

**Board of Early Care and Learning**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**August 27, 2020**

**Attendees**

**Board Members:**

Kristy Beam, Jen Bennecke, Melissa Boekhaus, Debra Brock, Phil Davis (Vice Chair), Susan Harper (Chair), Kathy Howell, Theresa Magpuri-Lavell, Luann Purcell, Cristina Washell

**DECAL Staff:**

Commissioner Amy Jacobs, Rian Ringsrud, Susan Adams, Bentley Ponder, Randy Hudgins, Elisabetta Kasfir, Pam Stevens, Gregory Brown, Ira Sudman, Dennis Brice, Reg Griffin, Quandra Collins, Ben Appling, Carrie Ashbee, Larilyn Beyer, Laura Boham, Tamika Boone, Jennifer Bridgeman, Catherine Broussard, Jerry Brown, Jessie Bruno, Alethea Cicero-Brown, Kati Cosby, Jennie Couture, Karla Crawford, Catherine Cypert, Erin Darley, Kimberly Davis, Jennifer Delorme, Woody Dover, Carol Fordham, Shayna Funke, David Ginsburg, Jasmin Godding, Janice Harris, Anita Hasni, Leigh Ann Hendrix, Amy Hill, Michelle Hughes, Denise Jenson, Donna Johnson, Shawnell Johnson, Melinda Knowles, Marcy Maioli, Susan Maude, Barbara McWethy, Angela Melton, Lindsay Miller, Christi Moore, Sara Myers, Rob O'Callaghan, Jill O'Meara, Rhonda Parker, Jody Peskin, Martine Powe, Laura Reid, Anne Rein, April Rogers, Edward Rowell, Brenna Rutherford, Barbara Sanders, Brittany Seltrecht, Allison Setterlind, Angela Shelton, Marcie Singletary, Carrie Spangler, Margrett Stephens, Sonja Steptoe, Robin Stevens, Michelle Talley, Melvia Usury, Keturah Wafer, Laura Wagner, Mark Waits, Bridgette Washington, Jill West, Kori Woodward-Dickens, Liz Young, Sheryl Young-Wilhite

**Other Guests:**

Elizabeth Akindele, Roma Anderson, Cheryl Arkwright, Tambe Arline, Allison Armstrong, Lana Armstrong, Alba Avila, Uzma Azhar, Jennifer Bailey, Jamie Baker, Crystal Banks, Lisa Barnes, Kim Barnett, Jacqueline Barrington, Charlotte Battle, Tracy Baynes, Lisa Belliston, Laurel Benta, Chelsie Booker, Joye Bradley, Angela Brown, Trenise Brown, Janna Brumby, Arealandra Burton, Pamela Bynes, Gloria Calhoun, Mary-Anne Carter, Fanny Ceballos, Kanesa Clemons, Andrea Cline, Jennifer Cloud, DiAnne Coggins, George Cole, Melissa Cole, Elizangela Primo Collins, Cherie Colquitt, Debbie Combs, Brittany Cook, Dayana Cross, Cassandra Crum, Kena Culver, Rosa Darnell, Rosheda Darrisaw, Johnise Davis, Carolyn DeLuca, Dawn DeVirgilio, Yasmeen Diggs, Rita DiPenti, Devida Dixon, Willene Dopson, Dana Driggers, Antoinette Elliott, Joyce Ellis, Ilene Farley, Khadijah Farmer, Paquita Few, Deidra Fitzpatrick, Rochelle Forbes, Debra Fordham, Karen Fowler, Jana Fox, Dana Gardner, Kathy Garrett, Yolanda Godwin, Hanah Goldberg, Marjorie Goodson, Denise Green, Rosa Green, Shanda Green, Dorenda Grier, Kim Gruber, Leysi Guarnizo, Sally Hardin, Katelyn Harlander-Locke, Japera Hemming, Debbie Hodges, Doris Holden, Doreen Holmes, Jessica Holmes, Tabitha Howard, Tokela Huston, Shana Isaac, Heather Jacobson, Cynthia Jeffries, Chanel Jiles, Tamarra Johnson, Tamera Knight, Anna Kowalsky, Blanche Lamb, Katie Landes, Michelle Lank, Taneisha Levy, Marcia Lloyd, Mary Lyons, Tina Maynard, Elaine McCall, Regina McCurty, Debra McDaniel, Linda McDonald, Danae McNair, Lula Memminger, Beverly Mercer, Levet Miles, Ellaine Miller, Soraya Miller, Lucia Montes, Terenia Moody, Carolyn Morkeh, Irene Morrow, Rozina Muradali, Cherese Myree, Jordan Napier, Stacie Neal, Delceda Neasman, Lisa Newman, Marjorie Nicely, Lynda Odaro, Wande Okunoren-Meadows, Adeline Osorio, Deborah Payne, Charlotte Pelz, Esther Perez, Joe Perreault, Julie Phillips, Maggie Reeves, Yvonne Reeves, Katrina Reid, Ellen Reynolds, Pam Runkle, Rosmary Sabbetta, Argelia Sanchez, Joy Sanders, Lynn Schnitzer, Tyra Scott, Sarah Shinsky, Jennifer Shook, Lenora Singleton, Susan Smith, Tamisia Smith, Amy Southers, Cindy Spann, Brandi Swain, Jamarrion Tabor, Amanda Tarpley, Cassandra Taylor, Lakisha Taylor, Crystal Trempe, Carla Turner, Arbendette Van, JaNice Van Ness, Aura Vizcaya, Montrail Walker, Noni Walton, Kayla Washington,

Nikita Wells, Caroline White, Laura White, Ora Elaine Wiley, Donna Williams, Samantha Williams, Brigitte Willis, Jessica Woltjen, Keisha Wynn

The August 27, 2020, meeting of the Board of Early Care and Learning was held online via GoToWebinar.

At 9:04 a.m. Ms. Harper called the meeting to order and explained the procedures for holding a virtual public hearing about the proposed licensing rule changes.

Ms. Harper asked for a motion to accept the meeting agenda. Dr. Boekhaus moved to accept, and Ms. Purcell seconded. The Board accepted the agenda unanimously. Ms. Harper then asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 14, 2020, Board meeting. Ms. Bennecke moved to approve, and Mr. Davis seconded. The Board approved the minutes unanimously.

DECAL leaders provided updates about their areas of responsibility.

- Commissioner Amy Jacobs informed the Board that DECAL's main office reopened on June 4 with a skeleton crew and limited hours. She praised DECAL employees for their teamwork and productivity working from home during the ongoing public health emergency.

The Commissioner gave an update on the Short Term Assistance Benefit for Licensed Entities (STABLE) grants, highlighting how the funds were disbursed and how providers used them. All licensed Child Care Learning Centers (CCLC) and Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH) were eligible to apply. DECAL disbursed a total of \$38,357,327 to 3,764 providers, representing 85% of those eligible. DECAL has more funds from the CARES Act to disburse and has engaged the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIIOG) to survey participating providers about how they used the funds and what their future needs are. The survey is complete, and results should be available later in September.

DECAL will receive between \$17 million and \$19 million for a program called Supporting Onsite Learning for Virtual Education (SOLVE) from the Governor's discretionary fund for education-related expenses. The Commissioner gave an overview of the program which will provide approximately 5,000 scholarships for school age children in public school districts that are using only a distance learning model. CAPS will administer the program.

- Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration Rian Ringsrud reviewed DECAL's quarterly budget and expenditures which coincided with the end of the state fiscal year 2020. DECAL spent all available funds without overspending in any category or from any funding source. Expenditures exceeded \$1 billion for the first time because of a prior increase in CCDF funding and the CARES Act funds. Mr. Ringsrud also presented the amended budget for fiscal year 2021 and the proposed budget for fiscal year 2022 which require Board approval and are due to the Governor's office on September 1. He also summarized the results of the emergency feeding program that DECAL oversaw between the middle of March and the end of June. Nutrition Services recruited 49 sponsors who served more than five million meals in 62 counties across the state.
- Deputy Commissioner for Pre-K and Instructional Supports Susan Adams and her team have developed three instructional models that Georgia's Pre-K providers may select from for the 2020–2021 school year. About 62% of Pre-K classrooms are following a traditional instructional model where all students attend on site each day with extra procedures in place to mitigate the spread of the virus. About 12% have adopted a hybrid model in which children attend on site in smaller groups for part of the school day or part of the week and receive the rest of their instruction at home from their parents. The remainder have adopted a full distance-learning model. Ms. Adams also announced the six finalists for the Pre-K Teacher of the Year (TOTY) award and described the selection process. One winner from a public school and one from a private child care center will be selected and announced in early October. Pre-K Week will take place virtually this year during the week of October 5–9, and Ms. Adams invited Board members to participate by reading or recording a story for 4-year olds. In addition to the survey of

STABLE grant recipients, Ms. Adams reported on other research that is underway to assess the impact of the pandemic.

- Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships Bentley Ponder reported that, because of the pandemic, the deadline for all CAPS providers to become Quality Rated has been extended from December 31, 2020 until at least December 31, 2021. As of July 99% of children with CAPS scholarships are enrolled with providers that participate in the Quality Rated program, and 79% are enrolled with providers who have achieved a star rating. Quality Rated classroom observations had to be suspended in March, but 93% of providers who had signed up to be observed by June 30, 2020 continued to engage with Quality Rated. DECAL offered providers in Cohorts 1 and 2 the opportunity to achieve a temporary (one-year) 1-star rating based on submitting a portfolio with the maximum quality points. In the next couple of months, Quality Rated will offer this option to providers in Cohorts 3 and 4 and is also in the process of developing an additional option that will also allow providers to receive a temporary (one-year) 2-star rating. Dr. Ponder also announced that DECAL awarded five Two-Generation Innovation grants to help community partnerships in five counties pilot or expand programs that connect parents who are themselves students with high-quality early learning for their young children.
- Director of Research and Policy Analysis Randy Hudgins reported on the ongoing data collection and analysis his team performs to support DECAL leadership in decision-making. As of August 19, 67% of child care providers were reporting that they are open. The research team reports open vs. closed status by provider type (CCLC or FCCLH) and region; by Quality Rating; and by whether providers have children with CAPS scholarships enrolled. There have been few cases of COVID-19 reported in child care settings. The research team tracks these by region and by date.
- Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs Elisabetta Kasfir informed Board members that the CAPS priority group for parents working in essential services was recently expanded from 500 slots to 1,000. Of the scholarships awarded so far, about 80% have gone to parents who work in medical care or child care. Ms. Kasfir reviewed the emergency payment policies to support CAPS providers that DECAL implemented in the spring. DECAL has allowed providers, whether they were open or closed, to bill for CAPS scholarships for children who were enrolled but not in regular attendance. Beginning September 14 CAPS will pay the appropriate rate based on the type of care provided or the school calendar. Beginning October 26 this policy will apply only to providers that are open. CAPS is also introducing a new emergency payment policy to support school age children who are engaged in distance learning at a child care center. Data collected by the research team show that 75% of CAPS providers are open vs. 56% of non-CAPS providers and that more than 80% of providers with the largest number of CAPS scholarships are open. However, the percentage of children billed as actually present, at open child care providers, has held steady at roughly 50% for the past eight weeks. Ms. Kasfir pointed to this data as evidence that the CAPS emergency payment policies are providing significant support to providers and is still warranted based on lower than typical attendance rates. DECAL also continues to waive the approved activity requirements for parents who have experienced COVID-19 related job losses or hours reduction when their scholarships come up for renewal.
- Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services (CCS) Pam Stevens set the context for the rule changes that the Board would be asked to approve. CCS is responsible, she said, for reviewing the rules on a regular basis to make sure they are up-to-date and current with all the research and science around keeping children healthy and safe. To minimize impact to providers, rule changes are implemented just once a year. The focus of this year's review of rules focused on nutrition and feeding, with an emphasis on preventing choking, a leading cause of death among toddlers. CCS has held two webinars to introduce the rule changes to providers and has been receiving public comments for several weeks. Ms.

Stevens reviewed each of the proposed rule changes she had introduced to the Board at its February 20 meeting. Ms. Stevens also introduced several new rule changes related to hygiene and required reporting that CCS has developed in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Following the division reports, Ms. Harper turned the meeting over to Legal Services Supervisor Gregory Brown, the designated officer presiding over the public hearing regarding the proposed rule changes. At 11:06 a.m. Mr. Brown explained the procedures for hearing public comments and called the public hearing to order. Board Liaison Quandra Collins reported that no members of the public were physically present in the Oak Conference Room to comment. Ms. Collins read one comment submitted through the GoToWebinar chat function. As there were no other comments, Mr. Brown adjourned the public hearing at 11:11 a.m. and turned the meeting over to Ms. Harper.

Ms. Harper led the Board to vote on each of the proposed rule changes. The Board approved all the rule changes unanimously.

Ms. Harper then asked Ms. Collins if anyone was physically present in the Oak Conference room wanting to make any general comments to the Board. Ms. Collins replied that there was no one physically present who wished to speak. She read one comment received through the GoToWebinar chat function.

Ms. Harper invited Board members to discuss the Amended 2021 budget and/or the 2022 budget. There was no discussion. At 11:28 a.m. the Board approved both budgets unanimously.

At 11:28 a.m. Ms. Harper announced the proposed dates for 2021 Board Meetings. These are February 18, 2021; May 20, 2021; August 26, 2021; and November 18, 2021. Ms. Washell made a motion to adopt the proposed dates, and Ms. Beam seconded that motion. The dates were adopted unanimously.

At 11:30 a.m. Ms. Harper asked if there was any other business for the Board, and, there being none, she announced the date of the next meeting, November 19, 2020, and adjourned the meeting.