

FFY2025-2027 Child Care and Development Fund State Plan

Section 9: Family Outreach and Consumer Education

CCDF consumer education requirements facilitate parental choice in child care arrangements, support parents as child care consumers who need information to make informed choices regarding the services that best suit their family's needs, and the delivery of resources that can support child development and well-being. Lead Agency consumer education activities must provide information for parents receiving CCDF assistance, the general public, and, when appropriate, child care providers. Lead Agencies should use targeted strategies for each group to ensure tailored consumer education information and take steps to ensure they are effectively reaching all individuals, including those with limited English proficiency and those with disabilities.

In this section, Lead Agencies address their consumer education practices, including details about their child care consumer education website, and the process for collecting and maintaining a record of parental complaints.

9.1 Parental Complaint Process

Lead Agencies must maintain a record of substantiated parental complaints against child care providers and make information regarding such complaints available to the public on request. Lead Agencies must also provide a detailed description of the hotline or similar reporting process for parents to submit complaints about child care providers; the process for substantiating complaints; the manner in which the Lead Agency maintains a record of substantiated parental complaints; and ways that the Lead Agency makes information on such parental complaints available to the public on request. Lead Agencies are not required to limit the complaint process to parents.

9.1.1 Parental complaint process

- a. Describe the Lead Agency's hotline or similar reporting process through which parents can submit complaints about child care providers, including a link if it is a Web-based process: *Parents may call the published child care services telephone number or use the email address as found on the Lead Agency's website at [Contact Us - Child Care Services \(ga.gov\)](#). An intake consultant will speak to or email the parent to determine if there are potential rule violations associated with the parent's concerns. If there are potential violations, an intake will be entered identifying the rule violations, the program, and person(s) involved, and the complaint will be assigned for investigation.*
- b. Describe how the parental complaint process ensures broad access to services for families that speak languages other than English: *Through a statewide contract for translation services, the state can provide translation services over the phone for French, Italian, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Hemispheric Indigenous Languages, Chinese, Hmong, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Khmer (Cambodian) Thai, Laotian, Mandarin, Arabic, African Dialects, Russian, and Polish. In addition, Google translate can be used for email content translation.*
- c. Describe how the parental complaint process ensures broad access to services for persons with disabilities: *The Lead Agency's website is accessible on any device through a web browser. Information can be accessed through text reads and audio scanners. The Lead Agency provides multiple ways for parental complaints to be submitted to the*

agency for review and investigation.

- d. For complaints about providers, including CCDF providers and non-CCDF providers, does the Lead Agency have a process and timeline for screening, substantiating, and responding to complaints, including information about whether the process includes monitoring?

Yes. If yes, briefly describe: *An intake consultant will speak to or email the parent to determine if there are potential rule violations associated with the parent's concerns. All calls and emails are responded to within 24-48 hours. If there are potential violations, an intake will be entered identifying the rule violations, the program, and person(s) involved, and it will be assigned for investigation. An investigation is conducted for all alleged potential rule and regulation violations, and initiation timeframes are based on the severity of those violations ranging from 24 hours to 30 days. The assigned consultant visits with the program and gathers information concerning the alleged rule violation(s), including a review of documentation, observation and inspection of the facility and equipment, and staff and child interviews, if applicable. In addition, contacts are made with other agencies/entities who may also be involved in the investigation (i.e., Department of Family and Children Services, local/state police). Medical documentation is requested for serious incidents/injuries, and written statements are requested from parties who may also be involved. Once all evidence is gathered, the consultant determines, based on Georgia statute, if there is preponderance of evidence that a rule was violated. If a preponderance of evidence is present, then the allegation is substantiated. Any rule violation is cited on a visit report. Investigations are given a due date of 30 business days; however, if there are parallel investigations by other agencies, the Lead Agency may determine that the investigation remains open until the other agencies make their determinations.*

No.

- e. For substantiated parental complaints, who maintains the record for CCDF and non-CCDF providers? *Violations of child care rules that resulted from substantiated parental or general public complaints are available on the Lead Agency's website for 60 months. Since 2004, electronic records on substantiated and unsubstantiated complaint investigations are maintained indefinitely. Paper records are maintained for three years at the Lead Agency's office. If the substantiated complaint results in an Adverse Action, after the appeal process has passed, the Adverse Actions are published for 60 months.*
- f. Describe how information about substantiated parental complaints is made available to the public; this information can include the consumer education website discussed in subsection 9.2: *Substantiated complaints are available to the public on the Lead Agency's website for 60 months. Any Adverse Actions resulting from substantiated complaints are available to the public on the Lead Agency's website for 60 months.*

9.2 Consumer Education Website

Lead Agencies must provide information to parents, the general public, and child care providers through a State or Territory website, which is consumer-friendly and easily accessible for families who speak languages other than English and persons with disabilities. The website must:

- Include information to assist families in understanding the Lead Agency's policies and procedures, including licensing child care providers;
- Include monitoring and inspection reports for each provider and, if available, the quality of each provider;
- Provide the aggregate number of deaths, serious injuries, and the number of cases of substantiated child abuse that have occurred in child care settings;
- Include contact information for local CCR&R organizations to help families access additional information on finding child care; and
- Include information on how parents can contact the Lead Agency and other organizations to better understand the information on the website.

9.2.1 Consumer-friendly website

Does the Lead Agency ensure that its consumer education website is consumer-friendly and easily accessible?

- Provide the URL for the Lead Agency's consumer education website homepage:
<https://www.decal.ga.gov/> <https://families.decal.ga.gov/>
- Does the Lead Agency certify that the consumer education website ensures broad access to services for families who speak languages other than English?

 Yes.

 No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*
- Does the Lead Agency certify that the consumer education website ensures broad access to services for persons with disabilities?

 Yes.

 No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*

9.2.2 Additional consumer education website links

Provide the direct URL/website link for the following:

- Provide the direct URL/website link to how the Lead Agency licenses child care providers:
[Starting a Child Care Program](#)
- Provide the direct URL/website link to the processes for conducting monitoring and inspections of child care providers: [Child Care Services Policies and Procedures \(ga.gov\)](#)
- Provide the direct URL/website link to the policies and procedures related to criminal background checks for staff members of child care providers: [Criminal Records Check \(ga.gov\)](#)

- d. Provide the direct URL/website link to the offenses that prevent individuals from being employed by a child care provide: [crcpolicy.pdf \(ga.gov\)](#)

9.2.3 Searchable list of providers

- a. The consumer education website must include a list of all licensed providers searchable by ZIP code.

- i. Does the Lead Agency certify that their consumer education website includes a list of all licensed providers searchable by ZIP code?

Yes.

No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*

- ii. Provide the direct URL/website link to the list of child care providers searchable by ZIP code: LAST TIME WE SAID <http://www.qualityrated.org/> and <https://caps.dec.state.ga.us/en/CAPSCaregiverVisits/>

- iii. In addition to the licensed child care providers that must be included in your searchable list, are there additional providers included in the Lead Agency’s searchable list of child care providers? Check all that apply:

License-exempt center-based CCDF providers

License-exempt family child care (FCC) CCDF providers

License-exempt non-CCDF providers

Relative CCDF child care providers

Other (e.g., summer camps, public pre-Kindergarten). Describe: *Local school systems (with Georgia’s Pre-K classes); Head Start (with classes blended with Georgia’s Pre-K Program or that are participating in Quality Rated or both); government owned and operated; technical schools; universities. NOTE: there is a formatting error for the table below regarding ages of children served – We are not able to access those boxes to click.*

- b. Identify what additional (optional) information, if any, besides the required name and location of the child care provider, is available in the searchable results by ZIP code. Check the box when information is provided.

Provider Information Available in Searchable Results					
	All licensed providers	License-exempt CCDF center-based providers	License-exempt CCDF family child care home providers	License-exempt non-CCDF providers	Relative CCDF providers
Contact information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enrollment capacity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hours, days, and months of operation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provider education and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Languages spoken by the caregiver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring reports	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Willingness to accept CCDF certificates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ages of children served	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specialization or training for certain populations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Care provided during nontraditional hours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- c. Identify any other information searchable on the consumer education website for the child care provider type listed below and then, if checked, describe the searchable information included on the website.
- i. All licensed providers. Describe: *Accreditation status, meals served, transportation information, fees charged, compliance status, program environment, activities offered, profit status, rates and fees, curriculum, liability insurance, and family engagement*
 - ii. License-exempt CCDF center-based providers. Describe: *Accreditation status, meals served, transportation information, fees charged, compliance status, program environment, activities offered, profit status, rates and fees, curriculum, liability insurance, and family engagement*
 - iii. License-exempt CCDF family child care providers. Describe: *Enter Text*
 - iv. License-exempt, non-CCDF providers. Describe: *Accreditation status, meals served, transportation information, fees charged, compliance status, program environment, activities offered, profit status, rates and fees, curriculum, liability insurance, and family engagement*
 - v. Relative CCDF providers. Describe: *Enter Text*
 - vi. Other. Describe: *Enter Text*

9.2.4 Provider-specific quality information

Lead Agencies must identify specific quality information on each child care provider for whom they have this information. Provider-specific quality information must only be posted on the consumer education website if it is available for the individual child care provider.

- a. What specific quality information does the Lead Agency provide on the website?

- i. Quality improvement system (QIS)
 - ii. National accreditation
 - iii. Enhanced licensing system
 - iv. Meeting Head Start/Early Head Start Program Performance Standards
 - v. Meeting pre-Kindergarten quality requirements
 - vi. School-age standards
 - vii. Quality framework or quality improvement system
 - viii. Other. Describe: *Family engagement practices. The Lead Agency used funds from its PDG-5 renewal grant to develop The Family Friendly Licensing Dashboard. The dashboard was created to provide families with an overview of child care programs and allow them to review more information if they desired. The foundation of the dashboard is compliance and prominently displays the program's most recent compliance zone determination of Good Standing, Support, or Deficient. There are definitions and explanations of the regulatory language throughout the dashboard to help families understand the rules child care programs are required to follow daily and to provide an analysis of the overall rules within that chapter, how many are out of compliance, etc.*
- b. For what types of child care providers is quality information available?
- i. Licensed CCDF providers. Describe the quality information: *A provider's QRIS star level, national accreditations, and family engagement practices are displayed. Families can search Quality Rated providers as a search parameter.*
 - ii. Licensed non-CCDF providers. Describe the quality information: *A provider's QRIS star level, national accreditations, and family engagement practices are displayed. Families can search Quality Rated providers as a search parameter.*
 - iii. License-exempt center-based CCDF providers. Describe the quality information: *For certain licensed-exempt center-based providers eligible to participate in the QRIS, including those associated with the Department of Defense, technical colleges, and public universities, a provider's QRIS star level, national accreditations, and family engagement practices are displayed. Families can search Quality Rated providers as a search parameter.*
 - iv. License-exempt FCC CCDF providers. Describe the quality information: *Enter Text*
 - v. License-exempt non-CCDF providers. Describe the quality information: *A provider's QRIS star level, national accreditations, and family engagement practices are displayed. Families can search Quality Rated providers as a search parameter.*
 - vi. Relative child care providers. Describe the quality information: *Enter Text*
 - vii. Other. Describe: *Enter Text*

9.2.5 Aggregate data on serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated abuse

Lead Agencies must post aggregate data on serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated cases of child abuse that have occurred in child care settings each year on the consumer education website. This aggregate data must include information about any child in the care of a provider eligible to receive CCDF, not just children receiving subsidies.

This aggregate information on serious injuries and deaths must be separated by category of care (e.g., centers, family child care homes, and in-home care) and licensing status (i.e., licensed or license-exempt) for all eligible CCDF child care providers in the State/Territory. The information on instances of substantiated child abuse does not have to be organized by category of care or licensing status. Information must also include the total number of children in care by provider type and licensing status, so that families can better understand the data presented on serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated cases of abuse.

- a. Certify by checking below that the required elements are included in the Aggregate Data Report on serious incident data that have occurred in child care settings each year.
 - i. The total number of serious injuries of children in care by provider category and licensing status.
 - ii. The total number of deaths of children in care by provider category and licensing status.
 - iii. The total number of substantiated instances of child abuse in child care settings.
 - iv. The total number of children in care by provider category and licensing status.
 - v. If any of the above elements are not included, describe: *Enter Text*
- b. Certify by providing:
 - i. The designated entity to which child care providers must submit reports of any serious injuries or deaths of children occurring in child care and describe how the Lead Agency obtains the aggregate data from the entity: *Licensed programs submit incidents of serious injuries or deaths to the Lead Agency through their individual DECAL KOALA account - Required Reporting. If a program is unable to submit the incident through their individual DECAL KOALA account, the report may be submitted to their assigned regional consultant. The consultant will then enter the incident into the KOALA database.*
 - ii. The definition of “substantiated child abuse” used by the Lead Agency for this requirement: *The Lead Agency cannot legally determine if child abuse is substantiated. The agency in Georgia that determines if child abuse is substantiated is the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). DFCS is bound by O.C.G.A. 19-15-1, which defines child abuse as (A) Physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a parent or caretaker thereof by other than accidental means; provided, however, that physical forms of discipline may be used as long as there is no physical injury to the child; (B) Neglect or exploitation of a child by a parent or caretaker thereof; (C) Sexual abuse of a child; or (D) Sexual exploitation of a child. If DFCS has determined under the law that child abuse has occurred, then the Lead Agency may use such a determination in its findings.*
 - iii. The definition of “serious injury” used by the Lead Agency for this

requirement: *The Lead Agency's definition of serious injury is defined for licensed providers as: A death or an incident requiring hospitalization or professional medical attention other than first aid of a child while in the care of the provider that was the result of a substantiated intentional or gross negligent act on behalf of the provider and or staff that indicates a deficiency in the operation and or management of the program. Any case of serious injury that was substantiated by the Lead Agency will be deemed as Extreme Harm and Imminent Danger according to the Lead Agency's Integrated Enforcement and Compliance System.*

- c. Provide the direct URL/website link to the page where the aggregate number of serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated child abuse, and the total number of children in care by provider category and licensing status are posted: *The aggregate number of serious injuries, deaths, and substantiated instances of child abuse can be found at: <http://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/FederalReportingDataLanguage.aspx>. The information is listed under Federal Reporting Data and is updated annually.*

9.2.6 Contact information on referrals to local child care resource and referral organizations

The Lead Agency consumer education website must include contact information on referrals to local CCR&R organizations.

- a. Does the consumer education website include contact information on referrals to local CCR&R organizations?

Yes.

No.

- b. Provide the direct URL/website link to this information:
<https://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/CCRSystem.aspx>

9.2.7 Lead Agency contact information for parents

The Lead Agency consumer and provider education website must include information on how parents can contact the Lead Agency or its designee and other programs that can help the parent understand information included on the website.

- a. Does the website provide directions on how parents can contact the Lead Agency or its designee and other programs to help them understand information included on the website?

Yes.

No.

- b. Provide the direct URL/website link to this information:
<https://www.decal.ga.gov/BftS/ContactList.aspx>

9.2.8 Posting sliding fee scale, co-payment amount, and policies for waiving co-payments

The consumer education website must include the sliding fee scale for parent co-payments, including the co-payment amount a family may expect to pay and policies for waiving co-payments.

- a. Does the Lead Agency certify that their consumer education website includes the sliding fee scale for parent co-payments, including the co-payment amount a family may expect to pay and policies for waiving co-payments?

Yes.

No.

- b. Provide the direct URL/website link to this information:

https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/09-CAPS_Policy-Family%20Fees.pdf
AND <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/AppendixD-Family%20Fee%20Assessment%20Chart.pdf>

9.3 Increasing Engagement and Access to Information

Lead Agencies must collect and disseminate information about the full range of child care services to promote parental choice to parents of children eligible for CCDF, the general public, and child care providers.

9.3.1 Information about CCDF availability and eligibility

Describe how the Lead Agency shares information with eligible parents, the general public, and child care providers about the availability of child care services provided through CCDF and other programs for which the family may be eligible. The description should include, at a minimum, what is provided (e.g., written materials, the website, and direct communications) and what approaches are used to tailor information to parents, the general public, and child care providers. *The DECAL website at www.decal.ga.gov has information about all programs, supports, and services the agency offers to families with young learners and providers including the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) subsidy program, Georgia's Pre-K Program, Child Care Services, Nutrition Services, and Quality Rated. The website includes written materials that can be downloaded and printed by users. Additionally the agency issues newsletters, news releases to the media, social media communications, flyers, palm cards, emails, letters, and text messages to eligible parents, the general public, and child care providers describing and promoting its programs, supports, and services. All this information is also disseminated by the agency's Community Coordinators to families, providers, community leaders, and the general public through their newsletters, birth-to-8 groups, and community meetings. In addition to the DECAL website, the Lead Agency also has a website at www.qualityrated.org that includes a search engine with information on licensed child care learning centers, family child care learning homes, and exempt programs that accept child care subsidies. The search engine allows families to find providers based on their needs (e.g., location, hours of operation, and type of care). Families can also see whether the child care program is Quality Rated and read its licensing inspection reports, all to help them make informed decisions. The website also includes information on a child care provider's participation in other Lead Agency programs, including Georgia's Pre-K Program; the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and the CAPS subsidy program. Beyond the child care search engine, the site informs families that if they want help with their child care search, the 1-877-ALLGAKIDS Call Center that the Lead Agency funds is staffed by specialists who can perform a search for them and provide them with child care referrals. Families can reach the Call Center in person, by phone, through email, or through an online chat bot. The Call Center staff also help families that fall into certain categories of high need enroll their children in child care. Additionally, the <https://families.decal.ga.gov/ChildCare/Choosing> section of the site includes an overview of Quality Rated child care, plus information on choosing a child care program and a summer camp*

program, paying for child care, and understanding licensing reports. The Lead Agency has also launched a provider self-service website that allows child care programs to update basic demographic information, pay license and enforcement fees, and submit and track criminal records check applications. Through the Lead Agency's website and community partnerships, the Lead Agency provides information that is easy to find and is in consumer-friendly formats. Community partnerships include other governmental entities, providers, and workforce development councils. For example, relationships were intentionally cultivated between a cohort of Hispanic family child care providers who serve Spanish-speaking families, the local CCR&R agency, and the Lead Agency to address resources and opportunities for a dual language learner population. Information about the diversity of child care services is readily available to parents and the general public on www.qualityrated.org. The Lead Agency also uses social media to post consumer resources directly to families. The Lead Agency shares information about child care options through direct communication with families. During the intake process to determine eligibility, CAPS staff discuss with families the child care options in their community and stress the importance of selecting high-quality early care and learning environments. If a family is determined not to be eligible for CAPS, the staff refers the family to the CCR&R call center for help locating affordable child care. Families determined eligible to receive child care subsidies are assigned to work with a Family Support Consultant throughout their eligibility period. The Family Support Consultant is responsible for annually determining ongoing eligibility, making changes to the family's case, discussing the family's child care needs, and providing information on community resources and supports. For example, the Lead Agency has developed an extensive resource and referral portal in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse Georgia and Technical College System of Georgia called Find Help Georgia. As Georgia's web-based portal within the findhelp.org nationwide network of free and reduced-cost social assistance, <https://findhelpga.org/> is a customized platform that serves Georgia residents via a user-friendly website, mobile app, and additional support provided by resource specialists through an online chat feature or by phone at 1-800-244-5373. These resources help families access public programs and community supports that fit their needs. Nearly 8,000 resources found in each of Georgia's 159 counties are listed. More than 6,000 community organizations and nonprofits are listed in the Find Help Georgia network. Additionally, there are nearly 5,000 claimed assistance program locations in Georgia where the agency, or organization, has verified their resource information on the Find Help. The website is simple, free, and easy to navigate providing families with links to supports related to financial assistance, food pantries, medical care, child care, job training, and other free or reduced-cost services.] The Lead Agency plans to continue expanding the resource and referral portal to include additional partners and resources while continuing to embed portal usage across all divisions of the Lead Agency. Additionally, CAPS created a more robust Provider Relations website for child care providers. The CAPS Provider Relations Education and Outreach team conducts outreach to every potentially eligible licensed facility and approved Exempt facilities to proactively provide information about enrolling in CAPS. This outreach is possible through an interface with KOALA; GACAPS creates a task for this team when the interface identifies that a new provider is approved to operate. When the task is received, the Education and Outreach team will inform the provider about CAPS and determine if they want to enroll. If they choose to enroll in CAPS, the Education and Outreach team notifies Enrollment Services to send a welcome email that includes a link through which the provider can submit their application. Additionally, the self-service website can easily be translated into four languages to meet the needs of providers. The provider self-serve website can be accessed through a web page dedicated to providers that contains up-to-date information about how to enroll in the CAPS program, a Provider Handbook and User Guides, tutorial videos (which are all currently being translated into Spanish and captioned), payment timelines, and

other resources to benefit providers.

9.3.2 Information about Child care and other services available for parents

Does the Lead Agency certify that it provides information described in 9.3.1 for the following required programs?

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
- Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
- Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- Programs carried out under IDEA Part B, Section 619 and Part C.

Yes

No, If no, Describe: Enter Text

9.3.3 Consumer Statement for parents receiving CCDF Services

Lead Agencies must provide parents receiving CCDF services with a consumer statement in hard copy or electronically that contains general information about the CCDF program and specific information about the child care provider they select.

Please certify if the Lead Agency provides parents receiving CCDF services a consumer statement that contains the following 8 requirements:

1. Health and safety requirements met by the provider
2. Licensing or regulatory requirements met by the provider
3. Date the provider was last inspected
4. Any history of violations of these requirements
5. Any voluntary quality standards met by the provider
6. How CCDF subsidies are designed to promote equal access
7. How to submit a complaint through the hotline
8. How to contact a local resource and referral agency or other community-based organization to receive assistance in finding and enrolling in quality child care

Does the Lead Agency provide to families, either in hard copy or electronically, a consumer statement that contains the required information about the provider they have selected, including the eight required elements above?

Yes.

No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*

9.3.4 Informing families about best practices on child development

Describe how the Lead Agency makes information available to parents, providers, and the general public on research and best practices concerning children’s development, including physical health and development, and information about successful parent and family engagement. At a minimum, the description should include what information is provided; how the information is provided; any distinct activities for sharing this information with parents, providers, the general public; and any partners in providing this information. *The Lead Agency has established a website ([Developmental Milestones \(ga.gov\)](http://DevelopmentalMilestones.ga.gov)) providing information on developmental milestones and monitoring for families, educators, and the public. Resources include milestones checklists, links to resources for obtaining developmental screening, strategies for conducting developmental monitoring in classrooms, and instructions on how to obtain referrals to early intervention and special education and other services. The resource includes links to programs and resources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Learn the Signs. Act Early. materials; information on resources for obtaining developmental screening; making referrals to early intervention and special education, child health, and wellness; choosing high quality care; breastfeeding practices; and supporting positive social emotional development. The Lead Agency also uses Family Peer Ambassadors who are family members of children in child care who receive training and resources on child development, high quality early learning, and strategies to support school readiness. The ambassadors then share this information with families of young children in their communities at local events, on social media, or by hosting virtual meetings. Family Peer Ambassadors also serve on advisory groups and taskforces to provide family perspective and advise on family engagement for policies and programs. The Lead Agency plans to train three new cohorts of Family Peer Ambassadors over the next three years.*

9.3.5 Unlimited parental access to their children

Does the Lead Agency have procedures to ensure that parents have unlimited access to their children whenever their children are in the care of a provider who receives CCDF funds:

Yes.

No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*

9.3.6 Informing families about best practices in social and emotional health

Describe how the Lead Agency shares information with families, providers, and the general public regarding the social-emotional and behavioral and mental health of young children, including positive behavioral intervention and support models based on research and best practices for those from birth to school age: *The Lead Agency has gathered all current social-emotional support strategies for early childhood professionals under the umbrella of the Georgia Social Emotional Early Development Strategies (SEEDS) for Success program. The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Pyramid Model) is the framework for all SEEDS work. The Lead Agency makes information about children’s social and behavioral needs available to families, providers, and the public through multiple sources. Agency websites and social media posts include information on topics such as early brain development, strategies for promoting young*

children’s social and emotional skills and competence, and preventing and addressing challenging behavior. Information about social-emotional development and the use of the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children as a support for behavioral intervention is available on the SEEDS for Success webpage. Training, coaching, and technical assistance addressing evidence-based prevention strategies and strategies for responding to persistent challenging behavior are offered to early childhood professionals through this initiative. Teachers, administrators, and families can contact the SEEDS Helpline (1-833-354-4357 or inclusion@dec.al.ga.gov for resources, referrals, and classroom-based support. Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialists are available across the state to support teachers and administrators in meeting the social-emotional needs of the children in their care. The Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialists provide training, consultation, on-site coaching, materials, and resources to teachers and administrators on topics such as preventing suspensions and expulsions, social emotional competencies, and pro-social classroom practices. Additionally, specialists work with classroom teachers, administrators, and family members to develop and implement behavior intervention plans for children with serious, persistent, challenging behavior. Specialists support programs in making referrals to early intervention, special education, and supplemental mental health services as appropriate Through the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Pilot sponsored by the Lead Agency. This pilot makes mental health professionals more accessible to families and child care staff. The consultants provide family engagement sessions (in person and virtual) to raise awareness about the importance of mental health and wellbeing practices. The consultants are also available to visit families in their homes and communities to discuss more specific mental health needs. The consultant can connect families with referrals and resources making sure that the family can successfully navigate any systemic barriers in obtaining support. The Lead Agency also sponsors Children’s Mental Health Week annually, the first week of May, to coincide with state and national mental health recognition events. Children’s Mental Health Week raises awareness, reducing the stigma around mental health and educating caregivers how to best support social emotional development and the importance of maintaining their own mental wellbeing. The Lead Agency also partners with the Georgia Association of Infant Mental Health (GA-AIMH) to make web-based resources and training videos about the foundations of infant and early childhood mental health available to the early childhood workforce (child care professionals, healthcare professionals, etc.) and families/caregivers. GA-AIMH, based at Georgia State University, serves as the resource hub for infant and early childhood mental health resources and training in Georgia. <https://aimh.qsu.edu/>

9.3.7 Policies on the prevention of the suspension and expulsion of children

- a. The Lead Agency must have policies to prevent the suspension and expulsion of children from birth to age 5 in child care and other early childhood programs receiving CCDF funds. Describe those policies and how those policies are shared with families, providers, and the public. Briefly describe those policies: *Georgia’s SEEDS for Success program is the Lead Agency’s initiative to prevent the suspension and expulsion of children from birth to age five in child care and other early childhood programs. SEEDS is a collaborative led by the Lead Agency to support and align the state’s initiatives related to increasing social-emotional competence in young children and decreasing challenging behaviors in early childhood settings through targeted*

supports to educators. One focus of this initiative is to reduce the use of suspension and expulsion in early learning programs through training, coaching, and resources for teachers and administrators. This initiative is based on the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Pyramid Model). Early childhood educators can contact the SEEDS Helpline at 1-833-354-4357 or inclusion@decalf.ga.gov to request assistance with referrals, resources, and materials or classroom-based support. Inclusion and Behavior Support Specialists are available to work with providers to implement strategies to support pro-social development, to prevent challenging behaviors, or to work with a classroom team of educators and the child's family to develop behavior intervention plans to support success for individual children struggling with persistent challenging behaviors. The agency strongly recommends that child care administrators contact the Helpline for support at the onset of behavior issues in the classroom rather than waiting until suspension or expulsion is being considered.

- b. Describe what policies, if any, the Lead Agency has to prevent the suspension and expulsion of school-age children from child or youth care settings receiving CCDF funds: *Through the Georgia SEEDS for Success Program, the Lead Agency provides training, coaching, and resources to school age teachers in child care on social emotional learning, preventing and addressing challenging behavior, and accessing additional behavioral or mental health supports as needed. School age or summer care programs can contact the SEEDS Helpline for assistance at 1-833-354-4357 or email inclusion@decalf.ga.gov.*

9.4 Providing Information on Developmental Screenings

Lead Agencies must provide information on developmental screenings to parents as part of the intake process for families participating in CCDF and to child care providers through training and education. This information must include:

- Existing resources and services that the State can make available in conducting developmental screenings and providing referrals to services when appropriate for children who receive child care assistance, including the coordinated use of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program carried out under Title XIX of the Social Security Act and developmental screening services available under IDEA Part B, Section 619 and Part C; and,
- A description of how a family or child care provider can use these resources and services to obtain developmental screenings for children who receive subsidies and who might be at risk of cognitive or other developmental delays, which can include social, emotional, physical, or linguistic delays.

Information on developmental screenings, as in other consumer education information, must be accessible for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities.

9.4.1 Developmental screenings

Does the Lead Agency collect and disseminate information on the following:

- a. Existing resources and services available for obtaining developmental screening for

parents receiving CCDF, the general public, and child care providers.

Yes.

No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*

- b. Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program—carried out under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.)— and developmental screening services available under Part B, Section 619 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.).

Yes.

No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*

- c. Developmental screenings to parents receiving a subsidy as part of the intake process.

Yes. If yes, include the information provided, ways it is provided, and any partners in this work: *The Lead Agency collaborates with local, state, and federal agencies, such as the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Georgia Department of Public Health, the Georgia Department of Community Health, and the CDC to collect information on existing resources and services for conducting developmental screenings. Existing resources and services are disseminated to families, the public, and child care providers through the consumer education website. The Lead Agency has a resource and referral portal called Find Help GA that provides information for families and the public on existing resources and services available for conducting developmental screenings. In addition, families who receive subsidies are provided information on developmental screenings and Find Help GA during the annual redetermination process. Families receiving child care subsidies can obtain a referral to an applicable child development resource through Find Help GA.*

No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*

- d. How families receiving CCDF services or child care providers receiving CCDF can use the available resources and services to obtain developmental screenings for children at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays.

Yes.

No. If no, describe (optional): *Enter Text*