

**Enhancing School Readiness**  
**Increasing Quality and Access**  
**Supporting Workforce Development**  
**Coordinating Services**



**Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning**

**BRIGHT FROM THE START**

# **2019 ANNUAL REPORT**



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# A Message from Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear Friends of DECAL,

Welcome to the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning 2019 Annual Report, a report that will illustrate how State Fiscal Year 2019 was a banner year for Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). As DECAL's Commissioner, I'm proud to share the work we have accomplished...in conjunction with many of you...to enhance the health, safety, and quality education of Georgia's children, birth to five years old.



This annual report highlights our programs and services, accomplishments, and financial performance in SFY 2019. Our work this year has focused on:

## Enhancing School Readiness

*Goal: Contribute measurably to school readiness for children birth to age five*

## Increasing Quality and Access

*Goal: Increase the number of high quality, affordable child care programs statewide thereby improving access and better addressing the needs of all children*

## Supporting Workforce Development

*Goal: Develop, engage, and retain a capable, well trained, and effective workforce for the early care and education industry and for DECAL*

## Coordinating Services

*Goal: Build a framework that aligns and coordinates DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age eight*

I attribute our successful year to the dedicated child care providers who care for Georgia's children day in and day out; to the valuable stakeholders who collaborate with us for the good of Georgia's children; to the passionate staff of DECAL professionals; to the Board of Early Care and Learning, DECAL's board that advises and supports our work; and to Georgia's Governor and state policy makers.

I thank them...and you...for helping to make SFY 2019 and DECAL's first 15 years substantively productive in enhancing the well-being of the state's most valuable asset, our children.

If you have any questions or comments about items contained in this report or ideas of how DECAL can continue to serve Georgia's children, families, and early care and education community, contact me at [amy.jacobs@decalfga.gov](mailto:amy.jacobs@decalfga.gov).

Sincerely,

Amy M. Jacobs  
Commissioner

# About Us

## Mission

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning enhances children's early education experience to promote their academic, social-emotional, and physical development in partnership with families, communities, the early care and education industry, and stakeholders.



## Vision

Every child in Georgia will have access to high quality early care and education regardless of family income or location.

## Services

DECAL is the department of state government that supports child care providers in preparing Georgia's children and their families for school. Our services focus on quality child care, early education, brain development, nutritional programs, and tools and resources for families. We work to equip early care and education professionals with enhanced credentials, appropriate teaching strategies, and best practices in working with children. We also collaborate with state policymakers and stakeholders to develop and implement policies that ensure access to quality care for all Georgia children.

# By the Numbers

COMPLETED  
CRIMINAL RECORD  
CHECKS WITHIN TWO  
BUSINESS DAYS FOR  
APPROXIMATELY  
**65,500**  
CHILD CARE WORKERS

PROCESSED  
**82,534**  
APPLICATIONS FOR  
CHILDCARE  
AND PARENT SERVICES

RATED OVER  
**800**  
EARLY EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS AT  
1, 2, OR 3 STARS

SERVED OVER  
**1,000**  
INFANTS AND TODDLERS  
AND THEIR FAMILIES  
DURING THE FIRST  
5 YEARS  
OF DECAL'S EARLY HEAD  
START CHILDCARE  
PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Supported  
**79,976,823**  
meals served  
through the  
Child and Adult Care  
Food Program

Processed  
**19,789**  
grant payments and contract  
payments to  
**2,257**  
vendors through our  
Finance Division

The Head Start Collaboration Office partnered with the GA Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics to help DECAL host Child Care Safety training for over **100 providers statewide.**

SERVED MORE THAN  
**80,000**  
STUDENTS IN  
**3,860**  
GEORGIA'S PRE-K  
CLASSROOMS

IN  
STATE  
FISCAL  
YEAR **2019**  
DECAL

AWARDED MORE THAN  
**\$2.4M**  
TO **2,646**  
UNIQUE PARTICIPANTS  
IN DECAL SCHOLARS

Enhanced and expanded Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs) from four areas to six regions each with an Early Education Community Partnership Coordinator serving all **159 counties.**

*Supported*  
**75,839**  
unique children through  
active  
CAPS Scholarships

Processed  
**173**  
new DECAL hires in our  
Human Resources Division

The Foundation secured more than **\$750,000**, which was directly invested back into Georgia's early care and learning classrooms.

Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialists completed  
**1,148**  
visits to child care programs

SUPPORTED  
**4,815,922**  
MEALS SERVED  
THROUGH THE  
SUMMER FOOD SERVICE  
PROGRAM

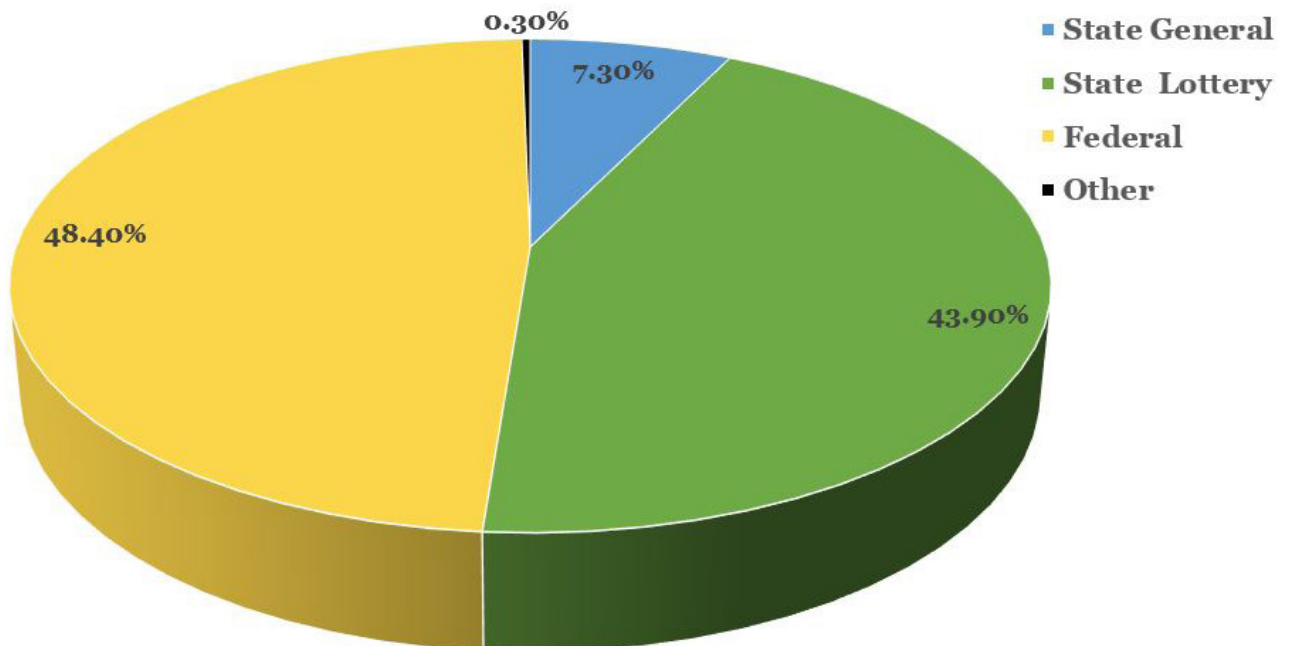
*Conducted*  
**14,525**  
visits to child care programs to ensure that licensing standards have been met

# Financial Highlights

## FISCAL YEAR 2019 BUDGET BY FUNDING SOURCE

<b>State General</b>	<b>\$61,514,778</b>
<b>State Lottery</b>	<b>\$367,286,459</b>
<b>Federal</b>	<b>\$447,424,715</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>\$2,998,146</b>
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$879,224,100</b>

## DECAL APPROPRIATION BY FUNDING SOURCE



## FISCAL YEAR 2019 BUDGET BY PROGRAMS

<b>Child Care Services</b>	<b>\$283,930,600</b>
<b>Pre-K +(HS)</b>	<b>\$367,446,620</b>
<b>Quality Initiatives</b>	<b>\$78,772,395</b>
<b>Nutrition</b>	<b>\$149,074,485</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$879,224,100</b>

## FISCAL YEAR 2019 GRANTS

- **Preschool Development Grant: (\$2.9 million for one year)** Funding from the Preschool Development Grant Birth to Five enables DECAL to design and implement activities to help ensure that Georgia’s children from birth to age five have equal access to high quality early childhood care and education. Although all children and families in Georgia benefit, the activities in the grant target the needs of children and families from vulnerable and underserved populations.
- **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant: (\$3.7 million a year for five years; currently in year one)** The Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant provides infants, toddlers, and their families access to high quality early education and comprehensive services by funding Early Head Start programs in child care learning centers and family child care learning homes.
- **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Research Grant: (\$250,000 a year for four years; currently in year two)** Funding from the CCDF Research Grant is enabling DECAL, the lead agency for the CCDF in Georgia, to create a plan (including studies, surveys, evaluations, etc.) to determine how effectively and efficiently the state is using monies from the CCDF.
- **USDA Farm to School Grant: (\$18,750 for one year)** Funding enabled DECAL to co-host the 7th Farm to School and Early Care and Education Summit in June 2019. More than 200 attendees, consisting of educators, child nutrition organizations, community partners, farmers, and food service professionals, shared information on implementing and accessing fresh, local, and quality meals for children in their communities and increasing gardening and nutritional education opportunities.
- **Child and Adult Care Food Service Program (CACFP) Meal Service Training Grant: (\$100,000 for two years; currently in year two)** Grant funds awarded by USDA are enabling DECAL to host trainings for CACFP organizations on planning and preparing healthy meal options that follow the updated meal patterns.

# Enhancing School Readiness

## Goal: Contribute measurably to school readiness for children birth to age five

In SFY 2019 the lottery funded **Georgia's Pre-K Program** served more than 80,000 children. Since its inception in 1992, the program has served more than 1.6 million children in a high quality learning environment to prepare them for Kindergarten.

During the eighth annual **Georgia Pre-K Week** in October 2018 more than 138 state leaders made 200+ visits to Pre-K classrooms to raise awareness about the state's innovative preschool program.



Researchers finalized the most current report from the Georgia Pre-K Program longitudinal study, commissioned by the Georgia General Assembly in 2011. The report focuses on children in the second grade who had attended Georgia's Pre-K Program when they were four. The second-grade results make clear that Georgia's investment in early education is paying off and should continue. The students continued to gain skills and overall were still performing at or slightly above the mean at the end of second grade.

DECAL's Summer Transition Program offered **66 classes** for Rising Pre-K students and **156 classes** for Rising Kindergarten students serving approximately **3,420 children**.

As an **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership** grantee, DECAL oversaw the delivery of comprehensive Early Head Start services to approximately 200 children under three years of age. These services included health, early education, nutrition, mental health, and family support services.





# Increasing Quality and Access

**Goal: Increase the number of high quality, affordable child care programs statewide thereby improving access and better addressing the needs of all children**



DECAL's Child Care Services consultants conducted more than **14,500 visits** to the **4,500+ child care programs** in Georgia to ensure they were caring for children in safe, healthy, and nurturing environments.

DECAL's Legal Unit completed criminal record checks within two business days for approximately 65,500 child care workers.

DECAL staff rated more than 800 early education programs through **Quality Rated**, Georgia's rating system to improve and communicate the quality of child care and early learning programs.

The Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program:

- Provided child care scholarships to **75,000+ children**
- Paid early education programs more than \$227.6 million so eligible families could work or go to school
- Processed **82,000+ new CAPS applications**
- Renewed **27,000 scholarships** for families to remain in the program



Quality Rated Subsidy Grant Program (provides 2- and 3-star Quality Rated providers higher reimbursement rates for CAPS eligible infants and toddlers):

- Provided full-day care to **3,819 children**
- Paid 137 early education programs **\$24.2 million** to provide care for eligible children

DECAL expanded its network of coaches statewide through Georgia SEEDS (**Social Emotional Early Development Strategies**) for Success and established the SEEDS for Success Pyramid Model Grant to help early learning programs improve Pre-K and preschool classroom climate; prevent and reduce challenging behaviors; and reduce suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary discipline practices. DECAL awarded **\$436,000** to **18 child care programs** to implement the **Pyramid Model**.

DECAL's Inclusion Unit doubled in size. The unit 1. Supports early childhood professionals and families in resolving and reducing challenging behaviors, and 2. Helps child care programs effectively include ALL children, regardless of disabilities, in their classrooms. The unit launched an **Inclusion and Behavior Support Helpline** as a resource for early childhood professionals and families.

DECAL provided 43 child care programs grants totaling almost \$1.9 million to implement the **LITTLE (Lifting Infants and Toddlers Through Language-rich Environments)** program. The grants helped improve the quality of care provided to infants and toddlers.

# Supporting Workforce Development

**Goal: Develop, engage, and retain a capable, well trained, and effective workforce for the early care and education industry and for DECAL**

To help reach this important goal, DECAL:



Awarded more than **\$2.4 million in scholarships and incentives** to 2,646 unique participants in the DECAL Scholars program.

**Trained 273 PLC facilitators**, 109 of whom have become Certified PLC Facilitators, through the Professional Learning Community (PLC) Facilitator Initiative.

Increased the number of users in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) by 16.44% resulting in a total of **106,334 users**.

Successfully rolled out GaPDS Phase II, which includes all aspects of Georgia Training Approval and provides all state approved trainers with the ability to manage training registrations.

**Approved 192 new trainers** and **1,222 new trainings** through Georgia Training Approval.

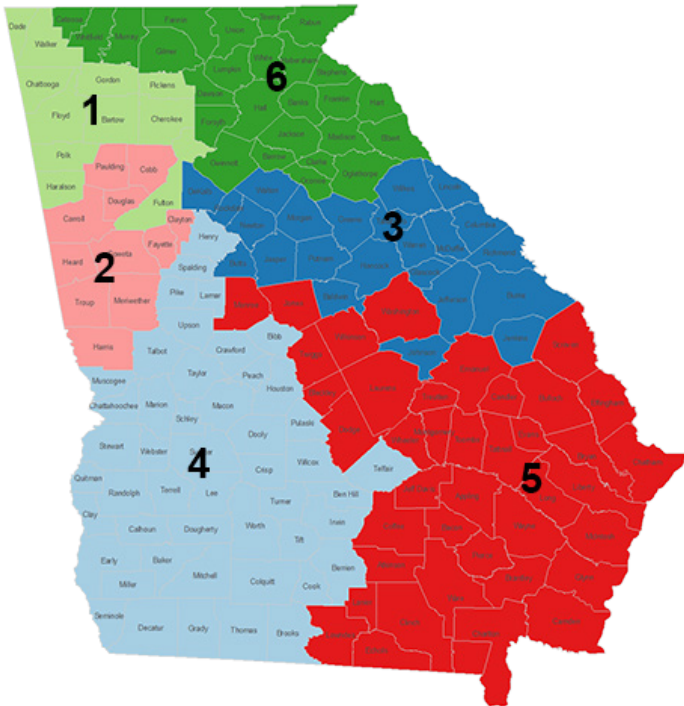
Developed a Coach Designation to acknowledge skilled early learning coaches in Georgia, with 30 coaches receiving a designation in the first pilot round.

**Trained 2,280 teachers** to use the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) to complete lesson planning through the state's child care resource and referral (CCR&R) network.



# Coordinating Services

**Goal: Build a framework that aligns and coordinates DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age eight**



DECAL aligned all divisions (CCS, Pre-K, Quality Rated, Early Education Community Partnerships) into **six regions** to better coordinate DECAL programs and services across the state.

DECAL's Information Technology Unit (IT) enhanced the **KOALA Provider Portal** allowing child care providers to update their profiles, pay license fees, submit and receive results of Criminal Records Checks, view reports, pay enforcement fines, etc. The self-service website is available 24/7.

IT deployed significant **enhancements to comprehensive background checks** to comply with changes in federal legislation.

IT began moving DECAL's customer and other critical applications to **Microsoft Azure Cloud**.

DECAL enhanced and expanded the **Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs)** from four localized areas to six regions serving all 159 Georgia counties. Work in each region is spearheaded by an Early Education Community Partnership Coordinator

DECAL administered federally funded **Child Nutrition Programs** in 27 out of the 33 (81%) Georgia counties with a food insecurity rate of 20% or higher and in 94 out of 115 (82%) Georgia counties with reported adult obesity rates of 30% or higher.

DECAL supported 79,976,823 meals served through the **Child and Adult Care Food Program** and with partners across Georgia, supported 4,815,922 meals served through the **Summer Food Service Program**.



# Executive Cabinet



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# Board of Early Care and Learning

**Drew Hunt, Savannah**  
First Congressional District

**Susan Harper, Albany**  
Second Congressional District  
(Chair)

**Kathy Howell, Carrollton**  
Third Congressional District  
(Secretary)

**Phil Davis, Stone Mountain**  
Fourth Congressional District  
(Vice Chair)

**Kristy Beam, EdD, Atlanta**  
Fifth Congressional District

**Vacant**  
Sixth Congressional District

**Kristin Morrissey, Cumming**  
Seventh Congressional District

**Luann Purcell, EdD, Warner Robins**  
Eighth Congressional District

**Cristina Washell, EdD, Cleveland**  
Ninth Congressional District

**Theresa Magpuri-Lavell, EdD, Milledgeville**  
Tenth Congressional District

**Jen Bennecke, Atlanta**  
Eleventh Congressional District

**Vacant**  
Twelfth Congressional District

**Dr. Melissa Boekhaus, Smyrna**  
Thirteenth Congressional District

**Debra Brock, Calhoun**  
Fourteenth Congressional District





# Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning

BRIGHT FROM THE START

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