

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan for Georgia FFY 2019-2021

Executive Summary

Introduction:

Every year Georgia receives significant funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Historically, the monies, which come to the state in the form of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), have been primarily used to help low-income, working families afford child care.

In November 2014, with widespread bipartisan support, Congress reauthorized the CCDBG while refocusing and expanding the purpose of the CCDF. The expanded purposes of the CCDF as identified in the reauthorization included:

- promoting self-sufficiency for low-income families
- promoting involvement by parents and families in the development of their children in child care settings
- improving the overall quality of child care services and programs
- increasing the number and percentage of low-income children in high quality-child care settings.

To continue receiving these funds, each state must submit a State Plan detailing how it will meet federal requirements. As the Lead Agency responsible for administering these funds in Georgia, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has worked with other state agencies, local governments, and stakeholders to develop a State Plan in which CCDF dollars are used wisely, efficiently, and in accordance with federal guidelines.

Georgia has implemented the new federal guidelines set forth in the 2014 Reauthorization. The purpose of this Summary is to highlight the key areas of Georgia's State Plan, for federal fiscal years 2019-2021, necessary to maintain compliance with the requirements of reauthorization. The structure of this document is aligned with the federally mandated structure of the State Plan.

Section 1: CCDF Leadership and Coordination with Relevant Systems

Highlights from this section focus on disaster preparedness and statewide collaboration. DECAL proposes:

- Continuation of collaborative efforts with all appropriate federal, state, and local programs. The plan details efforts to strengthen such collaborations.

Section 2: Promote Family Engagement through Outreach and Consumer Education

Highlights from this section focus on promoting and encouraging families to be actively engaged in the development of their children in child care settings. DECAL has expanded and will continue to foster consumer awareness and increase efforts to ensure that family engagement information is easily accessible for families and the general public. Focal points include:

- Requiring child care programs to provide information on existing developmental screening services to parents and families with links to available services.
- Providing additional information about all child care programs licensed by the state and all programs receiving CCDF funds. Being able to access information easier will help families make more informed choices when selecting child care programs. The new child care search available at <http://qualityrated.org/> supports this effort.
- Providing additional data, at the aggregate level, of incidents resulting in serious injury, death, and child abuse in child care settings. This information is currently available at the program level. DECAL will expand this information to be offered at the aggregate level.

Section 3: Provide Stable Child Care Financial Assistance to Families

Highlights from this section focus on supporting family self-sufficiency and ensuring that families receiving CCDF have access to high-quality child care. Key areas include:

- In furtherance of the department's commitment to quality, the state will continue the CAPS tiered bonus percentage of 5%, 10%, and 25% for one-, two-, and three-star Quality Rated providers.
- Initial eligibility thresholds for CAPS scholarships of 50% state median income (SMI). After being approved for the subsidy, families continue to meet income requirements unless their income exceeds 85% SMI.
- Determining the percent of income a family pays for CAPS by the family's gross income as a percent of the federal poverty guidelines (FPL). Family incomes are grouped into four tiers for determining what percent of income is assessed:
 - 1) the copayment is waived for families at or below 10% FPL;
 - 2) families above 10% FPL and at or below 50% FPL are currently assessed a copayment of 7% of family income;
 - 3) families over 50% FPL and at or below 100% FPL are currently assessed a copayment of 11% of family income;
 - 4) families over 100% FPL are also currently assessed a copayment of 11% of family income.

Section 4: Ensure Equal Access to Child Care for Low-Income Children

Highlights from this section focus on families receiving CCDF having access to the same quality of care as families who are not receiving CCDF. Therefore, DECAL proposes continuing:

- The use of funding models that offer grants to providers to serve a certain number of child care subsidy-eligible children. Programs accepting grants agree to meet higher standards of quality and thereby receive additional funds and supports.
- Development of new research methodologies to 1) estimate the true cost of care; 2) determine underserved areas; and 3) measure the level of access to high-quality care for families receiving CCDF.

Section 5: Establishing Standards and Monitoring Processes to Ensure the Health and Safety of Child Care Settings

Highlights from this section focus on the expectation that child care programs receiving CCDF funds are monitored for health and safety requirements, undergo criminal background checks, and receive training in key topics. DECAL will:

- Continue on-site monitoring of exempt programs that receive CCDF funds for compliance with health and safety standards and the same comprehensive background check requirements as licensed providers.
- Require comprehensive background record checks to include a national and state sex offender registry check, child abuse registry check, and criminal registry check.

Section 6: Recruit and Retain a Qualified and Effective Child Care Workforce

Highlights from this section focus on a well-trained and supported early education workforce. DECAL proposes continuing the following supports offered to early care and education teachers:

- Increasing professional development on meeting children's social emotional needs.
- Providing training for programs serving children with disabilities, dual language learners, and children who are experiencing homelessness.
- Piloting new models specifically geared toward serving infants and toddlers.
- Providing professional development to help program owners/directors strengthen their business practices.

Section 7: Support Continuous Quality Improvement

Highlights from this section focus on how the state will improve the quality of child care. DECAL proposes:

- Improving infant/toddler care by utilizing current infant/toddler specialists to support programs in increasing their Quality Rated star ratings and by expanding evaluation methods around infant/toddler supports.

Section 8: Ensure Grantee Program Integrity and Accountability

Highlights from this section focus on monitoring CCDF funds. DECAL proposes:

- Continuation of sub recipient monitoring processes.
- Revising, as necessary, policies related to identifying overpayments, which is based on the continuity of care approach articulated in reauthorization.

Conclusion:

The proposals highlighted in this summary are not exhaustive. Georgia's comprehensive State Plan includes many more details concerning how the state plans to use the resources provided through the CCDF. But, as mentioned earlier, Georgia is currently fulfilling the majority of the requirements that must be met to receive these funds.

The proposals in this document highlight the efforts the state will make to continue to comply with federal guidelines as identified in the legislation reauthorizing the grant.

Georgia's State Plan is now available for interested parties to review and to provide comment. Comments can be made in writing and submitted to DECAL or can be made publicly at one of three public hearings on May 19, May 22, or May 23. Instructions for commenting on the plan can be found at: <http://www.decal.ga.gov/BftS/CCDFPlan.aspx>.