners are: Kristen Huie, System Reform Coordinator; Kiejuan Davis, Help Desk Specialist; Donna Marks, Pre-K Consultant; and Rob O'Callaghan, Research and Policy Analyst.

The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Georgia Pre-K Week, a partnership with Voices for Georgia's Children, recently ended. Commissioner Jacobs introduced Emily Pelton, Executive Director for Voices, who spoke on the importance in having public officials in Pre-K centers to see the work the teachers are doing. This year, over three-quarters of our state legislators and over 500 centers registered to participate in Pre-K Week. She thanked Commissioner Jacobs and the board for their support, and said it's a pleasure and honor to partner with DECAL. Governor Deal and the First Lady are integral leaders and participants of Pre-K Week, and their support is appreciated. Ms. Pelton also thanked Liz Young, Meghan McNail, Reg Griffin who worked hard to plan the month-long event. DECAL's new mascot CALi participated in Pre-K Week for the first time. The Georgia School Boards Association also served as a partner. A key component of Pre-K Week is the community partnerships that amplify social media impact of event.

**b. Finance, Administration, and Legislative Updates:**

Ray Higgins, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, presented updates on the department's current finances (see slides). Mr. Higgins presented the standard budget report for the first quarter assuring the board the department is on track. The total budget is over \$800 million, an increase from past years. The audit is underway currently. Mr. Higgins reported on possible bills related to DECAL during the 2017 General Assembly. He presented the projected schedule of the CAPS transition project to be completed by October 2017. Tangela Johnson asked if the additional 200 people hired for the CAPS unit will be housed in the office. Mr. Higgins explained that DECAL has procured the fifth floor of the Agriculture building to house the CAPS unit. Susan Harper asked for clarification of what CAPS stands for. Response: Childcare and Parent Services. Phil Davis commented on the proposed bills in the upcoming session of the General Assembly and asked about the impacts or considerations of the bill regarding hearsay. Mr. Higgins answered that Ira Sudman could provide further information about this question.

Rian Ringsrud, Director of Audits and Compliance, presented the findings from the audit and fraud assessment. The assessment was requested by the Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) involved the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) and contractor The Hackett Group. The audit focused on four areas: people, processes, tools, and data. DECAL was ranked the highest of nine agencies assessed, especially in the people, process, and data categories despite having such a new fraud and abuse unit. Next steps are to work with GTA to find a way to procure a fraud and waste abuse computer system to pilot for the rest of the state. Mr. Ringsrud thanked Craig Detweiler in IT, Sharon McPherson in Finance, and Ira Sudman in Legal, all of whom contributed to this work. He also thanked Ben Appling, who worked most directly with the contractor.

Bentley Ponder, Research and Policy Analysis Director, presented on the CCDBG Evaluation and Planning Grant. Georgia was one of eight states awarded the grant to create ways to evaluate the effectiveness of Georgia's State Plan for the Child Care and Development Fund monies. It is a relatively small grant, but receiving this grant is a prerequisite to apply for additional funding to implement the plan to evaluate the activities outlined in the State Plan. DECAL is currently collecting large amounts of data, and this grant will give the research team opportunity to expand its data and research capacity.

**c. Federal Program Updates:**

Elisabetta Kasfir, Assistant Commissioner for Federal Programs, presented on CAPS (see slides) especially focusing on the future direction of CAPS as a program. The purpose of CAPS has been to help families attain and maintain self-sufficiency, while also increasing access to quality programs. The goal is to transform this program by more closely aligning it to early education and to more directly involve families. The new CAPS structure contains three components: scholarship administration, program administration, and family support. Family support is the new component which will assign consultants in the field to raise awareness and connect families to needed resources. DECAL currently contracts with the Division of Family and Children Services to complete the scholarship administration function (i.e., determine eligibility) but, as mentioned in Deputy Commissioner Ray Higgins' report, DECAL is working to transition all CAPS functions to the department. Susan Harper asked if there is a difference between scholarship administration and the way reimbursement is carried out now. Calling it scholarship is a way to rebrand this function of the program to make it a part of Georgia's early education system. Victor Morgan commented that these changes could be a way for CAPS to focus more on growth. Carlene Talton asked about the number of consultants that will be needed. Ms. Kasfir answered about 60 spread across the state.

**d. System Reform Update:**

Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform, explained the responsibilities of the System Reform division (see slides) now composed of 52 employees. One of the division's goals is for every child care program to become Quality Rated. Nearly 62% of all centers have applied to participate so far. System Reform has been increasing awareness of Quality Rated through public service announcements, TV spots, and billboards. The purpose of the campaign is to familiarize the public with the Quality Rated brand and to drive people to the Quality Rated website. DECAL wants this website to be first tool that families use when looking for a child care center. So far the rate of return from the public awareness campaign has been high. The average time a user spends on the website is 1.5 minutes. Ms. Bernhard announced that the Atlanta Journal Constitution will have a Quality Rated wraparound ad on their November 20, 2016 issue. Susan Harper asked about the status of the Kindergarten Entry Assessment. Ms. Bernhard answered that GKIDS is an on-going, formative assessment the purpose of which is to inform instruction. Results from this assessment will provide teachers information on their students from previous school years. The pilot data is under review.

**i. Testimonial from EHS-CCP Grantees:**

Maria Claudia Ortega, owner of My Little Geniuses (a three-star Quality Rated family child care learning home), shared how the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant allowed her to improve the backyard play area of her program. The DECAL Early Head Start Partnership has given her facility a more disciplined process making things like routine paperwork easier. Ms. Ortega thanked Quality Rated and the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership for the supports provided for her program and the families she serves.

Tyese Lawyer, President and CEO of Our House, Inc. Genesis, presented on how the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership grant has impacted her work. Our House, Inc. is a shelter for families experiencing homelessness. Our House provides comprehensive early childhood education, case management services, and training for the families. The early education center achieved a two-star rating last year. Ms. Lawyer talked about how early childhood education really can help people achieve their goals. They spent a lot of time helping the teachers understand what Head Start is, and what Early Head Start could do for their clients. The Sheltering Arms hub has been supportive to the staff at Our House, Inc. The curriculum specialist allowed the center to train teachers to provide meaningful education, and the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership funding enabled teachers to buy materials and equipment that allow children to learn through play.

Phil Davis asked if Our House, Inc. is unique in Metro Atlanta. Ms. Lawyer answered that Our House, Inc. has two locations in Metro Atlanta, one in the Old Fourth Ward and one in Decatur. The two locations serve 151 people each day. A lot of families stay in nonprofit and faith-based shelters throughout Atlanta. The number not being served could be 6,000 families on any given night. Statistically, 1 in 4 of those people is a child. This is a huge unmet need. Our House, Inc. works hard to stabilize families with employment and housing.

--BREAK--

**e. Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update:**

Assistant Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams gave an update on enrollment and the Quality Rated School System Pilot. Georgia's Pre-K is currently budgeted for 84,000 slots. Enrollment is just above 80,000 with a waiting list of about 5,000 children. DECAL continues to work on cleaning up the waiting list. The waiting lists capture only those children whose families had access to a program or the opportunity to apply. The recession and declining birth rate may be factors in enrollment numbers. Ms. Adams also presented on the Quality Rated School System Pilot. She explained that the Quality Rated improvement system is based on rating a site, not a classroom. Melissa Boekhaus asked if the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) tool looks at parent satisfaction with the program. Ms. Adams responded that ECERS focuses on the quality of the classroom environment including health and safety, classroom materials and furnishings, and interactions between children and teachers.

**f. Improving Infant Toddler Care Report:**

Jennie Couture, Director of Practice and Support, presented on Georgia's Comprehensive Assessment System Taskforce. The taskforce considered child level assessments including screening and formative assessments, and surveyed 900 educators to learn what assessments are being used in Georgia and by whom. The taskforce created a list of recommendations that will be included in the taskforce's final report (that will be sent to the Board).

Ms. Couture also presented on improving care for infants and toddlers (see slides). She explained how important the first three years are in a child's life. She suggested that infant and toddler caregivers should have their own recognition event next year (similar to Georgia's Pre-K Teachers of the Year). Ms. Couture said the department is encouraging infant and toddler teachers to earn specialized credentials to promote higher quality of care. Pam Stevens, Director of Quality Rated, presented research that shows infant and toddler classrooms are of lower quality than preschool classrooms. DECAL is conducting a pilot project to evaluate the impact of using child care subsidy funds to improve quality. Meaningful improvements are needed, and it will take a substantial investment. Ms. Stevens also said the Early Learning Challenge Grant has provided an opportunity to innovate. Tangela Johnson asked why infant classrooms lose so much money. Ms. Stevens answered that infant and toddler classrooms are more expensive because of the greater staffing needs.

**g. Head Start State Collaboration Report:**

Janice Haker introduced Allison Setterlind as the new Head Start State Collaboration Director. Ms. Setterlind has over 20 years of experience and a master's degree in early childhood education. Ms. Setterlind presented on the new Head Start Performance Standards. Since DECAL is now a Head Start grantee, the agency is impacted by the new standards. One of the goals is to reduce the burden of having over 1,500 duplicated regulations. Standards will have a greater alignment with child care requirements and greater emphasis on data management and analysis. This is part of a push to have grantees focus more on community needs assessment data and to better understand homeless and foster care populations. The new standards must be implemented within the next year.

Janice Haker reported on ongoing projects. The Collaboration Office is seeking ways to increase access to WIC services by combining the registration processes of WIC and Head Start. University of South Florida is conducting research to investigate chronic absenteeism and family toxic stress. Three centers in Georgia that have a problem with absenteeism were chosen to participate in the study. Head Start is encouraging Farm to ECE as a way to bring fruits and veggies to communities. New menus will be approved centrally and then distributed to all centers across Georgia. Fifty-four percent (54%) of Head Start centers are now participating in Quality Rated.

**h. Child Care Services Update:**

Kristie Lewis presented updates on Child Care Services (CCS) starting with an overview of the history of CCS, and how the organizational structure has changed over the years. She credited Commissioner Jacobs for the unit's positive growth and development. The Policy and Process unit is the newest addition to CCS's organization chart. These two staff members will help DECAL stay on track with federal regulations. Last year the CCS consultants completed over 12,000 visits. Tangela Johnson asked who can file a complaint. Lewis answered that anybody can file a complaint via phone, website, or through a variety of sources. The division does have screening questions to ensure the complaint meets a rule violation and is credible.

**6. Committee Meetings and Lunch**

Victor Morgan dismissed board committees for their meetings. Committee meetings were held in separate rooms over lunch. All committee meetings were open to the public.

**7. Committee Reports**

Committees reported on their work.

**a. Budget & Finance:**

Carlene Talton reported for the Budget and Finance committee. During the lunch meeting they reviewed current fiscal year expenditures and discussed the recent fraud assessment results and areas for improvement. No board members had questions.

**b. Programs & Rules:**

Jerri Kropp reported for the Programs and Rules committee. Elisabetta Kasfir presented further information on the CAPS program. The committee discussed the September letter that was sent to CAPS providers and recipients, and the group decided to table a few issues of concern. Tiered reimbursements have been implemented. A CAPS stakeholder meeting will be held in December, and CAPS family forums will be conducted by July to determine

ways to meet federal regulations while serving as many families as possible. In the next year DECAL will hire several CAPS directors and expand the unit. Falita Flowers updated the committee on the nutrition program. The summer meal service increased participation by 3%. During the January 2017 annual conference, summer programs will be discussed, including the changes to nutrition standards that will be implemented in October 2017. The USDA is working on training states about these changes. Christie Bearden talked about the exemption visit project and reported that all exempt programs will be visited. Kristie Lewis reported further data related to CCS. Susan Adams reported on the ongoing longitudinal research study that will continue through the participants' third grade year. The report on the students' kindergarten year has not been formally released yet, but early results are good. The first grade report will be released in the spring. Craig Detweiler reported that license fees can now be paid online. Janice Haker reported that all Head Start programs are required to provide 10% slots to children with disabilities.

**c. System Reform:**

Susan Harper reported for the System Reform committee. Ms. Harper mentioned an issue she was aware of in Dougherty County. Some faith-based centers that had exemptions were extending their hours and therefore were not in compliance. Ms. Harper distributed a handout to the board that provided an update on Quality Rated and other important information. Ms. Harper challenged the board members to contact child care programs in their communities to encourage them to participate in Quality Rated. The committee also discussed the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grants. Lastly, Ms. Harper talked about the four Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs). Community coordinators can help board members write and submit op-eds to their local newspapers about the community wide efforts of the E3Zs.

**8. Public Hearing/Public Comment Period**

Board Chair Victor Morgan opened the meeting for public comments. No one had signed up for comments, so the public comments portion closed.

**9. Adjournment**

Victor Morgan reminded the board that their next meeting will take place on February 16, 2017. After that, the board will meet quarterly on May 11, August 17, and November 16. The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.