

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



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DECAL By the Numbers

4,729 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia

1,486 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia

82,571 - Four year olds enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program

85,805 - Registrants in Georgia Professional Development System

15,223 - Followers of DECAL social media platforms

Follow DECAL on Social Media

Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECAL Team,

At the beginning of January 2018, Governor Deal made his annual *State of the State* speech to the Georgia General Assembly, invited guests, and the citizens of Georgia. At the end of January 2018, President Trump made his annual *State of the Union* speech to members of Congress, invited guests, and the American people.

So I decided, "I think it's time to share my perspective on the *State of Early Care and Education in Georgia 2018*" with you, the women and men committed to meeting the early education needs of Georgia's children and their families.

I am proud to say that the state of early care and education (ECE) in Georgia is strong, evolving, responsive, and caring, and following are just a few of the reasons I feel justified in saying so.

1. We have a department of state government that houses almost all the services, programs, and resources relating to child care and early education for children from birth to age five. In most states, these programs/services are spread across multiple agencies making aligning services and communication more difficult...and less effective.
2. We have not only transitioned CAPS from DFCS to DECAL...we are transforming the program to become a component of Georgia's early education system, not just subsidized child care. At DECAL, CAPS is benefiting children, families, child care programs, and communities in new and different ways.
3. We are continuing to administer an established voluntary, universal Pre-K program that is celebrating its 25th birthday this year. The celebration honors the legacy and foresight of

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Andrews Receives Servant's Heart Award

Cassa Andrews, manager of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Program, has been awarded First Lady Sandra Deal's With a Servant's Heart Award for her volunteer work with a religious organization that established and administers several schools in Pakistan. The goals of these schools are to educate Christian and Muslim students together, to educate girls, and to educate children with disabilities. The schools employ Christian and Muslim teachers in an effort to show how teachers of different faiths can work together to educate the children of their country.

In nominating Cassa for the honor, Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs wrote, "Cassa's work on behalf of children and teachers has not only cost her financially, it has come with a cost to her personal safety. On her most recent trip to the country this past summer, a bomb exploded in a market place where Cassa was shopping. Though her injuries were not life-threatening, the recovery from injuries to her legs has been slow and painful."

Through her decade of trips to Pakistan, Cassa has personally funded her travel and living costs and expenses for supplies she has been able to take with her. She also contributes substantially to a school for children with disabilities, including sponsoring several children so they can attend the school.

Previous DECAL recipients of With a Servant's Heart are Laura Wagner, Family Support Director with Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program, and Richard Bartlett, Compliance Examiner with DECAL's Audits and Compliance Team.

Andrews is shown below with her husband Garrett, First Lady Sandra Deal, and Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs.

- Governor Zell Miller and others who came before us backed by research proving that Pre-K has positive outcomes across all domains of learning. And the effectiveness of the Pre-K program has spawned the creation of summer transition programs to better prepare young students for Pre-K and Kindergarten.
4. We are broadening the academic focus of our services to begin reaching children from birth to Pre-K.
 - o Early Language and Literacy Classroom Grants are supporting 50 classrooms across the state in implementing research based language and literacy instruction for children from birth to age three, the earliest, and most critical, years of life.
 - o The Georgia Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia College and State University is equipping early education teachers with research-based practices related to early language development and literacy for children from birth to age eight.
 5. With support from the Georgia General Assembly, we now have the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning that will allow corporate and philanthropic partners to provide private funding to support early childhood educators and child care providers in ways that state and federal funding could not.
 6. We have expanded services or developed new services in response to expressed needs from stakeholders, providers, and families:
 - o Trained and supported thousands of early education professionals on inclusion and social and emotional development ensuring that all children are supported and can succeed in high quality early learning programs.
 - o Improved technology to make information even more accessible and user-friendly for parents and providers through website enhancements and social media now reaching over 15,000 followers every day, 24/7.
 - o Fed millions of meals and snacks to more children and eligible adults every year through our federal nutrition programs reaching counties that have not participated in previous years.

Of course the accomplishments I mentioned above are just a few of the reasons I believe the state of ECE in Georgia is as strong as it's ever been. I easily could have listed more...but these items clearly illustrate the significant strides Georgia has made in early care and learning in the past years.

I hope YOU feel the same pride I do when I review the current state of ECE in Georgia. I assure you: We wouldn't be in this solid, stable place...from which we can continue moving forward to enhance the well-being of children, families, and the child care community...if it weren't for you and your commitment to exemplary customer service.

Thank you for your hard work.

Help Us Celebrate Inclusive Early Learning Week

Inclusive Early Learning Week (IELW) in Georgia is February 12-16, 2018 and we encourage you to help us celebrate the important practice of inclusion. At DECAL we want all children regardless of background, race, income, or ability to have equal



Lewis Named to NARA Board



Kristie Lewis

Kristie Lewis, Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services, has been named to the Board of Directors for the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA), an association dedicated to supporting regulatory professionals throughout North America who ensure the health and safety of individuals in out-of-home care.

"I am honored to serve with NARA, the only national organization that advocates for human care regulation policy," said Lewis. "We spent this past weekend doing strategic planning for NARA through 2020."

Lewis has worked in child care since the early 1990s beginning as a child care preschool teacher and a child care learning center director. She joined state government as a regional licensing consultant with the Georgia Office of School Readiness, the predecessor of DECAL. With DECAL she has served various leadership roles including Applicant Services Unit Director, Licensing Regional Director, and Child Care Services Director. She was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Child Care Services in 2013 responsible for more than 120 child care licensing staff who monitor and support the almost 5,000 child care programs in Georgia.

Lewis also serves DECAL as Co-Administrator for the federal



CALi and Commissioner Jacobs are shown during Inclusive Early Learning Week 2016 while visiting CGTC Child Development Center in Warner Robins.

access to quality learning and to fulfill their full potential. Including children with disabilities in high quality early learning environments is a major focus at DECAL. Jennie Couture, Director of Practice and Support Services, explains: "When we support full participation in high quality early learning, we support all children's full potential."

In 2009, the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and various stakeholders in the field carefully developed a definition of early childhood inclusion that is still used. According to the definition, the results of inclusion are a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach a child's full potential. These results align with the Commissioner's vision for DECAL and with the work we all do to ensure that every child has access to a

high quality early learning environment.

One of child care providers' most common misunderstandings involves what actually makes an early learning setting inclusive. DECAL's Inclusion Specialists work with child care providers to help them better understand how to modify their environments, materials, and activities so all children can actively engage in their environment. This is just one example of how DECAL continuously supports and promotes high quality early learning experiences for all children, including children with disabilities.

We work hard to eliminate barriers to high quality care for children with disabilities. DECAL Inclusion Manager Brandy Locchetta says, "One goal of our work is to help society understand that the only barriers to inclusion are our own mindsets and preconceived ideas of what disability is and what having a disability means." Please join us in spreading this message and in promoting inclusive practices during Inclusive Early Learning Week!

The Instructional Supports Inclusion Team includes Back Row: Shayla Lewis (Inclusion Specialist), Veronica Thomas (Inclusion Specialist), Esther Dykes (Inclusion Specialist), Emily Graham (Inclusion Specialist), Brandy Locchetta (Inclusion Manager), Front Row: Aleta Gass (Inclusion Specialist), Lindsey Urry (Inclusion Specialist), Katie Hagan (Lead Inclusion Specialist), Michelle Clark (Inclusion Specialist), and Margaret Armour (Inclusion Specialist)

Child Care and Development Fund.

Afterschool Day at the Capitol Slated for February 28, 2018

Join us and the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network for the inaugural Afterschool Day at the Capitol on February 28, 2018 from 8:00 - 11:30 a.m. At the event, afterschool and school-age child care providers will have an opportunity to share how their programs help Georgia's youth succeed.

The day will begin at the Sloppy Floyd Building for training, resources, and networking. Participants will then go to the State Capitol to share the value of afterschool directly with legislators, meet with partners, and reflect on the experience. For more information, [click here](#).

If you make visits to providers who offer afterschool, summer or school-age care services, please share with them this information about Afterschool Day at the Capitol.



Let's unite as one powerful voice for afterschool in GA!

Join us at Afterschool Day at
the Capitol 2018 on
February 28th!

Learn more at afterschoolga.org



Division Updates

Legal

The Legal Division is in the process of hiring for three positions: Records Unit Document and Archiving Specialist, Policy and Training Specialist, and a CRC Supervisor.

Communications

The Communications Division has started planning the Look Again PSA for this year. They are also preparing materials for Georgia's Pre-K 25th birthday celebration in March. If you have any photos from the early years of GA Pre-K, please send them to Shannon Williams or Lara Ijitoeye.

IT

The IT Division has been busy equipping 24 temps for CAPs with necessary hardware and software. They are also preparing for an equipment swap-out for System Reform.

HR

Training opportunities: The 1st Quarter Training Schedule is now out. To take advantage of these training opportunities, discuss the relevant classes with your supervisor and, as approved, submit training registration requests by email to julie.harnage@dec.al.gov copying the authorized manager or supervisor in your section.

System Reform

Quality Rated Operations

System Reform has added a new Central GA Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessor team to the Operations Unit. There are now three teams: North GA and Metro Atlanta; Central GA; and South and Coastal GA. Also, currently 1,462 child care programs have earned a star rating from Quality Rated..

New Faces and Places

Congratulations to the following employees who joined the DECAL team in December and January.

Administration welcomes Research and Policy Intern Shayna J. Funke.

Audits and Compliance welcomes Auditor/Examiner Tomeka B. Bailey and Audits and Compliance Intern Adrien R. Roberson.

CAPS welcomes Scholarship Administrative Specialist Cheresa Holmes, Federal Programs Intern Aeshalon Carter, and Scholarship Administrative Specialist Central Chimeka L. Lawrence.

Finance welcomes Federal Reporting Supervisor Damon Smith.

CCS welcomes Administrative Assistant Patricia Bebley, CRU CCS Consultant Isha Barrie (Gwinnett), CRU CCS Consultant Tasha E. McDonald (Clayton), and Administrative Assistant Jamal R. Merritt.

Instructional Supports welcomes Professional Learning Intern Alexis-Breanna N. Jefferson.

System Reform welcomes QR Subsidy Analyst Alena Victoria Antonowich, QR Help Desk Assistant Nichole C. Setser, QR Subsidy Analyst Tiffany A. Allen, QR Subsidy Analyst Kristy Turner, and QR Subsidy Analyst Shantreze D. Anderson.

Pre-K welcomes Agency Receptionist/Info Specialist Tammy W. Clark.

Board of Early Care and Learning

Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright from the Start:

Board of Early Care and Learning

Kay Ford, Midway
First Congressional District
(Secretary)

Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Chair)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District

Quality Rated Policy & Partnerships

- Big news for the Quality Rated Subsidy Team. Subsidy grants have expanded. As of January 1, 2018, the Quality Rated Subsidy Team has added just under 1,800 subsidy slots.
- Six new PSN groups (35 Ambassadors) have been added throughout the state.
- Angela Melton is now on Round 2 of the Child Care and Parent Services (CAPS) Q & As.

Early Head Start Partnerships

Early Head Start Partnerships shared successes with other states by presenting at the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP) State Grantee Learning Community on Georgia's experience addressing the challenge of parents opting out of Child Care and Development Fund subsidies.

DECAL Accepting Applications for Georgia's Pre-K Program TOTY

DECAL is seeking applications for Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year for 2018-2019. DECAL will select a winner from a local public school system and a winner from a private child care center.

"Now in its 25th year, Georgia's Pre-K Program is nationally recognized as an exemplary early childhood education program for four year olds that significantly impacts school readiness skills in language, literacy, and math," said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. "The program's success can be attributed directly to the outstanding Pre-K teachers and assistants who implement this program daily. This is a small way for us to recognize their efforts."

The application for Pre-K Teacher of the Year is available on the DECAL website home page at www.dec.al.gov. Completed applications must be postmarked or hand delivered no later than 5:00 PM on Monday, February 26, 2018. Finalists will be announced in May 2018, with the winners announced in the early fall.



*Nathan Leatherwood and
Jodi McNamara*

Winners serve as ambassadors for Georgia's Pre-K Program. The 2017-2018 Georgia's Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year Jodi McNamara and Nathan Leatherwood joined Commissioner Jacobs and her family in representing DECAL in last year's Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade.

For more information, contact Meghan McNail, Summer Transition Program and Outreach Coordinator, at meghan.mcnail@dec.al.gov or 770-357-4911

Please ensure that directors, assistant directors, and other Pre-K staff are aware of this opportunity to recognize exemplary performance by Pre-K teachers.

Birthday Celebration Continues for Georgia's Pre-K Program

Georgia's Pre-K Program is celebrating its 25th birthday this school year and many activities are

Carlene Talton, Decatur
Fifth Congressional District

Dawnn Henderson, Marietta
Sixth Congressional District

Vacant
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District

Sheri Hooper, Gainesville
Ninth Congressional District

Vacant
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville
Eleventh Congressional District

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro
Twelfth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Melissa Boekhaus, MD., Mableton
Thirteenth Congressional District

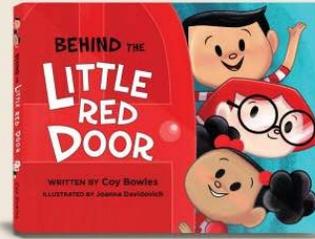
Tangela Johnson, Cohutta
Fourteenth Congressional District

Watch on POLAR



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Let Us Hear



happening to mark this historic occasion. On social media, a variety of personalities have been posting their happy birthday greetings to the program. View a sample on our YouTube channel [here](#).

On Tuesday, March 6, 2018, Governor Nathan Deal, First Lady Sandra Deal, legislators, child advocates, and other special guests will gather at the Georgia Railroad Depot for a celebration. Grammy-award winning Zac Brown Band guitarist and celebrated Georgia author Coy Bowles will unveil *Behind the Little Red Door*, a delightful picture book that encourages children to use their creativity to

determine what could be behind the door on each page. Published in partnership with DECAL, *Behind the Little Red Door* will be distributed to all 82,000+ children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program.

For continuing coverage of Georgia's Pre-K 25th birthday, follow DECAL on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Person on the Street

What is your favorite restaurant?



Rochelle Holmes, Family Support Consultant:

My favorite restaurant is The Cheesecake Factory. I enjoy the vibe and ambience, the food, the portions and, needless to say, the red velvet cheesecake. Don't judge me..LOL. I can eat there for birthdays, wedding anniversary, well, or just because.



Aleta Gass, Inclusion Specialist:

Hands down - Velvet Elvis in Milledgeville. They make the best cheese burger in the world.

Carrie Spangler, Central Region Manager:
The Crab Shack on Tybee Island

From You!

Employee Suggestion Program

ideas?

Visit the Virtual
Suggestion Box now!

The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Jerica Davis, Glen Clardy, Lori Ray, Alkadir Abdulkadir, Faith Duncan, Renee Lind, and Alena Antonowich.



Shenina Broaders,
Administrative Assistant, CCS -
Program Operations - Admin &
Operations Unit:
Villa Christina



Avery Jenkins, Administrative, Assistant:
My favorite restaurant is Baminelli's Italian Restaurant



Lisa Rambhajan, Administrative and Facilities
Coordinator:
My favorite restaurant is Olive Garden. I love
that they have a variety of pasta in different
sauces. I normally try to visit them once a
month. Plus they are kid friendly.



Steven Mayer, Systems Analyst:
I would have to name two as they are tied for my favorite. One is 'West Cobb Diner' in Marietta which has great vegetables and reasonable prices. In nice weather they have an outside patio where you can enjoy nice weather and sometimes live music. My wife and I usually split a four-vegetable plate which, with two drinks and tip, is only about \$14 (and we usually still take food home). The second restaurant is 'Gabriel's at the Old Mill' in Acworth. It is located in an old cotton mill building built in the 1800s that has been restored. The food is great and the owner is a lovely lady named Johnnie Gabriel. Apparently, good cooking runs in the family, as Johnnie is Paula Deen's cousin.

Congratulations
to the newest



programs!

- Laughter & Lullabies Childcare Academy, Monroe **
- Misty Sue's Christian 24 Hour Child Care Center, Conyers *
- CHI Montessori Academy, Inc., Atlanta *
- YMCA Pryme Tyme Isle of Hope Elementary, Savannah *
- Here We Grow, Cairo *
- Terry's Childcare and Learning Center, Savannah *
- Childcare Network #266, Carrollton **
- Donna B. Humphreys, Woodstock **
- Childcare Network #31, Athens **
- Lillie's Lil' Lamb Daycare & Learning Center II, Stockbridge **
- Tammie A. Capmbell, Savannah **
- A Child's Dream Childcare and Learning Center, Augusta *
- Bright Beginnings Learning Center, Decatur *
- La Petite Academy - Crooked Creek, Norcross *
- Peachtree Summit Child Care Center, Atlanta **
- Elaine G. Jamison ***
- Wilson's Academy, Columbus **
- We are the Future Child Care Center, L.L.C., Atlanta **
- Big Blue Marble - Evans Towne Center, Evans **
- YMCA Pryme Tyme Garrison Elementary, Savannah **
- Early Learning Scholars II, Clarkston **
- Little Blessings Day Care, Albany ***
- Magnificent Early Learning Center I, Atlanta *
- Stacey A. Gooden, Stone Mountain **
- Big Blue Marble - Madeline Drive, Augusta *