

**Georgia's Pre-K Program
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Updated 8.21.2020**

Student Attendance

Are programs required to disenroll students who are absent 10 consecutive days or have “chronic attendance” issues?”

Due to the current health pandemic, absences may be more common this school year. Programs should contact families of children who are absent to determine cause of absences. Programs should work with families on a plan for improving attendance and document efforts to assist families of children who do not attend on a regular basis. Programs should disenroll children who are not returning to the program; however, it is not required to disenroll children who are absent due to challenges due to the pandemic (e. g, quarantined, transportation).

Should I mark a student who is quarantined absent?

If a child is quarantined, not sick, and able to participate in distance learning activities, then the child should be marked present. If a child is quarantined and is sick or not able to participate in distance learning activities, then the absence should be recorded as an excused absence.

How do I record attendance for distance learning?

Each individual program is responsible for developing a written process for how student attendance will be documented and how the program will determine if a child is present. Programs may choose to take attendance based on children's presence during virtual learning instruction, as well as evidence of activities completed at home. Other examples for recording attendance include:

- Acknowledgement of viewing a posted activity
- Communication from a family member/caregiver that the child was engaged in a learning activity
- Online sign-in form
- Parent/caregiver responding to a text, email, or phone call
- Participation in a “check-in” virtual conference
- Parent or caregiver picking up learning packets as they are distributed
- Daily or Weekly Family Report (prepared by the teacher with activities that can be "checked off" by families)
- Logging into an online learning platform

Teacher Leave

Is a Pre-K Program required to have a substitute teacher if the Lead or Assistant Teacher is on leave?

DECAL recognizes that there is the potential for additional teacher absences during this time (due to quarantine, sickness, or other issues). Additionally, it may be difficult to employ qualified substitutes. DECAL is allowing some flexibility in the requirements for substitutes during the pandemic. The following guidance has been developed to support program. When considering this guidance, programs must ensure that they are following all relevant health, safety, and licensing regulations for their program (e. g. group size, adult/ child ratios).

Traditional Model: Programs should make every effort to provide a substitute.

Hybrid Model: In a hybrid model of instruction, programs should make every effort to provide a substitute for days that are taking place in the traditional setting. If the teacher's absence is on a distance learning day, the program is not required to hire a substitute but should ensure that the teacher delivering the instruction has the support and materials needed to successfully engage with children and families.

Full Distance Model: In a full distance model of instruction, the program is not required to hire a substitute teacher provided the teacher delivering the instruction during the absence has the equipment and materials needed to successfully engage with children and families.

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: Regardless of whether a substitute teacher is used, the program is required to meet the required salary minimum requirements for the lead and assistant teacher positions for each classroom. It would be allowable to pay the teacher who is on leave due to COVID-19 sickness or quarantine.

Student Documentation

How should programs address if parents are unable to provide required age documentation by the first day of Pre-K or meet the due date for required health certificates?

Families may experience difficulties acquiring required documentation (acceptable age documentation, immunization and eye, ear, dental and wellness forms) for enrollment and program attendance due to pandemic. Programs should work with families to acquire the required forms and may extend the deadline for acceptable age documentation and Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231) for up to 90 days.

Are Pre-K programs using the full distance model of instruction required to obtain the Certificate of Vision, Hearing, Dental, and Nutrition Screening (Form 3300) and Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231) for students enrolled in the program.

All children attending Georgia's Pre-K must have Form 3300 and Form 3231. This includes programs using the full distance model of instruction. Form 3300 is intended to ensure that every child in Georgia is screened for possible problems with vision, hearing, teeth, and nutrition that could hinder the child's ability to learn. Form 3231 is required for all children receiving educational services, even though instruction may be provided through distance learning. Programs should contact their local health department for additional information.

Therapists and Teachers Providing Services

Can child care programs allow outside therapists and teachers into their program to serve Pre-K students?

DECAL strongly encourages programs to work with Babies Can't Wait and local school systems to ensure that students receive therapy and special education instruction. Therapists and special education teachers would be considered essential visitors and are allowed to enter child care programs. However, individual child care programs can determine whether to allow outside personnel into their centers.

Technology Purchases for Virtual Learning

Can I use Pre-K funds to purchase technology for teachers and students participating in virtual instruction?

Programs may use Pre-K funds to purchase technology for students and teachers who do not have access to the tools required for virtual instruction. Technology purchases may include highspeed internet, mobile hotspot, devices (computer, tablet, smart phone) and appropriate learning software for at home use for Pre-K students. Prior approval is not required for these virtual learning tools.

Rosters Due Dates

Have the dates for submitting Pre-K Rosters changes for the 2020 – 2021 school year?

Yes, due to many Pre-K programs starting their school year later, the dates for Roster 1 and Roster 2 have been extended.

Roster	Roster Open for Data Entry	Count Day	Due to DECAL
1	August 3, 2020 August 25, 2020	September 4, 2020 September 18, 2020	September 14, 2020 September 25, 2020
2	October 5, 2020 October 19, 2020	November 6, 2020 November 13, 2020	November 13, 2020 November 20, 2020
3	December 11, 2020	January 15, 2021	January 22, 2021
4	February 12, 2021	March 12, 2021	March 19, 2021

Changes in Payments

Are there any changes in the Pre-K Payment calculation and schedule for the 2020 – 2021 school year?

Yes, due to the change in the Roster 1 dates, the October payment will be based on the Grant Agreement. (August, September, and October payments will be based on the grant agreement.) The Roster 1 data will be reviewed to determine if any changes will be made to the payment calculations beginning in November.

Ten (10) Payments	Level of Teacher Credentials and Number of Children	Ten (10) Months
Payment Processed on or Before	Based On	For the Month of
August 10, 2020	Grant Agreement	August
September 14, 2020	Grant Agreement	September
October 12, 2020	Roster 1 Grant Agreement	October
November 10, 2020	Roster 1	November
December 14, 2020	Roster 2	December
January 11, 2021	Roster 2	January
February 15, 2021	Roster 3	February
March 15, 2021	Roster 3	March
April 12, 2021	Roster 4 (Final)	April
May 10, 2021	Roster 4 (Final)	May

Delaying the Start of the School Year

Can programs delay the start of the school year due to the current community spread of COVID-19?

Due to the current spread of COVID-19, many school systems are deciding to delay the start of the school year. Georgia's Pre-K Programs, both public and private, may choose to delay the start of the school year. Per Pre-K Guidelines, each Pre-K grantee sets their school calendar. Programs will enter calendar information into the PANDA system for approval.

Can programs add additional planning days to allow teachers additional time to prepare for the school year?

To support additional preparation time at the beginning of the school year, DECAL will allow programs to convert up to 10 instructional days to be used as teacher planning days. These days must be scheduled prior to the start of the instructional year for students and may not be used during any other time of the year. Teachers would report to work during this time (onsite or teleworking).

Programs should use this additional time to prepare for the school year including developing distance learning lesson plans and packets, sanitizing and setting up the classroom, conducting Pre-K orientation, and communicating with families about program policies. It would be expected that during this time teachers would contact each child's family to begin to establish relationships, explain classroom and school procedures, and answer questions.

Teachers must be paid during this time as part of their 190 days. Programs who convert up to 10 days of instructional days for additional pre-planning would not be required to make these days up as instructional time with students. Prior approval for up to 10 days is not needed. For more than 10 days, please contact your Pre-K specialist to discuss. It is important to understand that Pre-K payments are based on a total of 190 days.

Meeting the Required Instructional Hours

I am concerned that my program may not meet the required instructional hours due to COVID-19 closures. Will I need to make up days when my classroom was closed due to COVID-19?

DECAL recognizes that it may be difficult to meet the instructional hour requirement for this year. Temporary Pre-K closures due to COVID-19 do not have to be made up if the program provides distance learning during the closure.

Rest Time

My classroom is not large enough to space mats or cots with three - six feet between each. I am concerned about properly sanitizing the mats/ cots. What should I do?

Many classrooms will not accommodate 3-6 feet between individual mat/cots. You can spread your mats as far apart as possible. Have children alternate head/ foot. It is not appropriate for children to sit at tables with their heads down for rest time.

Can I eliminate rest time from my Pre-K schedule?

Periods of rest and quiet are important for the development of young children. However, it may be appropriate to eliminate rest time from the Pre-K schedule due to COVID-19. Please consider the following factors and requirements.

- Some children may be unable to successfully participate in activities without rest time. This may impact their behavior.
- Rest time is especially important for children who will be attending after care.
- If rest time is eliminated, then an alternate activity(ies) must be planned.
- If rest time is eliminated, teachers must still have appropriate breaks for lunch.
- For licensed child care programs, licensing regulations must be followed.

Can I eliminate rest time from my Pre-K schedule and shorten my Pre-K day?

It is not recommended that the Pre-K day is shortened by eliminating rest time. However, it may be appropriate to move rest time to the end of the Pre-K day and allow students who are NOT attending after care to be dismissed one hour early if families are available for pick up. Please consider the following factors and requirements.

- The Pre-K schedule should be revised so that rest time is scheduled for the last hour of the Pre-K day.
- Children who are not dismissed and will be staying for after care would have rest time in the Pre-K classroom prior to their dismissal.
- Pre-K children with siblings to be picked up at the end of the regular 6.5-hour instructional day should not be dismissed early. This would cause families to have two pickup times.
- Families cannot be charged a fee for care during the 6.5 hours. (Can not be charged aftercare for the rest time period).
- Teachers must still have appropriate breaks for lunch; however, it would be appropriate for the break to be scheduled during rest time.
- For licensed child care programs, licensing regulations must be followed. (DECAL is working on temporary regulation to allow for children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K to remain in the program for up to 5.5 hours without a rest period.)

Additional Questions

If a teacher must be quarantined due to COVID-19 and a substitute teacher is hired to teach the class, am I also required to pay the teacher? For guidance regarding sick leave due to COVID-19, programs should review the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcrs-employer-paid-leave>

My class(es) do not have 22 children enrolled at this time. Will DECAL close classes with low enrollment at the beginning of the year? How will my payments be affected?

The first three Pre-K payments (August, September and October) will be based on the Pre-K Grant Agreement; and Pre-K payments are not prorated by the number of students enrolled. Beginning with the November payment, operating funds are prorated by the number of student enrolled. DECAL will review the Roster 1 data to determine if there will be any changes to the proration of Pre-K payments due to low Pre-K enrollment.

How can programs implement distance learning if they are unable to provide children and families with devices for virtual lessons?

It is recommended but not required that children have access to a device for virtual lessons in **traditional or hybrid** models. The distance learning requirement can be met by providing materials and activities for home-based learning on days when distance learning is required (either because the program is temporarily closed or due to hybrid instructional model schedule).

If a program chooses the **full distance** model, then they should ensure that all children have access to the tool needed for virtual learning: device (smartphone, tablet, or computer) and internet. This can be a device shared among family members as long as the family identifies time for the Pre-K students to utilize for lessons. Pre-K funds can be used to purchase devices to support virtual learning. If many families do not have access to the virtual learning tools, then the program should consider selecting a traditional or hybrid model.

What if we don't have enough students to request a classroom to be full distance learning? In the webinar, there was a mention of helping those parents who requested virtual to possibly attend another program. How would that work?

Please contact your Pre-K specialist who will be able to identify programs in your area that are offering the full distance model. DECAL encourages local programs to network between themselves to identify possible solutions for families. You may also ask parents to call 1-866-ALLGAKIDS for information about programs in their area.

May I have my Pre-K teachers come to work and do their full distance learning while monitoring other children in the building?

No, Pre-K teachers can not supervise other students during the Pre-K instructional day.