

# Decidedly DECAL

*Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are*



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



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## DECAL By the Numbers

**1,300** - Child care programs participating in Quality Rated

**203** - Child care programs rated in Quality Rated

**375,000** - Children attending a child care program in Georgia

**84,000** - Pre-K students expected to attend Georgia's Pre-K classes this fall

**84,644** - Children served by Children and Parent Services (CAPS)

**1,625** - Sites in 2013 Summer Food Service Program

## Commissioner's Corner

*by Commissioner Bobby Cagle*



tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System for Georgia.

In 2006, DECAL brought together a group of Georgia stakeholders to discuss a systematic approach for enhancing the quality of Georgia's early care and education system. Later, affirming the need for improvements, an independent study found a large number of infant/toddler classrooms, family day care homes and preschool classrooms to be "low quality." This was the beginning of a

Today we are announcing the official launch of the parent awareness campaign for Quality Rated, Georgia's community-powered, voluntary system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs.

Similar to rating systems for service industries like restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated identifies early care and education programs that meet a set of standards exceeding the state's minimum licensing requirements. The program uses one, two and three stars to indicate programs that meet defined program standards in the following areas: staff qualifications; child health, nutrition and physical activity; family partnerships; intentional teaching practices; and ratio and group size requirements

Today we launch our new website, [www.qualityrated.org](http://www.qualityrated.org), and for the first time post these ratings to our DECAL website at [www.decalsite.gov](http://www.decalsite.gov). Nearly 1,300 child care programs are participating in Quality Rated, with over 200 programs now rated. Only the rated programs will receive the Quality Rated designation on the web site.

Star-rated programs also will receive an increase in the state/federal



## Quick Links

[DECAL on Facebook](#)

[DECAL on Twitter](#)

[DECAL Website](#)



## Summer Food Service Kickoff



DECAL joined the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Food Bank Association on June 18, 2013, for the official kickoff of the 2013 Georgia Summer Food Service Program at Grant Park in Atlanta.

"Providing nutritious summer meals to children who would normally receive free breakfast or lunch during the school year is part of DECAL's commitment to keeping Georgia's children healthy," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle.

To find a Summer Food Service Program in your area, call 1-866-3HUNGRY, visit [www.nokidhungry.org/summer](http://www.nokidhungry.org/summer) or text FOODGA to 877-877.

## Georgia's Pre-K Team Gathers in Atlanta

reimbursements they receive from Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program, which provides subsidized child care to low income families. One-star programs will receive a 2% bonus; two-star programs will receive a 5% bonus; and three-star programs will receive a 10% bonus.

Programs choosing to participate in Quality Rated become eligible for free professional development, technical assistance and financial incentive packages supported by foundations and businesses. These programs support the whole child and prepare them for ongoing success in life.

Starting today, with funding from our public-private partnership, we will use billboards, print, radio, TV and online advertising to promote Quality Rated throughout the state. We want parents to be aware of the program and ask their child care programs if they are Quality Rated --- and if not, why not? This is an exciting time for our agency and early childhood education in Georgia. Please join me in encouraging parents to seek out quality early care and education for our state's youngest learners who in a short time will be the backbone of Georgia's workforce.

## DECAL Priority:

### Health & Safety

#### Arrest Reminds Parents to be Cautious in Selecting Child Care Providers

Last month in Lilburn, Georgia, police arrested two women for operating an unlicensed child care program after they allegedly left ten children -- ranging in age from eight months to ten years -- alone in a house. Police said neighbors called them when they heard crying from inside the house.

DECAL is currently investigating the case, which reminds parents that they can never be too cautious in selecting a child care provider. Parents should always do the following:

- Confirm that the program is a licensed child care program. Our rules require that the license be posted for public inspection.
- Do their homework by researching programs on the DECAL web site.
- Interview the owner/director and meet the teachers.
- Tour the facility, visiting classrooms with their children to see how they respond in the new environment.
- Just like in a job interview, ask the provider for references of current and past customers (parents) and get their opinions.
- In addition to the scheduled interview, make a "pop in" visit to make sure the story they heard in the interview matches up



Georgia's Pre-K team members were together in Atlanta recently for a staff meeting. DECAL appreciates the great work they do for Georgia's youngest learners!

## Georgia Lottery Turns 20



DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle joined Governor Nathan Deal and Senator Zell Miller on June 26 at the University of Georgia in Athens to help celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the Georgia Lottery. Since 1993, the Lottery has raised over \$14 billion for education, benefiting more than 1.6 million HOPE Scholarship recipients and more than 1.2 million

Georgia's Pre-K students.

with day-to-day operations.

- Ask if the provider has been Quality Rated, which shows they are going above and beyond the basic requirements of health and safety and are truly offering an educational program preparing children for kindergarten and beyond.

Watch media coverage about the unlicensed child care program [here](#).

## DECAL and the National Food Service Management Institute to Sponsor Nutrition Workshops

DECAL and the National Food Service Management Institute are partnering to sponsor eight workshops to help child care programs highlight nutrition in their classrooms. Using curriculum from a popular book titled *More than Mud Pies*, the training will be held from July to September in Marietta, Macon, Tifton and Savannah.

"The book *More than Mud Pies* provides a fun, educational nutrition curriculum for both staff and children," said Jennifer Popadiuk, nutrition project manager for DECAL. "This training will teach providers how to best utilize this material to easily incorporate nutrition lessons into the classroom."



Jennifer Popadiuk

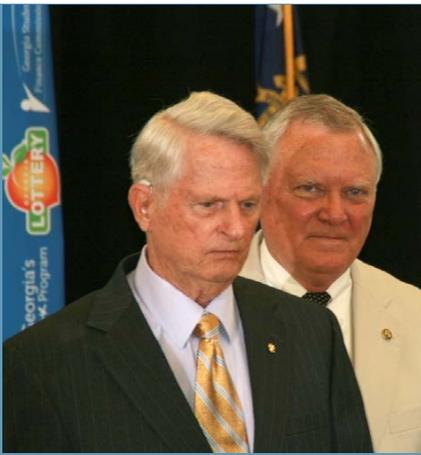
"We encourage all child care facilities to provide an active program so children are out moving around and also to serve healthier foods when they are given the opportunity," said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "These workshops will provide new and fun ways for teachers to incorporate good nutrition for our youngest learners, birth to five years old. Their health and safety are my top two priorities."

The conferences are scheduled for Tuesday, July 30, 2013, in Marietta at the Mansour Center; Tuesday, August 13, 2013, in Macon at the Marriott City Center Hotel; Tuesday, August 27, 2013, in Tifton at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center; and Tuesday, September 10, 2013, in Savannah at the Coastal Georgia Center. At each location, two sessions will be offered each day either from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. or from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Registration will begin 30 minutes before each session.

**DECAL Priority:**

**Quality**

**Georgia Early Education Professionals Present at NAEYC Conference**



Senator Zell Miller and Governor Nathan Deal

## July Birthdays



Best wishes go out to the following DECAL employees who celebrate birthdays this month:

- 7 - Zara L. Handsford
- 7 - Georgia Elizabeth Thomas
- 9 - Nakilia G. McCray
- 9 - Darlene V. Sims
- 9 - Robin Chanin Stevens
- 11 - Wakisha L. Carswell
- 13 - Ronnae D. Williams
- 14 - Marsha Ruiz-Crosby
- 19 - Jennie W. Couture
- 20 - Jackie R. Shivers
- 21 - Laura G. Evans
- 21 - Jacquice M. Jones
- 23 - Carol King Hartman
- 23 - Bridgette L. Merrett
- 26 - Carley L. Geren
- 26 - Ashley C. Wilson
- 28 - Christie M. Bearden
- 28 - Glenda J. Davis-Canteen
- 28 - Rhonda G. Gunn
- 29 - Cecelia L. Dorsey
- 30 - Deidria W. Bolden
- 31 - Dextral G. Austin
- 31 - Bentley D. Ponder

## Board of Early Care and Learning

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

**Board of Early Care and Learning**

Five early childhood education officials from Georgia shared their experience in professional development with educators from around the nation in June at a conference of The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) held in San Francisco, California. Georgia was one of only 14 states selected to participate in the meeting on Early Childhood Workforce Data Systems presented by NAEYC, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) and the Early Childhood Data Collaborative (ECDC).

The Professional Development Registry is one of the major components of Georgia's Professional Development System, along with SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES. The Registry tracks the education and training of more than 24,000 child care center, group and family day care home staff, providing a customized report to registrants on their education and training in order to meet state requirements or to participate in special initiatives. Georgia's SCHOLARSHIPS program offers financial support to enable many in early care and education to increase their education. It also provides career advisement to help participants explore their options for earning a credential or degree and how this impacts career advancement. In State FY12, 1,475 early care and education teachers began their pursuit of a credential with SCHOLARSHIPS support.

The INCENTIVES program rewards employment stability and educational attainment with a bonus payment upon earning a credential. In State FY12, 1,508 were rewarded with bonus payments after earning a technical college certificate, technical college diploma, associate degree, bachelor's degree or a Child Development Associate credential.

Georgia Training Approval, another major component of the system, ensures that high quality training provided by qualified professionals is available to help early care and education professionals continue to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Georgia's delegation to the NAEYC conference included Georgia Thomas, professional development manager for DECAL; Janice Haker, director of the Georgia Head Start Collaboration Office; Dr. Benita Moore, curriculum program specialist for the Technical College System of Georgia; Kelli Young, assistant director of certification for the Georgia Professional Standards Commission; and Dr. Karen Shetterley, senior public service associate with the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education.

"It is a great honor for Georgia to be selected for this program,"

Kay Ford, Savannah  
First Congressional District

Susan Harper, Albany  
Second Congressional District  
(Secretary)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton  
Third Congressional District

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain  
Fourth Congressional District

Carlene Talton, Decatur  
Fifth Congressional District

Dawn Henderson, Marietta  
Sixth Congressional District

Sherron Murphy, Lawrenceville  
Seventh Congressional District

Luann Purcell, Ed.D., Warner Robins  
Eighth Congressional District  
(Vice Chair)

Tammy Lenkeit, Flowery Branch  
Ninth Congressional District

Janice Gallimore, Greensboro  
Tenth Congressional District

Victor Morgan, Cartersville  
Eleventh Congressional District  
(Chair)

Jerri Kropp, Statesboro  
Twelfth Congressional District

Judy Neal, Stockbridge  
Thirteenth Congressional District

Vacant  
Fourteenth Congressional District

*We are committed to nurturing  
Georgia's youngest children, keeping  
them safe and healthy, and to enriching  
their lives.*

said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. "The Professional Development System is helping raise the level of professionalism and improve the quality of care in early care and education in Georgia."

"Well prepared teachers in early childhood education settings are critical to a child's future school success," added Thomas. "The Georgia team shared and exchanged information on the expansion of data collection, including lessons learned, with our peers from other states and US territories."

Georgia's early childhood teachers are required to participate in at least ten hours of approved training annually. Georgia Training Approval establishes the criteria for trainers and reviews training modules to ensure that they are consistent with the professional development competencies necessary to work effectively with young children.



*Shown L-R are Dr. Karen Shetterley, Janice Haker, Georgia Thomas and Benita Moore.*

## DECAL Priority:

# Organizational Excellence

## DECAL Welcomes New Board Member

Dr. Jerri Kropp was recently named to the Board of Early Care and Learning. Governor Deal appointed Dr. Kropp to represent the 12th Congressional District.



*Dr. Jerri Kropp*

Dr. Kropp is an associate professor in the School of Human Ecology, College of Health and Human Sciences, at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro. She received her Ph.D. in child and family development from the University of Georgia in 1981. Dr. Kropp has served as vice-president of programs and professional development on the Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC) advisory board

# your brain is only young once

If your child is 5 or under, now is the time to help them live a happier, healthier life.

Introducing Georgia's community-powered early education rating system.

Make the right choice for your child. Choose Quality Rated.



qualityrated.org  
877-ALL-GAKIDS

## The Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Sonia Ladd, Elizabeth Holland, Edna Zimmerman, Meghan McNail, Takisha Aragonas, Vicki Watts and Ann Wearing.

for the past ten years. She has recently been appointed to the Gulf South Summit Executive Committee, which oversees an annual conference on service-learning and civic engagement through higher education. In 2010, Dr. Kropp received a university award for Excellence in Service.

"I feel honored to have been asked to serve on the Board of Early Care and Learning," said Dr. Kropp. "I have spent my entire career teaching about, and advocating for, high quality early childhood care and education for all children. For the past ten years, I have served on various state committees working on the GELS (now GELDS), Quality Rated, and other initiatives. It is exciting to learn about the DECAL organizational structure and how child care services, Pre-K, and quality initiatives are all related."

"One of my goals while on the Board is to make sure that educators and stakeholders in the 12th Congressional District are aware of all of the programs offered by the Department of Early Care and Learning. One thing that makes me especially proud is that many graduates of the child and family development major at Georgia Southern now work for Bright from the Start!"

Dr. Kropp is a member of NAEYC, GAYC, SECA, and the Child Life Council. For 13 years, she was the director of the NAEYC accredited campus child care center at Georgia Southern.

Dr. Kropp also is an approved trainer for Better Brains for Babies. Additionally, she is the owner of a certified therapy dog, Wrigley, a white German Shepherd, and belongs to Chapter 215 of Therapy Dogs International.

"Wrigley and I go once a month to our regional library to participate in Reading to Rover," said Dr. Kropp. "This is part of a national program sponsored by Therapy Dogs International. The national program is Tail Waggin' Tutors. The idea is for children to read to dogs. Many children are shy or embarrassed to read in front of their peers but will read to dogs. Dogs are accepting and non-judgmental."

Dr. Kropp and her husband, Joe, a psychologist, have two grown sons.

## CAPS Investigative Unit Moving to DECAL

Beginning today, the investigative unit of Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program has a new home at DECAL.

Ray Higgins, DECAL Deputy Commissioner of Finance and

Administration, said the team of six employees will report to Dextral Austin, DECAL's Director of Audits and Compliance.

Providing subsidized child care to low income families, CAPS is administered in all 159 counties in Georgia through the county Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS). Family Independence Case Managers in those county offices determine eligibility for CAPS.

The over \$200-million CAPS program currently serves 52,000 children per month. On July 1, 2012, the CAPS program moved to DECAL from the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Family and Children Services. Governor Nathan Deal directed the move as part of his FY 2013 state budget.

Shown L-R are Richard Bartlett, Amy Hill, Leigh Ann Hendrix, Lee Holloway and Charles Cobb.



### **Four Quality Rated Specialists Join DECAL Team**

DECAL welcomes four new Quality Rated Program Evaluation & Development Specialists. Margrett Stephens is based in Northwest Georgia. She has worked as a resource and referral technical assistance support person, Georgia's Pre-K teacher and assessor for the State of Tennessee. Bianca Staggs is based in the Metro Atlanta area. She previously supported Quality Rated as a family child care technical assistance provider at Quality Care for Children. Andrea Marable is based in Northwest Georgia. A recent graduate of the University of Tennessee, she previously worked with Margrett as an assessor in Tennessee. Mary Stoklas is based in Atlanta answering calls regarding Quality Rated, training and technical assistance. She brings a wealth of knowledge regarding early childhood and is a recent graduate of Georgia State University.



*Pictured L-R are Margrett Stephens, Bianca Staggs, Andrea Marable and Mary Stoklas.*