



**Brian P. Kemp**  
Governor

**Amy M. Jacobs**  
Commissioner

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Media Contact: Reg Griffin  
404-656-0239  
[reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov)



**CDC Report Highlights Success of Georgia Head Start Programs in  
Mitigating Spread of COVID-19**

*Georgia's Head Start Collaboration Office Kept Programs Connected with  
Critical DECAL Services*

**Atlanta, GA (December 17, 2020)** – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released a report highlighting Head Start's effective response in managing the spread of COVID-19.

View the report here: <https://bit.ly/2JPESgL>

The study found programs have been successful at implementing CDC-recommended guidance and other mitigation strategies that could serve as a model for the early care and education system across the country. The report also validated the critical role that increased funding, provided through the CARES Act, played in enabling Head Start programs to support families in a safe, healthy manner.

The study, which included Head Start grantees in Georgia, as well as Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Missouri, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin, noted several factors contributing to successful implementation of CDC-recommended guidelines that helped to prevent COVID-19 transmission among children and staff members, including:

- Following the lead of experts and their recommendations;
- Funding programs through the CARES Act to enable necessary adaptations;

- Providing flexibility and support for Head Start staff, including flexible medical leave, reimbursement for health care costs, remote work options, and flexible hours;
- Taking a nimble, multi-pronged approach that evolves as circumstances change; and
- Conducting multi-faceted, ongoing communication with consistent messaging among program administrators, parents and caregivers, teachers, and other staff members, as well as continuous engagement with community partners.

National Head Start Association Executive Director Yasmina Vinci issued the following statement:

“Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, Head Start has once again set the standard for delivering high-quality early care and education, taking every possible precaution to protect the health of Head Start children, families, and staff and the communities in which they live,” said Vinci. “Head Start and Early Head Start programs have led the way in responding to COVID-19, successfully continuing services to families and implementing guidance to reopen and remain open for in-person services.”

Allison Setterlind, Director of Georgia’s Head Start Collaboration Office, issued the following statement:

“This CDC report provides positive reinforcement for the hard work we have seen on the ground here in Georgia. Our Head Start and Early Head Start programs continue to provide essential services to over 24,000 young children and their families during this stressful time. Our Head Start staff have gone the extra mile these past several months to keep families safe and provide a critical lifeline to health, mental health, early education, and nutrition resources. Georgia Head Start programs have benefited from the support and resources from the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning in the provision of high-quality services during the pandemic.”

As an Early Head Start (EHS) grantee, DECAL partners with and supports early care and education programs that provide EHS services to infants, toddlers, and their families in counties across the metro Atlanta area. The partnership between DECAL and EHS is a system-building initiative formed to strengthen Georgia’s early education foundation and provide comprehensive services that meet the needs of low-income working families. The partnership strives to provide access to high-quality care, promote infant/toddler development through strong relationship-based experiences, and prepare young children for the transition to preschool.

Georgia’s Head Start Collaboration Office hosted over 48 virtual meetings with Directors of Head Start grantees to connect them with DECAL divisions such as Nutrition and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) during this critical time.

### **About the National Head Start Association**

The National Head Start Association is a not-for-profit organization committed to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in school and in life. The opportunities offered by Head Start lead to healthier, empowered children and families, and stronger, more vibrant communities. NHSA is the voice for more than one million children, 270,000 staff, and 1,600 Head Start grantees in the United States. Visit [www.nhsa.org](http://www.nhsa.org) and follow @NatlHeadStart for more information.

### **About DECAL**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program; licenses child care centers and home-based child care; administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program and federal nutrition programs; and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's community-powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.al.ga.gov](http://www.dec.al.ga.gov).