

# Welcome to the Board of Early Care and Learning

*August 22, 2024*



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of Early Care  
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BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Board Meeting Welcome

*Phil Davis, Board Chair*



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# Approval of Agenda and Minutes

- Approve 08/22/2024 agenda
- Approve 05/16/2024 minutes



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# Inspiration

Susan Harper



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# Board Member Updates

# Commissioner's Updates

*Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner*



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# Senate Study Committee on Access to Affordable Childcare

- Created by SR 471 (Albers) during 2024 legislative session
- Study on challenges many Georgians face when seeking affordable child care options for both preschool and school-aged children
- Study measures necessary and appropriate to increase access to affordable child care in Georgia
- Chaired by Senator Brian Strickland and 6 other members
- First meeting August 28, 2024
- Report issued by December 1, 2024



# Special Examination of the Childcare and Parents Services (CAPS) Program



- Requested by the Senate Appropriations Committee
- Conducted by the Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA)
- Assisted by Georgia State University Fiscal Research Center
- Economic analysis of changes to CAPS slots versus changes to CAPS subsidies for eligible families
- DOAA will submit report to Senate Appropriations Committee





# Finance, Legislative, & Administrative Updates

*Rian Ringsrud, Deputy Commissioner for Finance & Administration*



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## Budget Comparison

Data as of June 30 <sup>th</sup>	Budget	Expenditures*	Remaining Balance	% Remaining
By Program				
Child Care Services	\$1,017,150,920	\$1,017,150,920	\$0	0%
Nutrition	\$166,950,534	\$166,950,534	\$0	0%
Pre-K + (HS)	\$462,735,694	\$458,476,791	\$4,258,903	1%
Quality Initiatives	\$44,094,308	\$44,094,308	\$0	0%
Totals	\$1,690,931,456	1,686,672,553	\$4,258,903	.25%

By Fund Source				
State General	\$63,285,758	\$63,285,758	\$0	0%
State Lottery	\$462,555,096	\$458,296,193	\$4,258,903	1%
Federal	\$1,164,741,388	1,164,741,388	\$0	0%
Other	\$349,218	\$349,218	\$0	0%
Totals	\$1,690,931,456	1,686,672,553	\$4,258,903	.25%

\* Includes encumbrances.

## Finance Update

## FY 2024 Q4 Budget Summary



## Upcoming Budget Requests

	Current FY25 Budget	Proposed AFY25 Budget	Proposed FY26 Budget
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### By Program

Child Care Services	\$452,173,841	\$452,173,841	\$452,173,841
Nutrition	\$170,000,000	\$170,000,000	\$170,000,000
Pre-K + (HS)	\$541,598,948	\$541,598,948	\$560,501,199
Quality Initiatives	\$57,693,238	\$57,693,238	\$57,693,238
Totals	\$1,221,466,027	\$1,221,466,027	\$1,240,368,278

### By Fund Source

State General	\$71,882,694	\$71,882,694	\$71,882,694
State Lottery	\$541,423,948	\$541,423,948	\$560,326,199
Federal	\$607,659,885	\$607,659,885	\$607,659,885
Other	\$499,500	\$499,500	\$499,500
Totals	\$1,221,466,027	\$1,221,466,027	\$1,240,368,278

# Finance Update

## AFY 2025 & FY 2026 Budget Requests



# Happy Helpings

*Georgia's Summer Food Service Program*



## **FY24 Stats to Date**

- Meals Served: 2,644,424
- Meal Sites: 1,025
- Sponsors: 72
- Counties Served: 103

## **Start-up Grants**

- \$100k awarded by State for grants to increase access to meals in areas with high childhood food insecurity
- 12 new and experienced sponsors were awarded grants
- Expanded meal services to 14 unserved Georgia counties
- Counties include Appling, Calhoun, Clay, Emanuel, Evans, Heard, Jasper, Laurens, Pickens, Talbot, Turner, Union, Warren & White

# Happy Helpings Events

- Nutrition Services Division partnered with Happy Helpings sponsors to host events promoting the importance of combining good nutrition with physical activity.
- Events held in June with Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta and Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Georgia were held to officially kick-off the summer meals season.
- Spike event held in July with the City of Atlanta to remind families that summer meals are available until school starts.
- Along with multiple physical activities that included bean bags, hula hoops, jump ropes and hopscotch, children enjoyed a nutritious meal, stayed hydrated with a hydration station with fruit and herb infused water, and taste-tested Georgia grown fruits and vegetables. Nutrition education materials were also provided.





# Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports Updates

*Susan Adams, Deputy Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K and Instructional Supports*



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# Summer Transition Program 2024



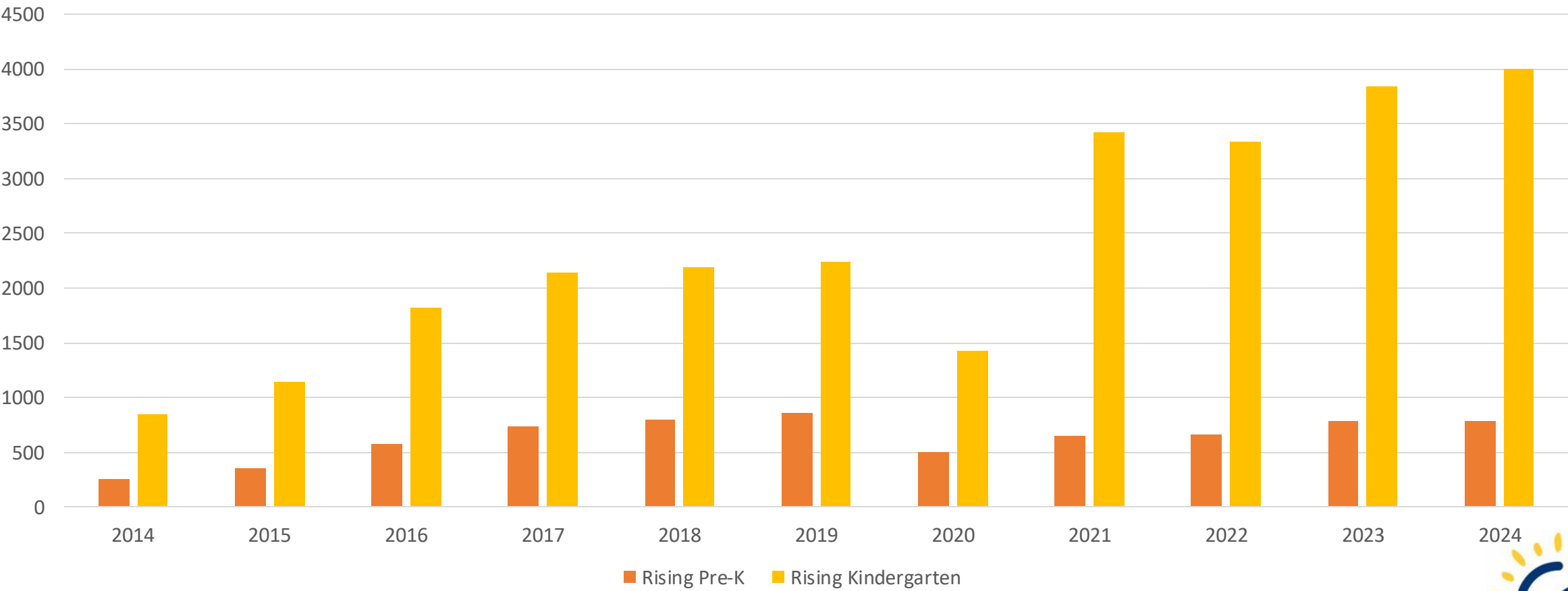
- Five-week onsite program for Rising Pre-K and Rising Kindergarten students
- Reduced class size
  - Rising K: 12
  - Rising Pre-K: 14
- Transition Coach Support for Families



# Summer Transition Program 2024

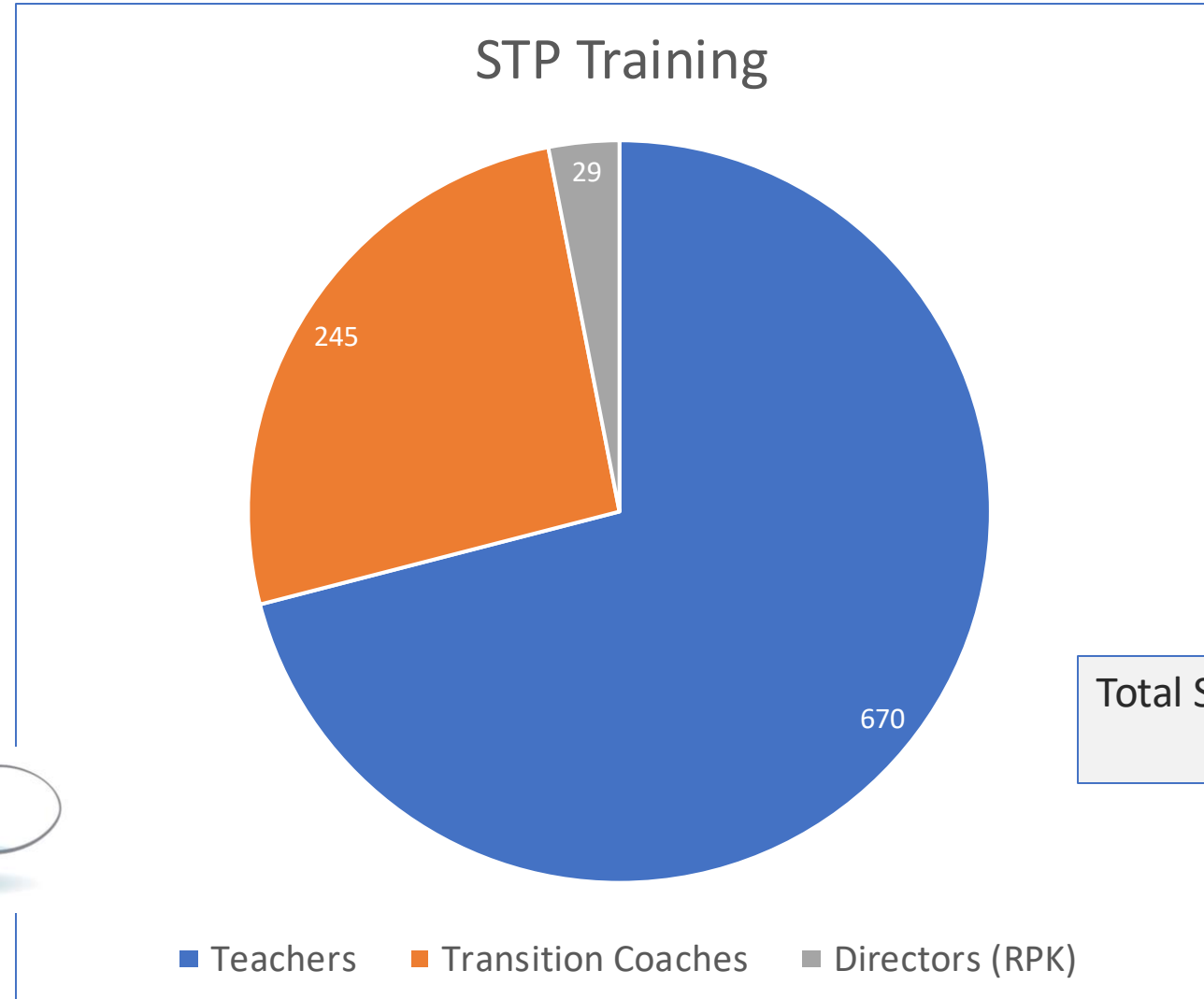


Total Enrollment





# Summer Transition Program 2024



Total Staff Trained  
944

**Alliance  
Theatre**





"The STP Program is one of the most powerful educational experiences I have had in my 35 years as an educator. The pure joy of learning among the students and teachers was inspiring. It was engaging learning at its best.

One parent commented, "Every day, my child thrived while exercising his social skills in a playful and engaging environment. His excitement for exploring new concepts through our hands-on approach was palpable."

Thank you for allowing us to be a part of this great program!"

Annette Beckwith  
Director of Early Learning  
Jefferson City Schools







# Pre-K FY 2025 Updates

*Budget Increases support the access to and quality of Georgia's Pre-K Program*

Access	Quality
Funding of additional classrooms (~90 classes per year for next four years)	Reduction of class size from 22 students to 20 students
Inclusion of Pre-K in the K-12 capital outlay formula	Salary parity with K-12 for Pre-K lead and assistant teachers
Increased operating funds for private programs	Increased start-up funding for new classrooms and ongoing replenishment grants for continuation classrooms
Increased funds for transportation	



School Year	Grantees	Sites	Classes
2023 - 2024	836	1827	3682
2024 - 2025	887	1892	3810

# Workforce Task Force Updates

*Christi Moore, Director of Workforce Supports and Learning*



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# Mission and Vision: Workforce Supports & Learning

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## Mission

We champion Georgia's early childhood educators.

## Vision

Georgia's early childhood educators are committed to the profession, achieve their career goals, and provide Georgia's children with high quality early care and education.



# Pillars of Workforce Development

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RECRUITMENT  
AND CAREER  
PATHWAYS



PROFESSIONAL  
STANDARDS AND  
PRACTICES



RETENTION AND  
WELL-BEING



WORKFORCE  
DATA AND  
SYSTEMS





# Early Care and Education Workforce Task Force

Task Force and Recommendations Review

# Mission and Purpose: ECE Workforce Taskforce

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## Mission

The mission of the Early Care and Education Task Force is to support the recruitment and retention of a skilled early childhood education workforce, improve career pathways for early childhood educators, and support high-quality early care experiences and outcomes for children and their families.

## Purpose Statement

The Early Care and Education Task Force will research and make recommendations for how to best support the early childhood education workforce. The task force will focus on the state registry, career pathways and credentialing, and gathering and reporting out data on the workforce.



# Process and Methods

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**Webinar 1:  
Georgia Context**

**Webinar 2:  
National Trends**

**In-Person:  
Recommendations**

Early Care and Education Workforce Task Force was made up of representatives who were familiar with early education service delivery or early childhood education workforce training and development, including:

- Teachers
- Directors
- Trainers
- Post-secondary education specialists
- Advocates



# Recommendations

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## Workforce Data and Educator Registry

1. Develop a process for collecting early care and education workforce data that aligns with national standards.
2. Issue an annual report on the early care and education workforce.
3. Participation in GaPDS should be mandatory for all members of the workforce.



# Recommendations

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## Credentialing and Career Pathways

4. The Georgia Career Levels should be reviewed and updated.
5. Strengthen the system to better support educators to access training and credentials to achieve their career goals.
6. Establish a process to receive ongoing feedback from the workforce.



# Opportunities for Future Action

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## Workforce Data and Early Childhood Educator Registry

- Develop a dashboard for GaPDS data.
- Make GaPDS a one-stop shop for the early childhood workforce.
- Analyze existing GaPDS data to evaluate strengths, weaknesses, and data quality.
- Research steps to align data collection practices to Partners in Employment Reporting (PER) recommendations.

## Credentialing and Pathways

- Collaborate with institutions of higher learning to articulate ECE pathways.
- Establish an educator advisory group for consistent feedback.
- Work with early childhood educators to better understand workforce entry points and articulate pathways from those entry points.



# Federal Programs & QIP Updates

*Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs*

*Woody Dover, Enterprise Project Management Director*

*Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships*



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# CAPS Policy Changes

*Elisabetta Kasfir, Deputy Commissioner for Federal Programs*



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# Quick Facts



- CAPS is state and federally funded, with federal funding through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) and DECAL as the lead agency
- CAPS is designed to serve 50,000 children at a given point in time
- Providers participating in CAPS are required to be Quality Rated and receive additional funds based on their star level
- Since 2021, DECAL has supplemented CCDF funds with COVID-19 relief dollars that expire September 29, 2024
- These relief dollars not only allowed CAPS to pay child care providers their full published rate and to expand to serve over 72,000 children, relief funds were also used to increase tiered reimbursement percentages



# July 1, 2024 CAPS Policy Revisions

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- Families experiencing Domestic Violence, Natural Disaster and Families who lack fixed, regular, and adequate housing priority groups must meet state approved activity requirements
- Families of children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program at initial or previous determination must meet priority group status at redetermination
- Reduced grace period timeframes from 90 days to 45 days for verification documentation
- Reduced very low income (VLI) priority group values from 50% to 10%



# Need for CAPS Policy Changes

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## American Rescue Plan Funding Ends

- Federal ARP funds must be spent by September 30, 2024
- ARP funds were used to pay for ACCESS, increased tiered reimbursement, STABLE, and other critical initiatives
- Most importantly, ARP funds were used to increase the number of children and families CAPS serves

## New CCDF Rules Issued

- In March 2024, the federal Office of Child Care in the Administration for Children and Families issued new rules that states must implement
- While Georgia has applied for a waiver for some of the new rules, CAPS must adjust policies to prepare for implementation

## New CCDF Plan for Georgia Created

- Every three years, states are required to create a new state plan that details how they will meet CCDF guidelines
- New plan goes into effect October 1, 2024



# Bottom Line



- The end of pandemic relief funding, the changes to federal regulations, and the new state CCDF plan rules mean that CAPS has to implement policy changes
- The changes include reducing the number of CAPS Scholarships back to 50,000 and adjusting provider rates
- We recognize that these changes will not be easy, but we will work hard to minimize the impact on your children, families, workforce, and programs



# CAPS Payment Rate Changes

*Woody Dover, Enterprise Project Management Director*



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# CAPS Payment Rate Changes and Supports

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- For most types of care, DECAL is increasing the CAPS Rate to the 60th percentile
- Tiered reimbursement payments will transition to Quality Incentive Payments (*QIP*) for 2- and 3-star providers
  - 2- and 3-star providers will receive a quarterly payment of 5% and 10% respectively
- DECAL will introduce annual Workforce Support Payments (*WSP*) of \$500
- Recognizing that these are major changes, DECAL is offering new resources through its Thriving Child Care Business Academy



# DECAL's Priorities

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- DECAL faced difficult choices in deciding how to allocate fewer federal funds among its programs while complying with numerous new requirements
- In making those decisions, the agency was guided by the same priorities DECAL set for distributing the federal pandemic relief funds: ensuring that the needs of **families**, **providers**, and the **child care workforce** are considered



- The new rates, quarterly incentive payments, and workforce payments reflect these priorities

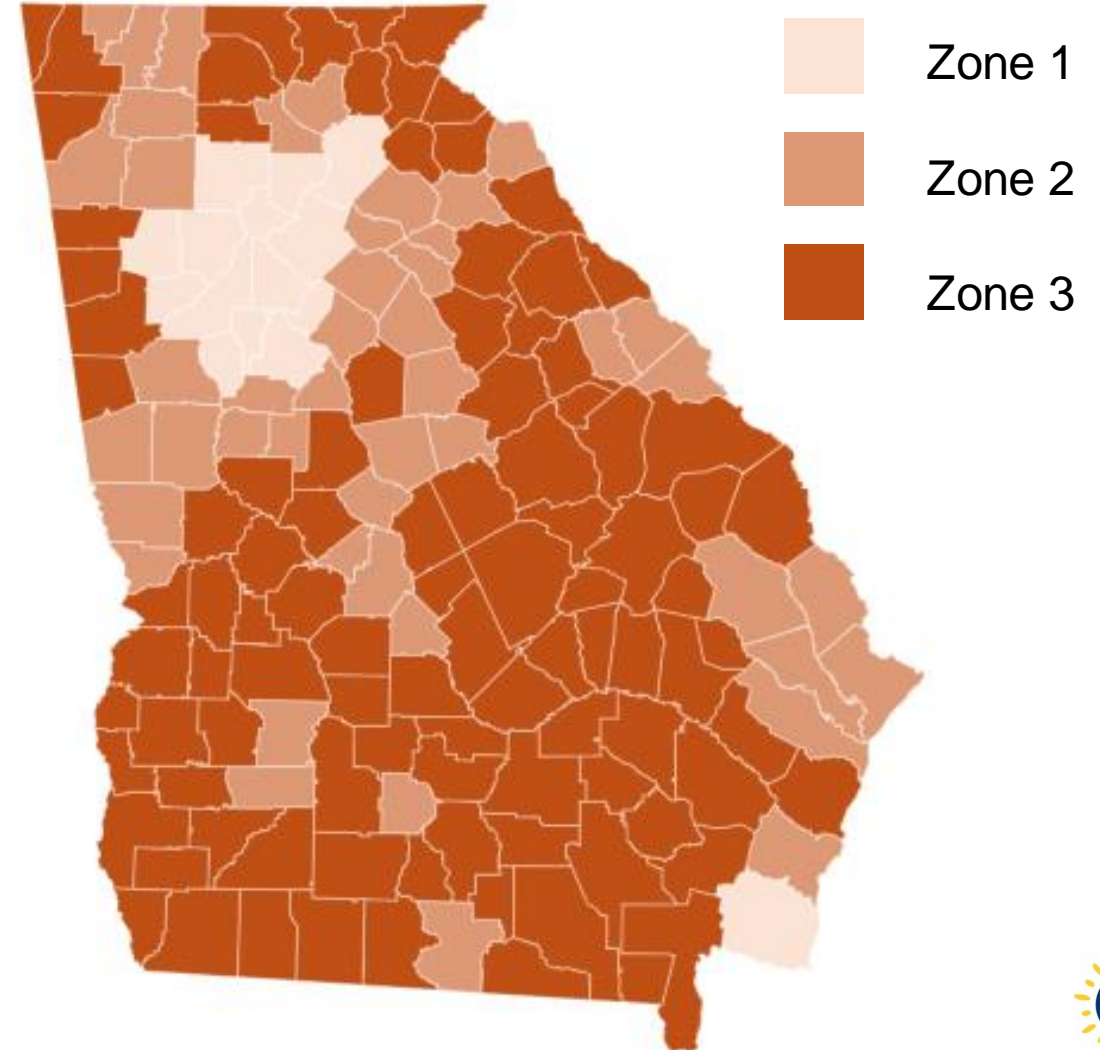




# CAPS Rates 101

- The CAPS Rate (also known as the SMRR and Base Rate) is the maximum rate the state pays providers offering CAPS before subtracting family fees
- The CAPS Rate is updated based on federal regulations and funding availability
- DECAL conducted a market rate evaluation and cost study to understand the price and cost of child care before setting rates
- The market rate evaluation helps DECAL determine market prices for child care in each of the three payment zones for setting rates
- **The new CAPS Rates go into effect the week of September 30, along with the new CCDF Plan**

## CAPS Payment Zones





# CAPS Rate Increase

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**DECAL is raising the CAPS Rate for full-day care from the 25th percentile to the 60th percentile, the largest non-pandemic-related increase in CAPS history**



# CAPS Rate Increase

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**The amount of the increase will vary by the type of care**

- **Full-Time Care:** Increase in full-time care rates will be the largest non-pandemic increase in CAPS history
  - Complies with federal guidelines
  - Reduces the financial impact on families
- **Before and After School Care:** Before and after school care rates will increase by 5%
  - All before and after school care rates are at or above the cost of care
  - Full-time care rates during holidays and summer



# Comparison of 2019 and 2024 CAPS Rates

**Overall, CAPS Rates are increasing significantly from pre-pandemic levels**

Example: Rates for Toddler Care

	Zone 1		Zone 2		Zone 3	
	Center	Family	Center	Family	Center	Family
2019	\$159	\$137	\$115	\$100	\$95	\$83
2024	\$248	\$188	\$160	\$140	\$125	\$110



# Break

*Ten Minutes*



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# New Quality Rated Supports

*Bentley Ponder, Deputy Commissioner for Quality Innovations and Partnerships*



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# Quality Incentive Payments

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**Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursement will be replaced with Quality Incentive Payments**

- **Current Structure:** As part of their total CAPS payment amounts, QR CAPS providers receive reimbursements set at various percentage levels that are based on their star rating and that have varied based on funding
- **New Structure:** Quality Incentive Payments (QIPs) will be paid separately from weekly CAPS payments and will be distributed as quarterly bonuses



# Quality Incentive Payments

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**Quality Incentive Payments will differ in structure from the previous Tiered Reimbursement**

- **Payment Timing**
  - Will be paid on a quarterly basis to promote reinvestment in maintaining and improving quality
- **Quality Rated Status**
  - Available for 2- and 3-star programs
  - 2-star programs will receive a 5% quarterly bonus; 3-star programs will receive a 10% quarterly bonus
  - While 1-star programs will not receive a quality payment, most will make up this difference in increased CAPS reimbursement rates
  - Additionally, resources will be offered in 2025 to assist 1-star programs in advancing to 2- or 3-star level



# How Will Quality Incentive Payments Work?

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- Payments will be based on a percentage of the amount paid for service weeks in the previous quarter
- Beginning in 2025, QIP will occur at the end of February, May, August, and November
- An initial payment will be made in December 2024, which will be prorated for the full first quarter, so that providers receive a payment in each quarter





# Key Takeaways

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- With the increase in CAPS rates and QIP, most providers will see an **overall increase** in payments from pre- to post-pandemic
- Though 1-star providers will no longer receive quality payments, **most will still see an increase resulting from CAPS** rate changes
- QR will support 1-star providers with resources to help them work toward earning 2- or 3-star ratings in 2025
- The \$98M increase in CAPS rates and QIP (plus \$17M for the soon-to-be-discussed workforce payments) represents the largest single increase (34%) in CAPS funding in CAPS history



# Workforce Support Payments

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## New Workforce Support Payments will be introduced

**Annual Workforce Support Payments (*WSP*):** DECAL is introducing a new annual workforce award of \$500 for eligible employees of providers who are Quality Rated at the 1-, 2-, or 3-star level

**Purpose of Payments:** This award is intended to help support and retain child care professionals, with the goal of enhancing the quality of care and education that children receive

**Who Receives the Payments:** Available to eligible staff of Quality Rated providers at all star levels, regardless of CAPS participation



# Workforce Support Payments

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## How Workforce Support Payments will work

**Eligibility for Multiple Program Types:** Eligible staff from any star-rated program will be entitled to the workforce support payment

- Family Child Care Learning Homes
- Child Care Learning Centers
- Stand-Alone School Age Programs

**Payment Process:** The \$500 payments will begin in 2025 and will be paid one-time annually, directly to each eligible individual, as designated in GaPDS

- Center Directors and Assistant Directors
- Family Home Administrators and Aides or Assistants
- Center Classroom Lead and Assistant Teachers
- Classroom Floaters



# Feedback Opportunities

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- Survey: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/QRPost-webinar](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QRPost-webinar)
- Upcoming in-person meetings




# Thriving Child Care Business Academy


*Sonja Steptoe, Communications and Outreach Manager*




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# Thriving Child Care Business Academy


**DECAL**  
Thriving Child Care  
Business Academy

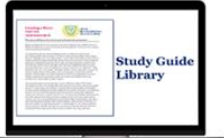
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Agency Programs Families Teachers Providers STABLE/Workforce Open Records





The DECAL Thriving Child Care Business Academy is an online platform of free training and resources to give owners and administrators the knowledge and tools to enhance their financial management skills with the goal of making their centers and family homes thriving child care businesses. [Learn More](#)


**TRAININGS**  
See descriptions of all trainings and resources; watch recordings of webinars  
[Learn More](#)

**RESOURCES**  
Utilize a library of free, bilingual, online materials and videos on 50+ business topics  
[Learn More](#)

**SCHEDULES & REGISTRATION**  
Get schedules and links to registration information for all Academy trainings  
[Learn More](#)

Helping organizations thrive  
**CIVITAS**  
STRATEGIES

Small Business  
Development Center  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Early Childhood  
Quality Assurance

<https://www.dec.al.ga.gov/Thriving.aspx>





# Thriving Child Care Business Academy



**DECAL**  
**Thriving Child Care**  
**Business Academy**

**An online platform of free courses and materials to help owners and administrators acquire the knowledge, skills, and tools to make their centers and homes thriving child care businesses**

**<https://www.dec.al.ga.gov/Thriving.aspx>**



# Thriving Child Care Business Academy

## Free Virtual Training & Online Resources

### Live Large-Group Webinars

- Basics of Business Management & Financial Planning; Recruiting & Retaining Staff; Marketing; and Leadership
- Some Classes in English & Spanish
- Training Hours Credits Available

### Small Study Groups

- Groups of up to 10 Providers Who Have Mastered the Basics and Want Intensive, Focused Training
- Deep Dives into Selected Business Topics
- Training Hours Credits & Stipends Available

### Individual Coaching

One-on-One Technical Assistance Tailored to Specific Needs



### Self-Study Library

Print & Video Guides on  
50+ Business Topics in English & Spanish



# Thriving Child Care Business Academy

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## **New Training & Supports Starting October 1**

- Study Groups & Tools to Support Navigating CAPS/QR Policy Changes
- Study Group Track & Resources on Accessing & Utilizing Technology
- Study Group Track on Assessing Business Financial Health
- Study Group Track on Financial Planning
- Study Group Track on Tax Preparation Strategies
- Study Group Track on Building a Strong Work Culture
- 30 Self-Study Guides & Videos on Additional Business Topics



# Thriving Child Care Business Academy

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## BY THE NUMBERS\*

### WEBINARS

- 769 Participants in 37 Trainings

### SMALL STUDY GROUPS

90 Groups: Original Capacity

- 155 Groups Completed & Ongoing
- 861 Total Enrollment
  - 451 Participants in Completed & Ongoing Groups
  - 410 Registrations for New Groups

### INDIVIDUAL BUSINESS COACHING

- 51 Sessions Completed

### WEBSITE UTILIZATION

- 22,772 Visitors
- 12,488 Downloads & Link Clicks

### INDIVIDUAL PAGE VIEWS

- 9,371 Home
- 3,979 Trainings
- 3,122 Schedules & Registration
- 2,654 About
- 1,983 Resources
- 1,085 Self-Study Guides & Videos
- 578 Related DECAL Programs

\*As of August 1, 2024



# Child Care Services Updates

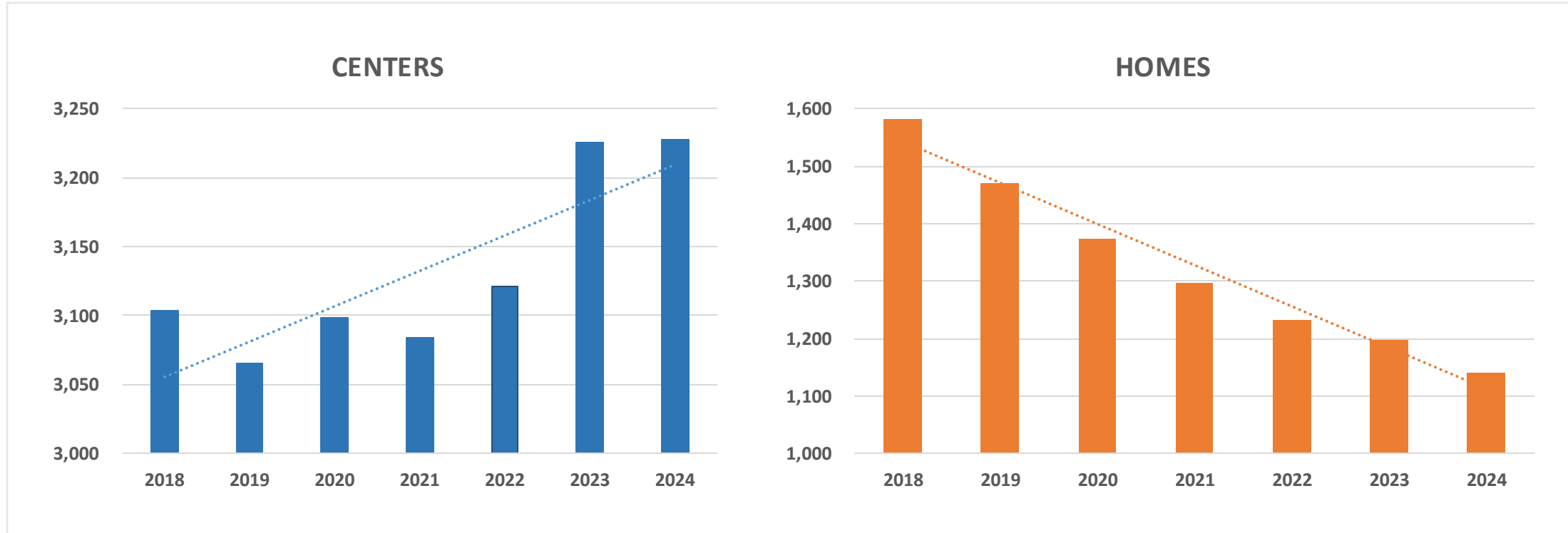
*Pam Stevens, Deputy Commissioner for Child Care Services*



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# Provider count by fiscal year

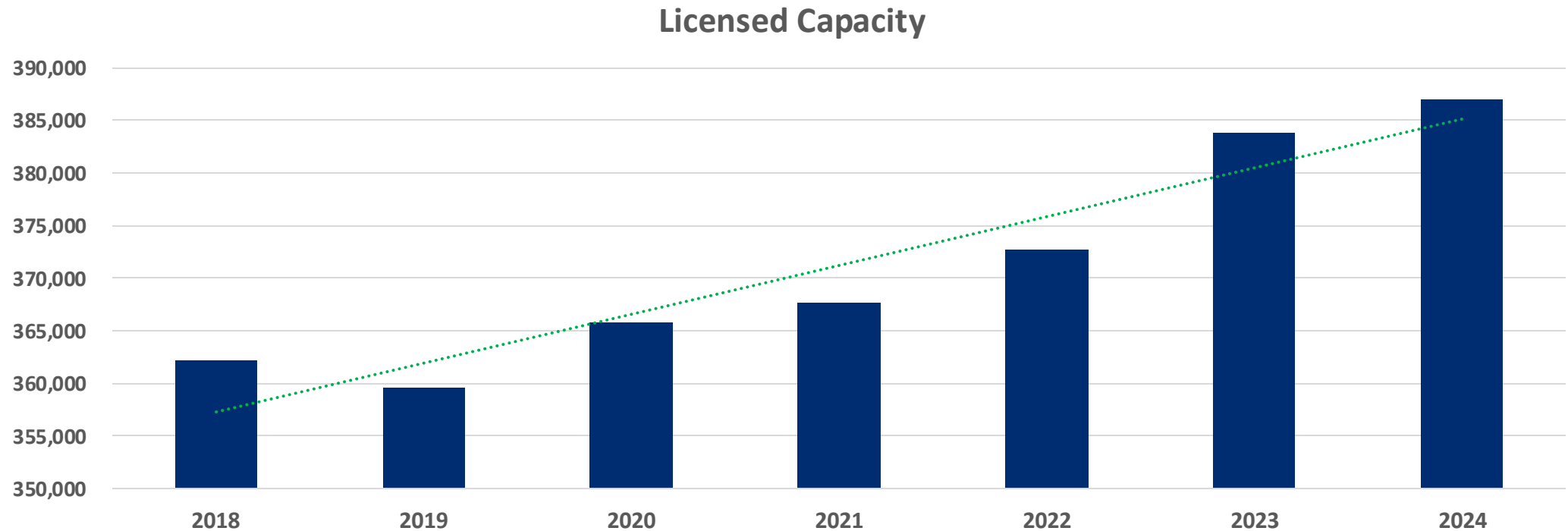
The number of open Centers has been steadily increasing while the number of Homes has consistently decreased each fiscal year.





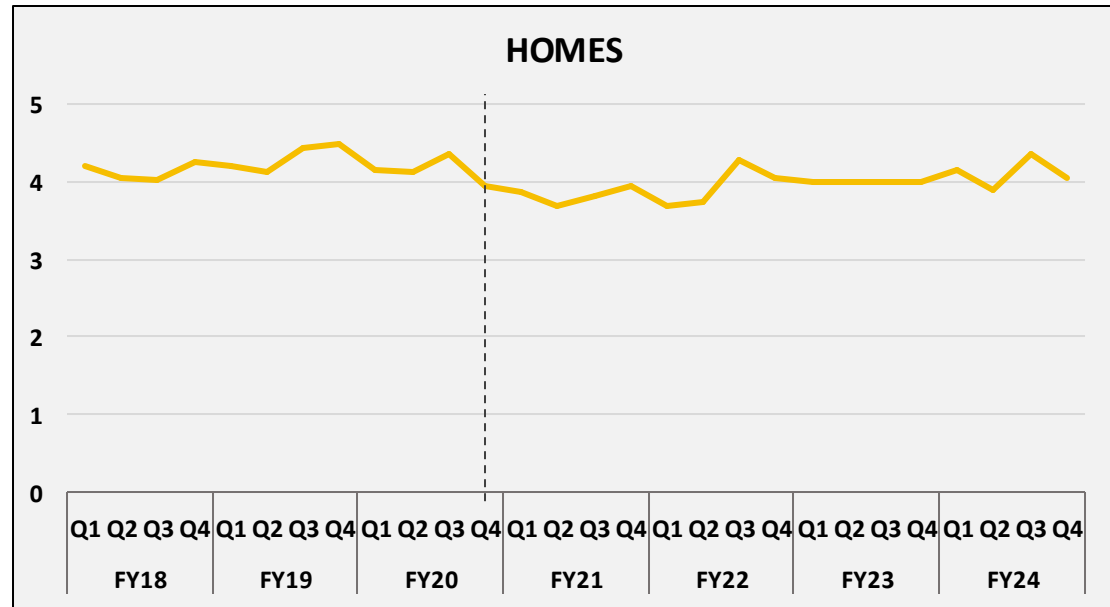
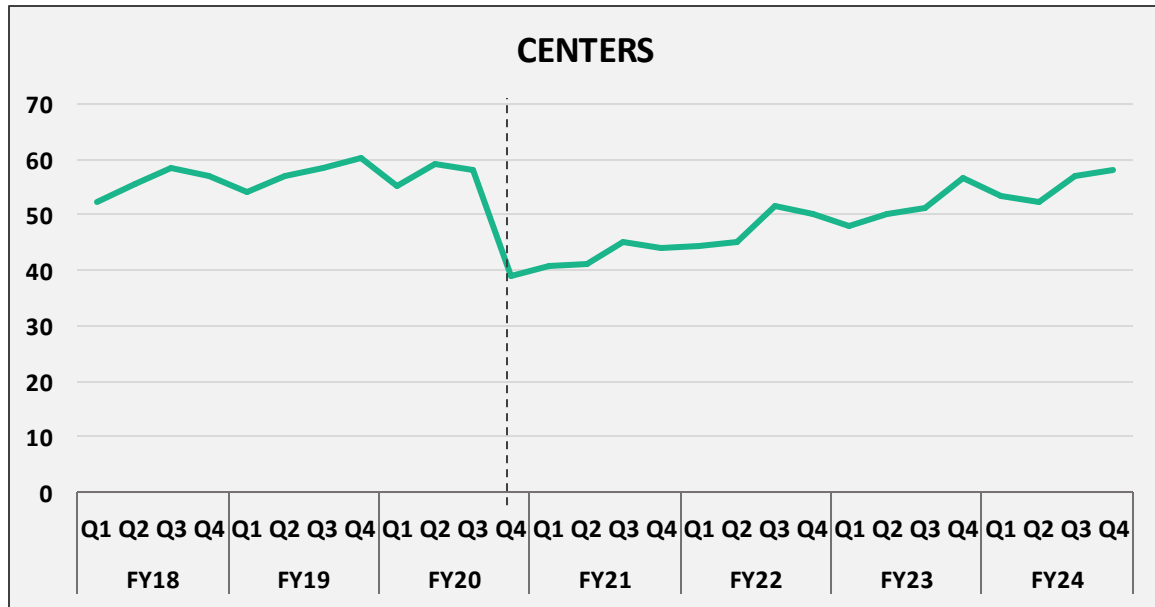
# Licensed capacity by fiscal year

Despite the decrease in Homes, total licensed capacity has increased by 7% since 2018.



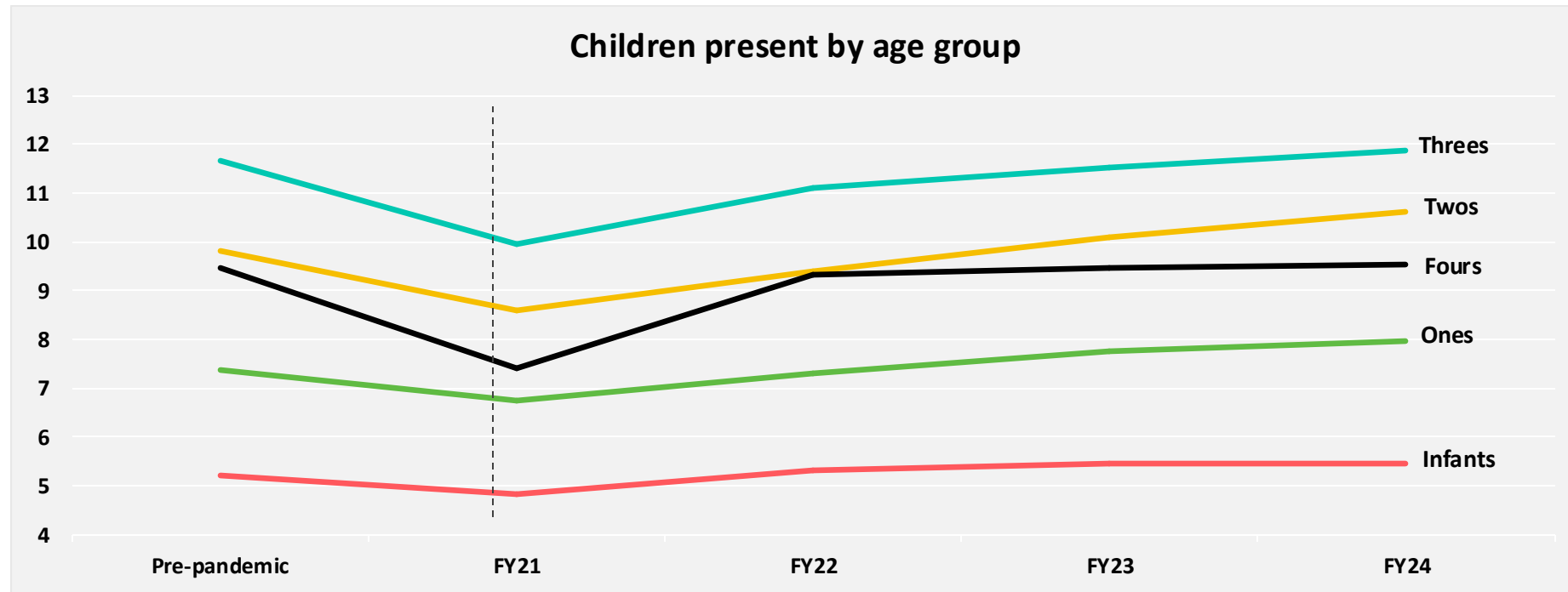
# Average number of children present

The average number of children present at both Centers and Homes has been gradually recovering and is currently 3% below the pre-pandemic annual average.



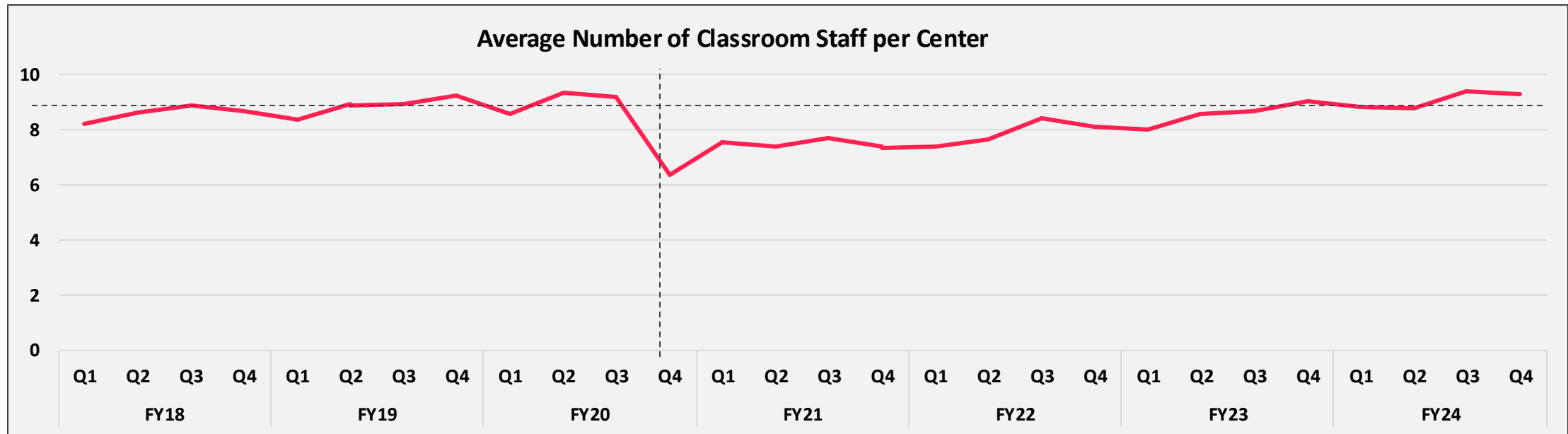
# Children present by age group

Infants and toddlers have surpassed pre-pandemic numbers and account for the greatest recovery.



# Number of classroom staff present

Number of classroom staff present has recovered to pre-pandemic numbers.



# Child Care Services Rule Revisions



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# CCS Proposed Rule Changes - CCLC

## ***Rules and Regulations for Child Care Learning Centers***

### ***Rule Chapter 591-1-1-.46 Exemptions***

- Reducing from 14 categories to 7
- Establishing procedures for online Exemption Applications (receives CAPS and licensed faith-based programs) vs. Exemption Self-Assessments (does not receive CAPS)



# CCS Proposed Rule Changes - CCLC

## *Rules and Regulations for Child Care Learning Centers*

### *Rule Chapter 591-1-1-.46 Exemptions*

- **.46(1)** – establishes the expectation for submitting an online application or self-assessment through the Department, as determined by services provided
- **.46(1)(a)** – identifies exemption categories required to complete an online application and application requirements for approval
- **.46(1)(b)** – identifies exemption categories required to complete an online self-assessment and establishes program operating expectations
- **.46(1)(c)** – identifies the 7 exemption categories

# Changes to Exemption Categories

## 591-1-1-.46(1)(c)

New Exemption Category	Changes from Previous Categories
Category (1) – Government Owned & Operated	Current Category (1)
Category (2) – National Membership School-Aged	Current Category (12)
Category (3) – Private Schools	Combined Current Categories (2), (3), and (4)
Category (4) – Short Term Care	Combined Current Categories (5), (6), (8), (9), (10), and (11)
Category (5) – Faith Based Accredited or Religious Schools	Current Category (14)
Category (6) – Reserved	Current Category (13)
Category (7) – Day Camp Programs and School Breaks for School-Aged Children	Current Category (7)





The following Committee meetings are in session:

**Programs and Rules** – Hickory Conference Room

**Budget and Finance** – Cypress Conference Room

**Quality Innovations and Partnerships** – Oak Conference Room

*The Public Comment Period will commence at 1:00 pm.*



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Welcome to the Board of Early Care  
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# Public Hearing

August 22, 2024



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# Committee Reports



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# Board Action On:

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## ***Rules and Regulations for Child Care Learning Centers***

### ***Rule Chapter 591-1-1-.46 Exemptions***

- Reducing from 14 categories to 7
- Establishing procedures for online Exemption Applications (receives CAPS and licensed faith-based programs) vs. Exemption Self-Assessments (does not receive CAPS)



# Board Action On:

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## ***Rules and Regulations for Child Care Learning Centers***

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## Upcoming Budget Requests

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### By Fund Source

State General	\$71,882,694	\$71,882,694	\$71,882,694
State Lottery	\$541,423,948	\$541,423,948	\$560,326,199
Federal	\$607,659,885	\$607,659,885	\$607,659,885
Other	\$499,500	\$499,500	\$499,500
Totals	\$1,221,466,027	\$1,221,466,027	\$1,240,368,278

# Finance Update

## AFY 2025 & FY 2026 Budget Requests



# Board Election



Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Board Meeting Dates 2025

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- February 20, 2025
- May 15, 2025
- August 28, 2025
- November 20, 2025





Georgia Dept  
of Early Care  
and Learning  
BRIGHT FROM THE START

# Board Meeting Dates 2024

- 
- ~~February 15, 2024~~
  - ~~May 16, 2024~~
  - ~~August 22, 2024~~
  - November 21, 2024

