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**DECAL joins Georgia Department of Public Health in
Offering COVID-19 Guidance for Georgia Child Care Facilities**

*Guidance Addresses Drop Off/Arrival and Food Prep/Meal Service to
How and Where to Report Confirmed COVID cases in Child Care Programs*

ATLANTA, Ga., (August 19, 2020) – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has joined the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) in offering COVID-19 Guidance specifically for Georgia child care facilities. The guidance covers everything from drop off/arrival and food preparation and meal service to how and where to report confirmed cases of COVID-19 in child care programs.

“The guidance we are releasing today is designed for families, child care facilities, and healthcare providers,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “The health and safety of Georgia’s youngest learners is always our top priority and we want to create an environment in child care that will continue to slow the spread of COVID-19. We have been working with local health departments and DPH since the start of this public health emergency in March, however, working together we have streamlined and improved this guidance based on science, data, and our experience over the past five months.”

“Through this partnership with DECAL, we are providing day care operators with guidance critical to their health and that of the children in their care,” said Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., DPH commissioner. “Our goal is for children to learn and grow in an environment that protects them, and their families, from COVID-19. Working together we can prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

Jacobs said the guidance helps clarify how and where to report confirmed cases of COVID-19 in child care programs. She added that an entire facility does not necessarily need to close if the affected person has been isolated to a single classroom.

“Child care providers are the experts at hygiene, sanitization, and disinfection and have worked under these rules and regulations on a daily basis for a long time,” explained Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner of Child Care Services. “COVID-19 raises the stakes for keeping our children healthy and safe, and the over 4,400 licensed child care programs in Georgia are willing and eager to do everything possible to serve children and families well during this public health emergency, allowing parents to return to work with greater peace of mind.”

Stevens said the new COVID-19 guidelines will be distributed to child care programs through e-mail and posted to the COVID-19 page on DECAL’s website at www.decal.ga.gov, where parents can also access the 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.decal.ga.gov.