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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sponsors needed to combat hunger among children next summer

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) served 4.6 million meals during Summer 2014

Atlanta, Ga., (December 2, 2014) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is looking for eligible organizations to serve as sponsors of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The SFSP is a nutrition program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that serves children healthy meals during the summer months when school is not in session.

“Providing healthy meals to children during the summer months is critical to the continued development and overall health and wellness of Georgia’s youngest learners,” said Falita Flowers, DECAL’s Director of Nutrition Services. “The success of the Summer Food Service Program is directly impacted by the organizations that partner with the state as sponsors to ensure children have access to nutritious meals throughout the summer.”

The SFSP reimburses non-profit and government organizations that provide free meals to eligible children in low-income areas during the summer. “While we saw a significant increase in meals served during the summer of 2014, there is room for and a need for growth. 4.6 million meals served is no small feat, but to reach all children in need throughout Georgia, we need more organizations willing to sponsor the program in their communities.”

The following entities can qualify to serve as sponsors: public or private nonprofit schools; universities, colleges or camps; units of local government; private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based organizations considered tax exempt by the IRS. Sponsors can operate the program and feed children at various sites such as schools, churches, recreation centers, community and migrant centers and other areas where children congregate. Mobile meal sites are also an option for sponsors – particularly those in rural areas of the state.

Sponsors are reimbursed according to federal guidelines for the meals they serve. Sponsors can prepare and serve meals themselves, receive bulk items from a vendor, or contract with a food service management company to prepare meals for the program.

Sponsors receive training regarding the application process; setting up and operating a successful SFSP; nutrition education; and they receive technical assistance during the time the program is operating.

For more information on becoming an SFSP sponsor, visit DECAL's website at <http://www.decal.ga.gov/BftS/SFSPBecomingASponsor.aspx> or contact the Summer Food Service Program team at DECAL toll free at 1-855-550-SFSP (7377) or via email, SFSP@decal.ga.gov. In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

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About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages the voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.