Cross Agency Child Council Newsletter

Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five

August 2020

Act Early: GA Milestones Website

Developmental Milestones are skills that most children achieve at a certain age, such as taking a first step, smiling for the first time, or waving "bye-bye." Monitoring these important milestones can help families see whether their child's development is on track and get extra support if they need it. Getting help as early as possible makes a big difference in later development and school achievement.

Research has shown that engaging families in understanding and monitoring children's development helps them better support their child's school success. DECAL has created an interactive website with tools that help families track their child's development. The website has information about developmental milestones and includes links to a variety of resources that families can use to get more information and learn how to access help if they have concerns.

Families can customize information by their child's age or the developmental domain they are interested in. Parents can view expected milestones for children of that age and compare expected milestones between age groups. Each age group lists milestones in four different developmental domains (social and emotional, language/communication, cognitive, and physical and motor development). The website uses the award-winning materials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Learn the Signs. Act Early* program with input from the American Academy of Pediatrics. The website launch is forthcoming.

Upcoming Events

08/26   CACC Meeting

09/30   CACC Strategic Planning Meeting

10/20   CACC Strategic Planning Meeting

Fall 2020

A survey will be fielded this fall to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on Georgia's birth through five mixed delivery system.

Family Peer Ambassadors Program

In 2019 DECAL implemented a Family Peer Ambassador project as part of Georgia's Preschool Development Grant. The goal of this project is to train and support parents and other guardians to act as early learning liaisons in their communities. They also participate in activities to give feedback on their experiences with and needs for early childhood programs and services. Ambassadors share information and resources with other families of young children in their communities, with a concentration on those families who are part of underserved populations and/or experiencing poverty. They also participate on community- and state-level advisory groups and councils.

Ambassadors are recruited from early learning programs around the state, including early intervention, home visiting child care, Head Start/Early Head Start, and Georgia's Pre-K. Ambassadors receive training on early childhood development, values-based leadership, the importance of quality child care, developmental monitoring, and many of the programs and services offered for children from birth to age 5 and their families.

Since October 2019, 75 mothers, fathers, foster parents, grandparents and other family members raising Georgia's youngest children have been trained. These dedicated people are leaders in their communities and passionate about early care and learning. They live in over 50 different communities across Georgia. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they attended 120 events in their communities, connecting with over 2000 families. Since the shut-down they have used social media to share information about resources and will soon begin to attend or conduct virtual events to share information. In addition, many of the Family Peer Ambassadors have participated in information forums and served on advisory councils to share the family perspective. Another cohort of Family Peer Ambassadors will be recruited and trained this fall.

Cost Modeling Project

In October of 2019, DECAL entered into an agreement with Third Sector Intelligence, Inc (3Si) to undertake the development of a methodology and framework modeling the cost of child care in Georgia. The multi-year project was to take place in two distinct phases. The objective of the first phase of the project was the development of an initial set of cost estimates based on the best available data and information as well as the production of a cost modeling tool for DECAL to maintain. The initial estimates and tool would allow DECAL to assess cost differences based on a variety of factors to include, but not be limited to, provider type, child age, geography, type of care, and Quality Rated star level. The objective of the second phase of the project was to continue to refine the cost modeling tool based on new data and information in order to make it as accurate as possible.

The first phase of the project was completed in May of 2020 with the delivery of the estimates and cost modeling tool. In addition to the primary deliverables, 3Si also provided DECAL with a summary analysis describing the primary cost drivers of child care, cost variances related to providing higher-quality care, subsidy-payment rate comparison to cost, and fundamental differences in cost between child care learning centers and family child care learning homes.

DECAL used the tool to inform payment rates for the Short-Term Assistance Benefit for Licensed Entities (STABLE) initiative that the agency made available to all licensed providers in May 2020. Made possible by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, STABLE was Georgia's initial child care stabilization funding in response to COVID-19. The cost modeling tool allowed DECAL to establish a per-child rate for both open and closed providers.

The second phase of the project was set to begin after the completion of the market rate survey and analysis this summer. The survey was to be used to inform DECAL and the cost modeling tool about many areas of cost. A primary focus was to be wage amounts and credentials for teachers and directors. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, the market rate survey has been postponed until 2021. Further work on the second phase has shifted, for the time being, to using data from the STABLE payments for further analysis. Also, 3Si has begun a feasibility assessment of DECAL's administrative data capabilities to outline a possible approach to leveraging program data to inform the agency more precisely about how to invest available funding to maximize benefits to Georgia's children and families. The second phase will ultimately be an evolving process of seeking more accurate information and using it to inform the cost modeling tool and agency policy.

The cost modeling project is strategically important to DECAL because it will make the agency better informed not only about the fundamental costs of providing child care but also about how future policy and program decisions will impact families and providers across the state.

Learn more

https://www.decal.ga.gov/BftS/PreschoolDevelopmentGrant.aspx

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