

**Georgia's Pre-K Program
2020-2021 School Year
Pre-K Providers' Operating Guidelines Addendum
COVID-19 Guidance
Revised 8.6.2020**

The COVID-19 Guidance document was created to provide guidance to Pre-K Providers due to the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency. This document provides additional information for specific sections of the Guidelines. For additional guidance or specific questions, providers should email prek@decals.ga.gov.

1.0 General Program Operations and Services Information

1.3 Days of Service

Local School System Furlough Days

DECAL recognizes that some local school systems will not meet the required days of service due to QBE state budget cuts. If a program is unable to provide the required instructional time (1170 instructional hours), then the program's Pre-K payment will be prorated based on the number of instructional days provided. Programs must include furlough days in the calendar submitted in PANDA.

4.0 Classroom Requirements

Georgia's Pre-K Program is built upon a developmentally appropriate, play-based, interactive instruction and classroom environments. DECAL strongly encourages programs to place a priority on having students physically present in Pre-K classrooms for the 2020 – 2021 school year. However, DECAL acknowledges that the level of COVID-19 community spread may necessitate the closure of Pre-K classrooms and instruction will need to be provided through distance instruction. Additionally, some family needs (or comfort level) may necessitate access to distance instruction.

For the 2020 – 2021 school year, DECAL will allow programs to select from three different instructional models: traditional, hybrid, and full distance. Each model will have specific guidelines and requirements for implementation. The 2020 – 2021 School Year Georgia's Pre-K Program Guidance Toolkit will be posted by July 8th. Programs will be required to select a model for each Pre-K classroom.

4.6 Lesson Plans

Written lesson plans are required for each Pre-K classroom regardless of the instructional model implemented. Lesson plans should be completed weekly and available prior to the beginning of each week. Lead and Assistant Teachers should work collaboratively on lesson plans, and Assistant Teachers should have access to the lesson plans to review activities prior to instruction. Lesson plans should include all required activities and should provide differentiated instruction based on the individual needs of all children in the class, including children with disabilities.

4.7 Assessment

Regardless of instructional model, all Georgia's Pre-K classrooms are required to implement the Work Sampling System.

4.8 Family Participation

Due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, programs should restrict families' access to parts of the program. Specifically, access may be limited to the front door of the facility/school and/or the door of their child's classroom.

Family Conferences/Sharing Assessment Information with Families

Family conferences which are normally held in person may be done via a web-based platform (i.e. Skype, Zoom, etc.) or by phone. If programs and/or families are unable to arrange remote meetings, Narrative Summary reports can be distributed to families electronically or through the mail. Parent signatures are not required for Narrative Summary reports distributed to families electronically or through the mail. In lieu of obtaining parent signatures, teachers should document the date and how the Narrative Summary was provided (electronically or through the mail) on the signature line.

Each Pre-K program is responsible for developing a written process for how children's performance will be shared with families. The process should include the method for providing information to parents (in-person or remote meeting, email, mail, etc.), when the information will be provided, and how family conferences/sharing of information will be documented. Pre-K project directors should share their written process with teachers and provide teachers the contact information for parents. Programs should maintain a copy of their written process for review by their assigned Pre-K Specialist.

4.9 Basic Classroom Equipment, Materials and Supplies

To limit the exposure to COVID-19, Pre-K providers should review the equipment, materials and supplies in the classroom and develop a plan for sanitizing and cleaning. The Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides guidelines for cleaning early childhood classrooms with considerations for classroom equipment, materials and supplies. The guidelines can be accessed [here](#).

It is appropriate for Pre-K classrooms to rotate materials and supplies available within the classroom to allow time for sanitization and cleaning. When selecting materials for use in the classroom, consider what type of materials are easily sanitized vs. those that require more cleaning effort and attention. Examples of materials and toys easily sanitized include Legos, wooden and plastic blocks, plastic manipulatives, board puzzles, markers and plastic cars/figures. Materials more difficult to sanitize include but not limited to play-dough, soft surface blocks/manipulatives and crayons. Programs may choose to limit sharing of those materials.

Additionally, Pre-K classrooms are designed with many learning centers. Programs should consider ways to enlarge the center spaces and limit the number of children within these spaces at one time. It would be appropriate to limit the number of centers open each day, have the same cohort of children stay together in an area of the room and for center materials to be brought to children rather than children moving freely within centers or rotating through activities.

5.0 Delivery of Services

5.2 Classroom Delivery

For the 2020 – 2021 school year, DECAL will allow programs to select from three different instructional models: traditional, hybrid, and full distance. Each model will have specific guidelines and requirements for implementation. The 2020 – 2021 School Year Georgia’s Pre-K Program Guidance Toolkit will be posted by July 8th. Programs will be required to select a model for each Pre-K classroom. The approved 2020 – 2021 models provide flexibility in group size but allow for programs to “cohort” classrooms into smaller consistent groups to reduce potential spread of COVID-19. Both the Lead and Assistant teacher must be actively involved with children during the 6.5 hours of instructional time each day with the exception of the one half to one hour rest time.

5.3 Program Delivery

For the 2020 – 2021 school year, DECAL will allow programs to select from three different instructional models: traditional, hybrid, and full distance. Each model will have specific guidelines and requirements for implementation. The 2020 – 2021 School Year Georgia’s Pre-K Program Guidance Toolkit will be posted by July 8th. Programs will be required to select a model for each Pre-K classroom.

5.4 Orientation

Family orientation should be offered virtually or with individual family groups.

5.6 Substitutes

The Pre-K provider must ensure that appropriate instruction is conducted daily in the Pre-K classroom. There must be continuity of instruction for each instructional model; however, for intermittent teacher absences (no more than 1-2 days in length) in the Full Distance model, it may be appropriate for one teacher to conduct instruction. In the Traditional and Hybrid model, a substitute will be required for any time a lead or assistant teacher is absent.

5.8 Program/Staff Hours

Regardless of Instructional Model, 6.5 hours of instructional activities should be provided daily (with the exception of rest time and meals). The remaining working hours of the lead and assistant teacher should be used for Pre-K activities such as family conferences, meetings, instructional planning, and child assessment. A program may choose to provide flexible hours in the Full Distance model to support the needs of families (i.e. teacher schedules conferences in the evening to accommodate a family’s work schedule.)

5.9 Transportation

Transportation should only be provided for transporting children between their place of residence and the Pre-K facility. To the greatest extent possible, all permissible transports shall be conducted in such a way that maintains social distancing.

5.11 School Closure and Make-Up Days

Programs are not required to make-up days closed due to COVID-19 if appropriate distance learning is provided during school closures. Programs should develop instructional plans for intermittent closures due to COVID-19.

8.0 Program Fees

8.3 Field Trips/ Special Experiences for Students

Fields trips off-site or on-site field trips are suspended until further notice.

8.7 Meals

Based on the CDC recommendations for group settings, it is recommended that meals and snacks be served in the classroom instead of a communal cafeteria or common space. Family style dining should be suspended until further notice.

Meal fees should align with the Instructional Model implemented. Families can not be charged meal fees for days when children are participating in regularly scheduled distance learning days. Meal fees for intermittent school closures due to COVID-19 should be clearly defined in written policy and provided to families upon enrollment.

8.9 Special Family Activities

Programs should refrain from providing on-site family activities. DECAL encourages Pre-K providers to host virtual family activities.

9.0 DECAL Monitoring and Technical Assistance

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Pre-K Division may implement alternative methods to monitor and support Pre-K providers. Information regarding virtual visits and technical assistance will be provided prior to the start of the 2020 - 2021 school year.

Instructional Quality (IQ) Guides specific to the 2020 – 2021 instructional models will be provided prior to the start of the school year.

11.0 General Personnel Information

In all Instructional models, both the Lead and Assistant Teacher must be actively involved with children during the instructional day. For any Distance Learning, it is the decision of the employer to determine if teachers providing distance learning are required to work from their school site or are able to work from home.

16.0 Grant Award Notification and Budgets

16.2 Class Budget

DECAL recognizes the potential impact of the public health emergency on student enrollment. To limit the impact of reduced enrollment on operating funds, enrollment data will be reviewed after Roster 1 to determine if there may be considerations for adjusting the per child proration.

17.0 Expenditure Requirements

17.1 Expenditure Guidelines

Programs may utilize Pre-K funds to purchase supplies or equipment needed due to COVID-19. This could include face coverings for Pre-K children and staff, sanitation supplies and costs associated with cleaning and sanitation of Pre-K classrooms and playgrounds. Additionally, funds should be utilized to purchase enough of frequently used supplies such as crayons, pencils, scissors, etc. so that supplies can be assigned to individual children or consistent small groups of children.

Programs should also consider using Pre-K funds to provide materials for supporting distance learning activities.

18.0 Reimbursement Process

18.4 Schedule of Payments

The August, September and October payments will be based on the executed grant agreement.

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

18.7 Rosters

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

Additional Guidance

Pre-K providers must make every effort to limit the exposure to and spread of COVID-19. Pre-K providers should comply with all relevant Executive Orders issued by the Governor's Office.

Limit group sizes per room. The term "single location" shall be interpreted to mean a space where all persons gathered cannot maintain at least six (6) feet of distance between themselves and any other person. For Pre-K purposes, this means a single classroom. It is not appropriate to require children and teachers to remain 6 feet apart. It is important that children and teachers can interact and that children can interact and play with peers. It is appropriate to consider measures to encourage physical distancing such as increasing small group instruction, dividing children into smaller consistent cohort groups, and implementing social distancing when in large group settings (assigning seats in circle time, limiting the number of children per center, etc.).

Health Screenings upon arrival. It is recommended that providers conduct temperature checks for children and staff upon arrival at the facility. All visitors, staff, and children shall be screened prior to entrance and shall be excluded if they have a fever above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or exhibit respiratory symptoms, including cough or shortness of breath. Staff conducting daily health screenings should use the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Restrict Access. Programs should restrict families' access to parts of the program. Specifically, access must be limited to the front door of the facility or the door of their respective child's classroom only.

Sanitize and disinfect. In addition to the rigorous hygiene, sanitation, and disinfection licensing rules childcare providers adhere to in their programs, special attention must be paid to the following:

- Surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially toys and games must be cleaned. This includes cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily such as doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops, nap mats, toilet training potties, desks, chairs, cubbies, and playground structures.
- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- Machine washable cloth toys should be used by one individual at a time or should not be used at all. These toys should be laundered before being used by another child.
- Set aside toys that need to be cleaned. Place in a dish pan with soapy water or put in a separate container marked for “soiled toys.”
- Use bedding (sheets, pillows, blankets, sleeping bags) that can be washed. Keep each child’s bedding separate, and consider storing in individually labeled bins, cubbies, or bags. Cots and mats should be labeled for each child. Bedding that touches a child’s skin should be cleaned weekly or before use by another child.