
Board of Early Care and Learning

Board of Early Care and Learning Meeting

Thursday, August 16, 2018, 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 Conference Room

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner

Meeting Minutes

Board Members

Susan Harper
Jerri Kropp
Sheri Hooper
Melissa Boekhaus
Carlene Talton

Phil Davis
Kathy Howell
Luann Purcell, Ed.D.
Tangela Johnson

Public Guests

Brett Copeland, Joe Perreault, Hanah Goldberg, Katie Landes, Paul Walker, Kayla Washington, Pam Runkle, Maryum Gibson, Kelly Farr, Erica Sitkolf, Lynn Manfredi-Petit, Patricia Sullivan

Bright from the Start Staff

Amy Jacobs, Commissioner
Rian Ringsrud, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration
Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs
Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner for System Reform
Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports
Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services
Bentley Ponder, Senior Director of Research and Policy
Laura Wagner, Director of CAPS Family Support
Allison Setterlind, Director of Head Start Collaboration
Amy Page, Manager of Process and Policy
Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer
Christi Moore, Director of Professional Learning
Reg Griffin, Chief Communications Officer
Ira Sudman, Chief Legal Officer
Carrie Ashbee, Executive Director of Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning
Carol Hartman, Policy and System Reform Director
Denise Jenson, Hearing Officer
Christie Bearden, Legal Services Supervisor

Faith Duncan, Director of Pre-K Field Operations
Jill O'Meara, Community Coordinator
Danielle Williams, Communications and Outreach Specialist
Darra Jackson, CACDS Coordinator
Clayton Adams, Community Coordinator
Reisha Merriman, Quality Rated Subsidy Analyst
Brandy Locchetta, Inclusion Manager
Tajjha Harden, Subsidy Manager
Laura Reid, Professional Learning Community Specialist
Jackie Shivers, Director of Quality Initiatives
William Cox, Director of Infrastructure
Woody Dover, Budget Administrator
Michael Rodgers, Director of Finance
Ben Appling, Audit Project Coordinator
Tamika Boone, Compliance Manager
Sonja Adams, Nutrition Program Administrator
LeighAnn Hendrix, Regulatory Compliance Manager
Mark Waits, Senior Writer
Quandra Collins, Executive Administrative Assistant
Shayna Funke, Research and Policy Analyst
Sonja Steptoe, Departmental Editor and Writer

1. Call to Order

Board Chair Susan Harper called the meeting to order. She welcomed the Board members, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) staff, and public guests. She also thanked the DECAL staff for its presentations that keep Board members informed about the agency's activities.

2. Approval of 8/16/18 Agenda and 2/15/17 Minutes and 5/10/18 Minutes

Ms. Harper asked for a motion to approve the day's agenda. Phil Davis moved to approve, and Luann Purcell seconded. The Board approved it unanimously.

Ms. Harper moved to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2018 meeting of the Board. Jerri Kropp requested a correction to note that she was not present. After this clarification, Ms. Harper again moved to approve the corrected minutes of the May meeting. Mr. Davis motioned, and Tangela Johnson seconded. The Board approved the corrected minutes unanimously.

Ms. Harper asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 15, 2018 Board meeting that were not approved at the May meeting because a quorum wasn't present. Mr. Davis moved, and Kathy Howell seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

3. Inspiration

Phil Davis provided inspiration, drawing on an experience with his son who works as a canine trainer at the Chatham County Sheriff's Department in Savannah, GA. Mr. Davis explained that he was visiting his son, who works with police dogs, and asked about stuffed toy dogs he saw in his son's patrol car. His son explained that he keeps them to comfort displaced children in situations where the police dogs have been used to investigate crimes that result in family disruptions. He had previously noticed that children cling to the real police dogs after such an incident. So he and his fellow officers bring these toy dogs along to give to the children to comfort them.

Mr. Davis was touched by the concern shown by the Sheriff's Department officers for the children. He reminded the audience that while DECAL staff usually see children under the best circumstances, some children face traumas and it's the little things people do in their daily lives that sometimes have the most impact.

4. Board Member Updates

Members of the board provided updates on their activities:

- Susan Harper announced that she and Ms. Howell attended the 25th anniversary celebration of the Georgia Lottery Corp. in June. She was moved to see Governor Deal overcome with emotion as he was acknowledging the impact that Georgia's Pre-K program has had on education in Georgia. Ms. Harper enjoyed hearing a young woman who had benefitted from both Georgia's Pre-K and the Hope Scholarship talk about how these programs have impacted her. Ms. Harper reminded the room that the decision 25 years ago to earmark lottery dollars for the two education programs has positively impacted Georgia, with DECAL and the Board as offshoots of the decision.

5. Bright from the Start Presentations

Members of the executive staff provided updates on their program areas:

a. Commissioner's Update

- Commissioner Amy Jacobs announced several recent leadership changes that included the departure of Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services Kristie Lewis from DECAL after 17 years to join a private consulting firm. Commissioner Jacobs is confident that Ms. Lewis will do great things for other states in her new role, but stated that she will miss her expertise. The Commissioner has selected Pam Stevens, DECAL's Quality Rated Policy and Partnerships Director, to succeed Lewis as Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services and congratulated her on her new role. Ms. Stevens has an abundance of relevant experience in education and with DECAL. Commissioner Jacobs stated that Ms. Stevens will be a great leader. Her first day in the new role is today and she will update the Board on the Child Care Services activities at the next meeting. While she was selecting a successor for Ms. Lewis, Commissioner Jacobs took the opportunity to upgrade the job titles for Susan Adams, from Assistant Commissioner to Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and

Instructional Support and Elisabetta Kasfir, from Assistant Commissioner to Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs.

- Commissioner Jacobs shared her experiences attending and speaking at the Georgia Lottery Corp. Anniversary event in June. She noted that the lottery has contributed over \$19 billion in funding for education over those 25 years and has allowed DECAL to spend over \$6 billion to educate over 1.6 million 4-year-olds through the Georgia's Pre-K Program.
- The Commissioner also attended the Second Annual Governor's Summit on Early Language and Literacy on June 20-21 at the Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy in Milledgeville. The Summit, the final one on early language and literacy of Gov. Deal's Administration, brought community-based teams together for two days to talk about early language and literacy development for children from birth to age 8. The summit focused on two topics: Why are children struggling with early literacy skills; and what are the factors that influence a child's development? Commissioner Jacobs participated along with Senior Director of Research and Policy Bentley Ponder, and Director of Practice and Support Services Jennie Couture. The Commissioner thanked the Deals, who received an award from the Grade-Level Reading Campaign, for their commitment to early learning and literacy, and stated that their concrete policies related to literacy elevated it as a top statewide priority and put Georgia on the map.
- She also reported on her experiences visiting and speaking at the Summer Learning Day on July 12 at the Andrew and Walter Young Family YMCA in south Atlanta. This event was hosted by the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network, a DECAL stakeholder organization that is focused on promoting quality programming for school-age children. Commissioner Jacobs praised the Center for creating quality summer learning programs that prevent "summer slide" and that provide other continued learning opportunities for children and adults that have a positive impact on the community. The Young Family YMCA has an early learning center, a Georgia's Pre-K program, adult learning programs, and after-school programs. Speakers at the event talked about the importance of public learning. Commissioner Jacobs enjoyed hearing from children who participate in the YMCA Center's activities about how they benefit from robotics, math through music instruction, coding, and horticulture.

b. Finance, Legislative, and Administrative Update

- Rian Ringsrud, Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, began his presentation by praising the \$6 billion funding from the Lottery for Georgia's Pre-K.
- He introduced and welcomed Mike Rodgers as the new Finance Director, succeeding Sharon MacPherson. Mr. Rodgers has 21 years of state government experience.
- His finance, legislative, and administration update focused on the final budget totals for the 2018 fiscal year (FY2018) that ended June 30, the FY2019 budget, and the proposed FY2020 budget. He reported that DECAL spent 99% of its available funds in FY2018, returning just \$9.5 million from the Pre-K and Head Start budgets to the state, which is customary and expected. During the meeting the Board will be asked to approve the \$820 million FY2019 budget and the proposed \$821.7 million FY2020 budget, which will be submitted to the Governor's Office after Board discussion and vote. The FY2020 budget reflects a 2% enhancement over FY2019. DECAL proposes spending the additional \$1.2 million on Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS).

c. Federal Programs Update

- Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs and Eligibility, spoke about the National Governors Association Parents and Children Thriving Together (PACTT) grant that DECAL was awarded to look at Two Generational (Two-Gen) strategies and summarized DECAL's efforts, pursuant to the grant's goal, to develop two-gen strategies to help families attain livable wages that will lead to their economic self-sufficiency. Those efforts have led to a partnership between DECAL and Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) that combines resources from the two entities to support families with access to affordable, high-quality care and early learning for children and higher education opportunities for parents. She stated that her team is taking ideas and direction from the PACTT grant group and turning them into action. She then introduced CAPS Family Support Director Laura Wagner.
- Ms. Wagner described the results of an online survey of 602 CAPS recipients conducted by GEEARS, including key findings that many parents who receive child care assistance in Georgia have some college experience but no degree. Additionally, DECAL reviewed data showing that in 2015-16, 27% of all students

enrolled at TCSG were females with dependents, echoing national statistics showing that single mothers with only high school diplomas are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as those with associate degrees. The findings helped to inform the creation of the collaboration between CAPS and TCSG to share resources that would support student-parents with CAPS services for which they are eligible, and guide families receiving CAPS to opportunities at TCSG to fulfill their academic aspirations and to qualify for jobs that would help them become more financially stable and independent. Ms. Wagner announced that another outgrowth of the discussions with agencies about ways to put the two-gen theory into practice is the recent decision by CAPS to add enrollment in associate degree programs at a Hope-eligible institution to the list of approved activities for CAPS eligibility. Ms. Wagner then shared details of the July 10, 2018, meeting at Georgia Piedmont Technical College, designed to allow DECAL and TCSG staff to network and identify opportunities to collaborate. The meeting presentations also explained the Two-Gen initiative and its mission to the combined total of 180 CAPS family support consultants and TCSG student navigators and special populations/disability services coordinators who attended. Ms. Wagner discussed the presentations the audience members heard, the activities they participated in, and the takeaways participants recorded on index cards that DECAL collected during the event. The CAPS and TCSG staff members also wrote down the actions they pledged to take to implement the two-gen strategy in their work on “Ticket to Ride” postcards that would be sent back to them later to prod them about following through on the commitments. All of the feedback showed that both TCSG and DECAL participants understood the reimagining of CAPS. Moving forward, CAPS family support leadership will require that staff meet with TCSG representatives in their communities. There will be referrals for current students who may be eligible for CAPS and for current CAPS participants who may want to enroll in higher education opportunities at TCSG. CAPS will track these referrals among families served in both programs.

- Mr. Davis observed that interaction with DECAL seems to generate a lot of “lightbulb” moments for people.

d. Head Start Update

- Allison Setterlind, Head Start Collaboration Director, begin her presentation by reminding the board how Head Start fits in at DECAL. The Head Start Collaboration Office is housed at DECAL and is funded through grant collaboration with U.S. Office of Head Start, the sister agency to the Office of Child Care within the Department of Health and Human Services. She reported that Deborah Bergeron, a former school principal and administrator was appointed as the new National Head Start Director. She said the new director has a background in public k-12 education and brings with her a strong emphasis on promoting kindergarten transition and school-readiness through collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education at the school district level. Ms. Setterlind says Ms. Bergeron will focus on using Head Start to ensure that children leave the program equipped with the skills to make a smooth transition to kindergarten.
- Ms. Setterlind reported that she submitted the five-year Head Start Continuation Grant application. She stated that the funding cycle runs from October 1 to September 30. She updated the Board on the Collaboration’s five-year plan priorities, which consist of supporting partnership-driven early childhood programs and fostering statewide data-driven innovation to ensure that Head Start data is correct, included in, and accounted for with all stakeholder data initiatives, such as the Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS). She is promoting professional development and retention of a capable early care and education workforce, particularly at the infant-toddler level, by supporting the CCDF Evaluation Grant that DECAL received, among other projects. Ms. Setterlind is also focused on reinforcing Head Start participation in the Quality Rated System by adding to the 68% of Head Start grantees that have earned the designation; promoting transition continuity and sustainable child outcomes from birth to third grade through work with the Get Georgia Reading Campaign and close monitoring of grantee experiences as reflected in assessment and health data that can indicate the level of positive outcomes for youngsters in Head Start. As her sixth priority Ms. Setterlind wants to prioritize outreach and enrollment of children from special enrollment categories and support grantees in their early identification and intervention efforts with special populations such as those who are homeless or in foster care. Finally, she wants to work with the DECAL System Reform team to help them identify two-gen opportunities to foster the health and well-being of Head Start children and their families.
- Ms. Setterlind outlined several special projects her office is undertaking. They consist of resuming Head Start’s focus on grantee accountability for achieving school readiness by monitoring how grantees are setting goals and progressing toward meeting them, including how grantees are articulating their transition agreements with school systems. She hopes that resources at DECAL and from other partners can support grantees in their efforts and provide great ideas and strategies.

- Ms. Setterlind also worked on a licensing project with DECAL’s Information Technology Department during the summer to solve the nettlesome problem of Head Start federal data not aligning with state data because of system differences. Ms. Setterlind worked with DECAL IT to figure this out. As a result, families will now be able to identify clearly the nearest Head Start program, many of which are blended with Georgia’s Pre-K. She reported that there are 344 locations in Georgia with Head Start/Early Head Start. The majority are licensed with DECAL while less than one-fourth are license-exempt. All sites are known to the state of Georgia. Further, approximately 50 Head Start sites operate in public schools. About seven of these are federal grantees, while others, such as the Atlanta Public School system, partner with grantees to house the Head Start classrooms within their system.
- She discussed with excitement the upcoming Head Start Leadership Cluster Meetings. DECAL’s CACDS project team will travel across the state between August and October to meet in clusters with Head Start program directors and data managers, giving them an opportunity to see what CACDS data can do for them and to provide feedback on the system to make it more user-friendly for grantees.
- She also is partnering with the American Academy of Pediatrics Safety and Injury Prevention Training under a grant to roll out training modules for child care providers across the state. DECAL and Head Start will target caregivers and trainers and give them access to the training materials to keep children in child care safe and healthy.

e. Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning Update

- Carrie Ashbee, Executive Director of Georgia Foundation for Early Care + Learning, presented details of the nonprofit’s upcoming inaugural fundraiser, co-hosted with its Georgia Forestry Commission counterpart, the Georgia Forestry Foundation. The Moonlight Through the Pines event at Lightwood Plantation on October 20, 2018 will include a private concert, authentic Southern spread, plus verbal and silent auctions. Ms. Ashbee also announced that the Foundation used a \$650,000 grant it received from the Joseph Whitehead Foundation to produce and distribute big, colorful yard signs displaying the Quality Rated logo for the 1,100 early learning centers that have earned Quality Rated star ratings. The signs will mark the centers as providers of high-quality child care so that parents can distinguish them from other facilities in their community. Ms. Ashbee also said the signs will serve as incentive for other centers to become Quality Rated.

Ms. Harper paused the meeting for a break at 9:57. The meeting resumed at 10:05.

f. System Reform Update

- Kristin Bernhard, Deputy Commissioner of System Reform, joined Ms. Ashbee in celebrating the new Quality Rated signs for providers. She noted that the signs replace the previously issued banners and flags that providers said didn’t work well if a community had signage restrictions or if the provider didn’t have a big display area. She invited the audience to go to the 6th floor Quality Rated program area to view them.
- Ms. Bernhard then shared the latest data on the Quality Rated System. Ms. Bernhard explained the difference between programs that are participating in Quality Rated and those that have achieved a Quality Rated star rating. She reminded the board that June 30 was the deadline for programs to become participants in Quality Rated to qualify for a bonus package that includes classroom supplies, materials, and in some cases, cash rewards when they earn a Quality Rated star rating. This incentive resulted in great increases in the number of participants. In all, 72% of eligible programs are participating in Quality Rated, representing a 7-percentage-point increase since the May Board meeting report. She attributed the increase to the incentive created by that June 30 deadline. In all, 33% of eligible programs currently are at least 1-star Quality Rated — up 3 percentage points from the last board meeting. She noted that just over 1,600 of the 4,825 eligible programs in Georgia are Quality Rated, with nice growth in the number of 2- and 3-star Quality Rated providers. Ms. Bernhard reported that 28% of eligible programs are not yet participating in Quality Rated and her team has developed outreach strategies to bring them into the fold. Additionally, she announced that 47% of children receiving childcare subsidies are in Quality Rated programs.
- Looking at Quality Rated from a geographic lens, Ms. Bernhard stated that it is important to ensure that Quality Rated is everywhere. She presented a map showing that there are 76 counties where more than three-quarters of the child care providers are participating in Quality Rated. The two counties with no participating providers have no licensed child care. Overall, the map shows that high quality can be found just about everywhere in the state, with areas showing few or no Quality Rated providers most likely reflecting the population patterns in the area. Providers that have earned Quality Rated star ratings are distributed across the state, with the heaviest concentration in the metro Atlanta area, and a spottier presence in rural areas. She

noted that there are more Quality Rated programs in metro Atlanta, but that this is to be expected because about half of Georgia's children live in the metro Atlanta area. Mr. Davis asked why there aren't more participating centers in coastal counties. In response, Ms. Harper highlighted Baker County, a rural area with massive tracks of timber and farm land, stating that there are no eligible child care programs there mostly because the county population is very low and doesn't produce enough children to support the financial investment of opening a child care center. The same could be true for some of the coastal areas in southeast Georgia.

- Ms. Bernhard said DECAI has launched an intense, in-person, and multi-media campaign to inform all Quality Rated eligible providers that they must be 1-, 2-, or 3-star Quality Rated by December 31, 2020 in order to continue receiving CAPS. The Quality Rated and CAPS teams have been communicating the deadline for the past two years, and with two years to go, she encouraged everyone to help DECAL spread the message by telling Quality Rated eligible providers about the deadline and about the numerous support and technical assistance services DECAL provides to help them successfully navigate the process to earn a Quality Rated star rating by the 2020 deadline. The DECAL deadline messages have been delivered via in-person Q&A sessions held in each region at different days and times during the week to accommodate as many schedules as possible. The deadline has also been publicized via repeated and recurring messages on social media and webinars. In particular, Ms. Bernhard and Ms. Kafir have appeared in YouTube videos describing the deadline, supplemented by animated videos from Maximus, promoted on DECAL's social media portals and on the Maximus CAPS billing portal that providers frequently use.
- Reporting on subsidized Quality Rated child care program progress, Ms. Bernhard showed that 93% of children receiving Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies are in Quality Rated participating programs and 47% of those children are in programs that are Quality Rated star rated, with 27% of them in 2- or 3-star programs, which is good news. She noted that when DECAL began subsidizing Quality Rated programs in 2015 the numbers were much lower. DECAL originally did this through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, which had 33 Quality Rated providers serving about 500 children from birth to age 3. That model has evolved into the Quality Rated Subsidy Grant (QRSG) Program, funded by CCDF and serving more children, but with stricter requirements for the centers. Overall, 5% of children receiving subsidies are in a QRSG program. Ms. Bernhard reported that 121 centers across the state have 2,700 funded slots for children from birth to age 4. Of those, over 2500 children are currently served in Quality Rated programs across Georgia. Families can get help from DECAL in finding open slots in their area by calling 1-877-ALL-GAKIDS.
- Ms. Bernhard then introduced Brett Copeland, assistant director, child care at Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC), whose school has received a QRSG. He explained that CGTC has two campuses that serve 94% of all students. The campuses have on-campus lab schools that provide affordable, quality child care. Surveys found that 20% of students are single mothers and unaffordable child care is a barrier to them completing post-secondary education. Mr. Copeland discussed the College's enhanced ability to train students in early childhood care, to offer child care services to its student-parents, and to provide their children with high-quality care, thanks to the QRSG and DECAL's technical assistance. Ms. Johnson congratulated Mr. Copeland and his team for their passion and amazing work in applying practicality and common sense to solving poverty-related issues.

g. Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Update

- Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner of Pre-K and Instructional Supports reported on the steady increase in access and participation in the Summer Transition Program that is based on agency research showing a need to provide opportunities for children that weren't enrolled in Pre-K and those who still need support before kindergarten, despite having attended Pre-K. Over the past five years, DECAL has also targeted diverse families and students, particularly those dual language learners (DLLs) who speak languages other than English most of the time at home, for the Rising K and Rising Pre-K Programs. The summer programs provide skill-building instruction to prepare children emotionally and academically to enter Pre-K and kindergarten in the fall. The Rising K Program is a 6-week program for children from CAPS-eligible families who didn't attend Georgia's Pre-K but will be enrolling in kindergarten in the fall. DECAL also has a six-week Rising Pre-K Program administered in bilingual classrooms for children who are between ages 3 and 4 and whose home language is Spanish. Ms. Adams presented stats showing the number of classrooms delivering both programs. There were 16 children per class in 149 classrooms across the state for the Rising K Program and 62 classrooms serving 14 children per class in the Rising Pre-K Program. She said research shows that children who attend the six-week Rising K Program make significant gains in literacy and math to

ensure that kids are more ready for the experiences they will have when they enter kindergarten. The Rising Pre-K Program allows DECAL to provide better support to youngsters entering Pre-K and to understand how to provide better support to DLLs. It also serves as an incubator for teachers, offering intensive professional development around supporting the DLLs, and for DECAL staff to learn more about how to support programs that serve these families.

- Additionally, Ms. Adams pointed to an important family-support aspect of the Summer Transition program that applies the two-gen philosophy that the CAPS Program endorses. She explained that both programs have a family support coordinator who helps families with kindergarten transition including paperwork completion, scheduling screenings and referrals to other services, and providing educational resources. The transition programs also receive funding to support family engagement activities. Mr. Davis asked whether children in these programs would otherwise not be in a program. Ms. Adams explained that many of the children served during summers, particularly many who are in Rising Pre-K, have been at home with parents or another family member and have not been enrolled in out-of-home care previously.
- Ms. Adams updated the Board on DECAL's extensive efforts to engage and serve diverse families and students, particularly those who speak languages other than English most of the time at home. She reported on a successful pilot program at Scottdale Early Learning Center in Clarkston, GA, on how to work with a multilingual classroom. Clarkston has a large refugee population and the Center serves children from those families. The residents represent a range of nationalities and speak as many as 10 different languages.
- DECAL wants to know how better to support these diverse children and families and Scottdale is helping the agency figure it out. She also shared images from Summer Transition Programs across the state in various settings.
- As the 2018-19 Pre-K session begins, Ms. Adams announced that the state has allocated 84,000 slots for Georgia's Pre-K Program and approximately 3,900 classrooms. The program will serve 60% of all eligible 4-year-olds.
- Adams also announced that DECAL has received additional funding to expand its Early Language and Literacy Grants focused on infant-toddler language and literacy in child care beyond the 50 classrooms and 16 programs served in 2017 as a pilot. Based on that success, the program has funding to expand to 36 programs representing 129 classrooms consisting of 35 continuation classes, 13 expansion classes, and 81 new classes. Ms. Harper asked if the program involved the LENA technology system to record student-teacher interactions and help assess language and literacy progress. Ms. Adams confirmed that it does. And the data it gathers will be shared at a future meeting. Also, for the first time, some grants will also go to infant toddler language and literacy development in family child care learning homes. Ms. Adams noted in closing her presentation that all of the classrooms receiving the early language grant funding are located in 2- and 3-star Quality Rated providers, part of an effort to lift high-quality programs to another level.
- Ms. Adams introduced Bentley Ponder, Senior Director of Research and Policy Analysis, who provided an update on the status of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Grant DECAL received in 2016. That award was for Phase One of the Grant, covering research and evaluation planning. Based on the promising work DECAL presented in the initial phase, Georgia was one of only four states that received an award to implement those research plans in Phase Two. The grant is for \$1 million over four years. Ponder reported that DECAL will focus on infant and toddler care, which is a Departmental and state priority, but a rarely researched area. Specifically, DECAL will try to gain a better understanding of barriers and to identify the supports needed to enhance infant and toddler classroom quality; workforce quality; and family access to high-quality infant and toddler care. Findings from the research will be used to improve overall infant and toddler care, develop strategies to provide better supports to the workforce, increase access to high-quality care, and to expand DECAL's research capacity.

h. Child Care Services Update

- Amy Page, Process and Policy Manager of Child Care Services, explained the criminal records-check rule revisions DECAL proposes to enact, effective October 1, 2018, in order to align with stiffer federal CCDF requirements and related state legislation regarding employment vetting steps. The key revisions raise background-check requirements beyond local records checks to fingerprint-based checks for all employees of child care learning centers and family child care learning homes. The lone exception applies to residents of the homes under the age of 17. Other changes restrict portability of clearance letters; require provisional employees, directors, and permanent full-time employees to undergo more-comprehensive background

records checks. A separate set of rule revisions targeted to take effect by July 2019 requires providers to complete routine DECAL KOALA updates involving rates and center enrollment data more regularly, to facilitate more timely CAPS scholarship recipient enrollment and updates to vacancy status. Ms. Page explained that the Board will review all the proposals during lunch meetings.

Ms. Harper explained that the Board would vote on the proposed background-check rule revisions during the afternoon session, but should vote immediately on the revised KOALA reporting requirements. Following a motion by Ms. Purcell that was seconded by Mr. Davis and Ms. Boekhaus, the Board voted unanimously to permit DECAL to work on revising the KOALA update rules.

6. Committee Meetings and Lunch

Ms. Harper dismissed the board for lunch and committee meetings at 11:30 a.m.

7. Public Hearing

Ms. Harper called the Board meeting back to order at 1 p.m.

When the meeting reconvened, Ms. Harper turned it over to Christie Bearden, DECAL's legal services supervisor and designated hearing officer for the meeting, who called the Public Hearing part of the session to order and presided over the proceedings.

- Ms. Bearden explained that the U.S. Government set guidelines for each state in implementing a 2014 Child Care and Development Fund block grant. The purpose of the hearing is to allow the Board to receive all public comments on the proposed rule changes DECAL seeks to make in compliance with those federal guidelines. The changes cover five rules related to family child care learning homes (FCCLHs), eight rules covering child care learning centers (CCLCs), and two rules covering support centers. She also reminded the audience that the hearing is being audio recorded and entered into the minutes in order to preserve an exact record of the comments. Ms. Bearden then listed the procedural rules governing the session. She explained that the comments should pertain to the rule changes only. General comments and questions about other topics would be covered at another public comment session to be held later in the meeting. Speakers are given five minutes to give their comments on the proposed rule revisions.
- Joe Perreault of the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia was the only speaker during the public comment period.
- Mr. Perreault directed the Board to the written comments he submitted to them before the meeting. In his oral remarks, he said regulations like the ones proposed, despite the extreme importance of protecting children, still have an effect on the neighborhood quality of family child care and on family quality of child care, and on the economics of family child care. He said those making regulations should consider those contexts. Secondly, his group has a longstanding concern that the regulations will accelerate the decline in the number of FCCLHs in Georgia. He noted that in 2015 there were 2,162 licensed providers but as of May 2018 there are 1,623, representing a decline of about 500 providers. Mr. Perreault said his group appreciates the support it gets from DECAL in helping track the changes in the category, noting that 132 homes closed and 41 opened. He said "something's going on" that's causing the significant declines. Also, his group surveyed the licensed child care providers in the state and received 32 responses. Despite the small number he felt the comments were interesting and he had shared them with the Board in writing. He said the definition of 'employee' in the rule revisions applies to volunteers and people living in the home over the age of 17 who have no actual specific role in the FCCLH and that language did not conform to the standard definition of the word. He also questioned the definition of volunteer and the exemptions of the definition and felt they needed clarification. He also challenged the licensing requirement of a credential ranging from an associate's to master's degree as a prerequisite for opening a FCCLH. Mr. Perreault would prefer that the rules state that the operator can obtain a credential after opening a FCCLH. He noted that DECAL has agreed to create a program to do that; but it isn't acknowledged in the new rules. He said people who want to open homes could read the rules and give up after seeing such strict requirements. He also said complying with the rules is very expensive, based on the survey responses. He asked the Board to review and reconsider those changes.

Following Mr. Perreault's comments, Ms. Bearden recessed the hearing.

8. Committee Reports

The Board meeting then resumed with committee chairs delivering their reports:

a. Programs & Rules

- Ms. Howell reported for the committee on behalf of Ms. Johnson, who left after lunch. The committee heard about new services targeted to easing access to child care for families in vulnerable groups, such as the homeless and about the success of the summer nutrition program, which served over 4 million meals this year. Specifically, Ms. Kafir presented information about new services, mostly for the homeless population, to help with documentation difficulties when they try to access CAPS and other services. She explained that verbal documentation is now being accepted while the agency and its partners assist in gathering written verification. CAPS has also added a second staff person to handle scholarship processing, which is a massive undertaking. She discussed a website form for CAPS that anyone in the community can use. The form will be routed to the appropriate person to help resolve issues. Ms. Wagner expressed her view to the Committee that the frequent rule revisions have helped CAPS to be more family friendly and to facilitate enrollment. Ms. Adams mentioned that beginning after Labor Day the movement of classes occurs. Based on the information Georgia's Pre-K Program has on hand, she said administrators are able to set up classes as needed quickly. One of the ways the Pre-K program can gather information that can tell administrators how and where to set up programs is focus groups. Four focus groups will be held around the state that will provide data to set up waiting lists, tell the Pre-K team what the barriers are to getting into a Pre-K program, and about family factors such as what they are seeking in a program. The reasons classes don't fill are complex. Pam Stevens, who was introduced as the new Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services, has a lot of experience that is complementary to the program. The Committee is looking forward to the ideas from her and her amazing team. The Committee also received two reports on the Summer Food Programs. Sonja Adams from Nutrition Services said that there was great publicity. Tamika Boone said the 2018 Summer Program had 89 sponsors, 1,600 feeding sites, and served 4.4 million meals through the end of July, and the total could rise to 4.5 million by the end of August. Ms. Howell said she had an opportunity to see the school food service person in Carrollton and thank her for providing the services to children who don't get good nutrition in the summer. October 1 is the beginning of the fiscal year and there are 700 year-round institutions that will be providing food services during school year. There will be a conference for food service meal providers to get more information on what is required by the FDA. Farmers, sponsors, and others will meet with providers to discuss the requirements and strategies to be more efficient. Ms. Howell thanked the staff for keeping the Committee updated. Ms. Purcell asked whether the 700 year-round sites are outside of the school systems. Commissioner Jacobs explained that they are mostly part of child care centers and that the summer sites are usually at parks or other places where children gather during the summer. Ms. Harper stated her excitement about Ms. Stevens's new position.

b. System Reform

- Mr. Davis mentioned that Deputy Commissioner Kristin Bernhardt has been named one of University of Georgia's 40 Under 40. He reported that the System Reform Committee received updates on the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership funding, including the announcement that it was awarded \$4.4 million to serve 200 children and their families from July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019, representing \$3.5 million in federal funding and 20% or \$886,900 in state matching funds. He said it was significant that the state legislature appropriated the amount because in most other states, awardees have to scramble for support. He said it's worth highlighting that we have a legislature that has proven it is supportive of DECAL's programs. In June, DECAL applied for a 2.6 % cost-of-living adjustment to increase salaries and benefits for the Early Head Start partners. The amount requested is \$113,257. The money goes to teachers and other staff to support continuity of care and employee retention. He said the economy is bubbling along and that makes it tempting for employees to seek higher paying jobs. He said DECAL wants to retain them because continuity of care is important for early learners. Congress appropriated an increase in Head Start funding for federal fiscal year 2018. The appropriation includes funding to expand Early Head Start through a competitive application process. The federal budget is smaller than it was in the first round and it's very competitive. DECAL is preparing to apply to expand the successful Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership model in another area of the state. He said DECAL has selective criteria. It only wants areas with Quality Rated programs and there are more of them now. Mr. Davis asked how it is that DECAL is so successful in grant applications and he was told that it is because DECAL operates as a coordinated single state agency. He applauded this and the fact that DECAL is led by a bright Commissioner and has support from the Governor and legislature, who understand that results outrank politics. The Quality Rated team reported that it is transitioning to the third version of the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scales — ITERS-3. Programs submitting their portfolio

will be able to select either ITERS-R or ITERS-3 for their on-site classroom assessment until December 3, 2018. After this time all infant or toddler classroom assessments will be conducted with ITERS-3. ITERS-3 has a much stronger focus on teacher-child interactions and engagement. Assessor staff will be working with the authors of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) to field test the reliability of the latest version of the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale — FCCERS-3 — prior to its publication. Two staff members have been invited to share Georgia’s experiences transitioning to ECERS-3 and ITERS-3 and Georgia’s ERS Assessor onboarding and reliability system at the National ERS Conference in San Diego this October. Mr. Davis noted that Carol Hartman and Denise Jenson are getting national recognition for the work they’re doing and said he was glad to see the recognition and it is a point of pride and that having a nationally recognized early education program is an advantage for the state and also helps businesses decide about expanding and where to relocate. The Committee was also informed about the Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS), the state’s early childhood integrated data system which houses de-identified but matched and longitudinal data on the utilization of programs and services for children from birth to five. It houses data from DECAL, Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services-Division of Family and Children Services, and the Department of Education. He called it an impressive accomplishment. Though multiple agencies participate in CACDS, it is housed at DECAL. System Reform has a new team member, Darra Jackson, who serves as the agency’s CACDS coordinator. CACDS has a public website (www.gacacds.com) where anyone can find data and information about how children accessed key early childhood services and supports in their community. Over the coming year, CACDS will be working to make the data and reports that are available more user-friendly.

- Ms. Howell added that Commissioner Jacobs reminded everyone in the Programs and Rules Committee meeting that the Pre-K Teacher of the Year will be announced in September, and Pre-K Week is the first week of October. She encouraged Board members to go on the road and visit Pre-K classrooms during Pre-K Week. Also, Craig Detweiler, Chief Information Officer, reported on KOALA. She said that so much work has been put into it that she wanted to applaud Craig and his team for all they accomplished. Systems have been streamlined and combined so that it’s easier to use. Soon the regions will be changed to align with the regions that are already set up. Lastly KOALA has won the state award for innovation. She applauded that achievement and said it was a point of pride.

c. Budget & Finance

- Ms. Talton welcomed Messrs. Ringsrud and Rodgers. She reported that the Committee discussed the amended FY 2019 budget and the proposed 2020 budget, in preparation for the vote on approving it later in the meeting.

Following the Committee reports, Ms. Harper turned the meeting back over to Ms. Bearden for public comment on general matters outside the scope of the rule changes.

9. Public Comment

Ms. Bearden then reconvened the public comment portion of the meeting. No one stepped forward to make verbal comments about the rule changes, and the public hearing was closed.

10. Additional Board Actions/Business

Ms. Harper reconvened the meeting. She noted that among its duties, the Board is required by law to promulgate rules and regulations and to approve the budgets to be submitted to the Governor’s Office of Budget and Planning.

- Turning first to the revisions, she noted that the Board appreciates the work of the members of the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia and had reviewed their letter and their concerns that were presented during the Public Hearing. She then said that after considering Mr. Perreault’s comments, and consulting with legal counsel, the Board determined that the rules were written very carefully to comply with federal regulations so that the proposed language presented is in compliance with the federal regulations. She said the Board is working on a waiver of the rules until Oct. 1, but the regulations must be in place by that

date. With no meeting scheduled before the October 1 implementation deadline, the Board needed to decide the matter without further delays and to vote on the rules as presented.

The Board then considered the rule changes in three separate groups. No Board members offered additional comments on the proposed changes.

Mr. Davis made a motion to vote on the proposed amendments to Rules 290-2-3-.03; 290-2-3-.04; 290-2-3-.07; 290-2-3-.14; 290-2-3-.15; and 290-2-3-.21304,07.21 covering FCCLH staff background checks. Ms. Boekhaus seconded. The Board approved the FCCLH rule revisions unanimously.

Ms. Talton made a motion to vote on the proposed amendments to Rules 591-1-.02; 591-1-1-.09; 591-1-1-.13; 591-1-1-.16; 591-1-1-.29; 591-1-1-.31; 591-1-1-.38; and 591-1-1-.46, all covering CCLC staff background checks, and Ms. Howell seconded. The Board approved the CCLC rule revisions unanimously.

Ms. Purcell made a motion to vote on the proposed amendments to Rules 591-3-1-.03 and 591-3-1-.04 covering support centers that was seconded by Ms. Boekhaus. The board approved those revisions unanimously.

Ms. Harper then turned the Board's attention to the budget proposals under consideration for approval. She reported that the Budget and Finance Committee recommended that the Board approve the budgets.

Mr. Davis made a motion to accept the amended FY2019 budget and the proposed FY2020 budget that Ms. Howell seconded. The board accepted both budgets unanimously.

Quandra Collins, Executive Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner asked Board members to check their badges to ensure that they were not expired and to turn in their travel information.

Ms. Harper reminded the Board that the next meeting will take place November 15, 2018.

Ms. Harper adjourned the meeting at 1:43 p.m.

Susana Harper 11/15/18
Board Chair, Signature Date

Kathy B. Howell 11/15/18
Board Secretary, Signature Date