



Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning
BRIGHT FROM THE START

FY 2023 Annual Report



Contents



A Message from the Commissioner.....	2
About Us.....	3
Values and Principles.....	4-5
By the Numbers.....	6
Financial Highlights.....	7-8
Enhancing School Readiness.....	9
Increasing Quality and Access.....	10
Supporting Workforce Development.....	11
Coordinating Services.....	12
Technological Advancements.....	13-14
Executive Cabinet.....	15
Board of Early Care and Learning.....	16



A Message from Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs

Dear Friends of DECAL,

Thank you for reviewing this annual report highlighting the work the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) accomplished in State Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023). During the year we continued serving the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and families through the programs and services we administer and, as always, explored ways to grow and improve our efforts.



This annual report will illustrate how we focused our work on our goals of:

- Enhancing School Readiness
- Increasing Quality and Access
- Supporting Workforce Development
- Coordinating Services

This report will also share how DECAL administered the funds we received from federal, state, and private sources to benefit children, families, and the early care and education industry in Georgia.

I'm proud of the work we accomplished, and I attribute our successes to the dedicated child care providers who care for Georgia's children every day; to the valuable stakeholders who partner with us to enhance the well-being of Georgia's children; to DECAL's passionate and professional staff; to the Board of Early Care and Learning, DECAL's board that advises and supports our work; and to Governor Kemp and other state policy makers.

If you have any questions or comments about items contained in this report or ideas of how DECAL can continue to serve Georgia's children, families, and early care and education community, contact me at amy.jacobs@decalfga.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

About Us

Mission

Every child in Georgia will have equal access to high-quality early care and education.



Vision

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning improves outcomes for children and families by strengthening early learning experiences in partnership with early education programs, professionals, stakeholders, families, and communities.

Services

DECAL is the department of state government that supports child care providers in preparing Georgia's children and their families for school. Our

services focus on quality child care, early education, brain development, nutritional programs, and tools and resources for families. We work to equip early care and education professionals with enhanced credentials, appropriate teaching strategies, and best practices in working with children. We also collaborate with state policymakers and stakeholders to develop and implement policies that ensure access to quality care for all Georgia children.

Values and Principles

DECAL has embraced values that define its culture, guide the actions of staff as they work each day, and set the tone for interaction as an effective, cohesive team. In addition, DECAL's work embodies principles that characterize effective early childhood system building. Early childhood system building involves the ongoing process of adapting and developing the structures, behaviors, and connections that make the components of an early childhood system operate holistically to benefit children and families.

Values

- **Customer Service:** We strive to always respond professionally, courteously, respectfully, and in a timely manner to all our customers: families, child care providers, teachers, stakeholders, and policy makers.
- **Integrity:** We are honest, transparent, and accountable in our work.
- **Excellence:** We strive for quality and excellence in all we do; we use data, research, and best practices in our decision making.
- **Innovation:** We are focused on continuous improvement and are willing to try new approaches to accomplish our vision and to achieve our goals.
- **Collaboration:** We engage stakeholders and partners and value input from people and groups with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.
- **Equity:** We are committed to a culture of diversity and inclusion and recognize the complex and varying needs of families and children to access high-quality early education opportunities.
- **Respect:** We maintain a professional work environment and value the contributions of our team members and partners in helping children and families succeed.

Principles

To build a comprehensive early childhood system for all Georgia children, DECAL will partner with others to:

- Reach all children (as early in their lives as possible) and their families with high-quality services and supports
- Create policies and procedures that help Georgia children remain healthy and safe
- Include and effectively accommodate children with special and complex needs
- Reflect and respect the strengths, needs, values, languages, cultures, and communities of children and families
- Make it easier for families to access quality early care and education and for children to transition from early care and preschool to kindergarten
- Value parents as decision makers and leaders
- Promote and maximize investment and foster data driven innovation





By the Numbers

Conducted
11,107
regulatory visits

Processed
82,119
applications for
Childcare And
Parent Services
(CAPS)

71,538
students served in
3,708
Georgia's Pre-K
Classrooms

3,235
Child Care Learning
Centers
1,143
Family Child Care
Learning Homes

Supported
69,538,549
meals served
through the
Child and Adult Care
Food Program

Processed
19,067
grant payments and contract
payments to
1,358
vendors through the
Finance Division

Received **12,829** student parent
CAPS applications

9,926
educators completed
OLLI courses on
Child and Family
Development, Inclusion,
and Infant Development
Program

IN
**STATE FISCAL
YEAR 2023
DECAL**

Awarded 44
Community Impact
Grants totaling
\$2.95 million

Rated **1,116** programs bringing the number
of Quality Rated providers to **2,896**

Supported
115,070
unique children through
active
CAPS Scholarships

Hired and onboarded
100
full time staff and
142
temporary staff through
Human Resources Division

\$6.4 Million
awarded in
EXPAND
Grants

The DECAL Scholars program
provided financial support for
3,339
members of the workforce to
earn a credential or degree.

Supported
2,936,600
meals served
through the
Happy Helpings program

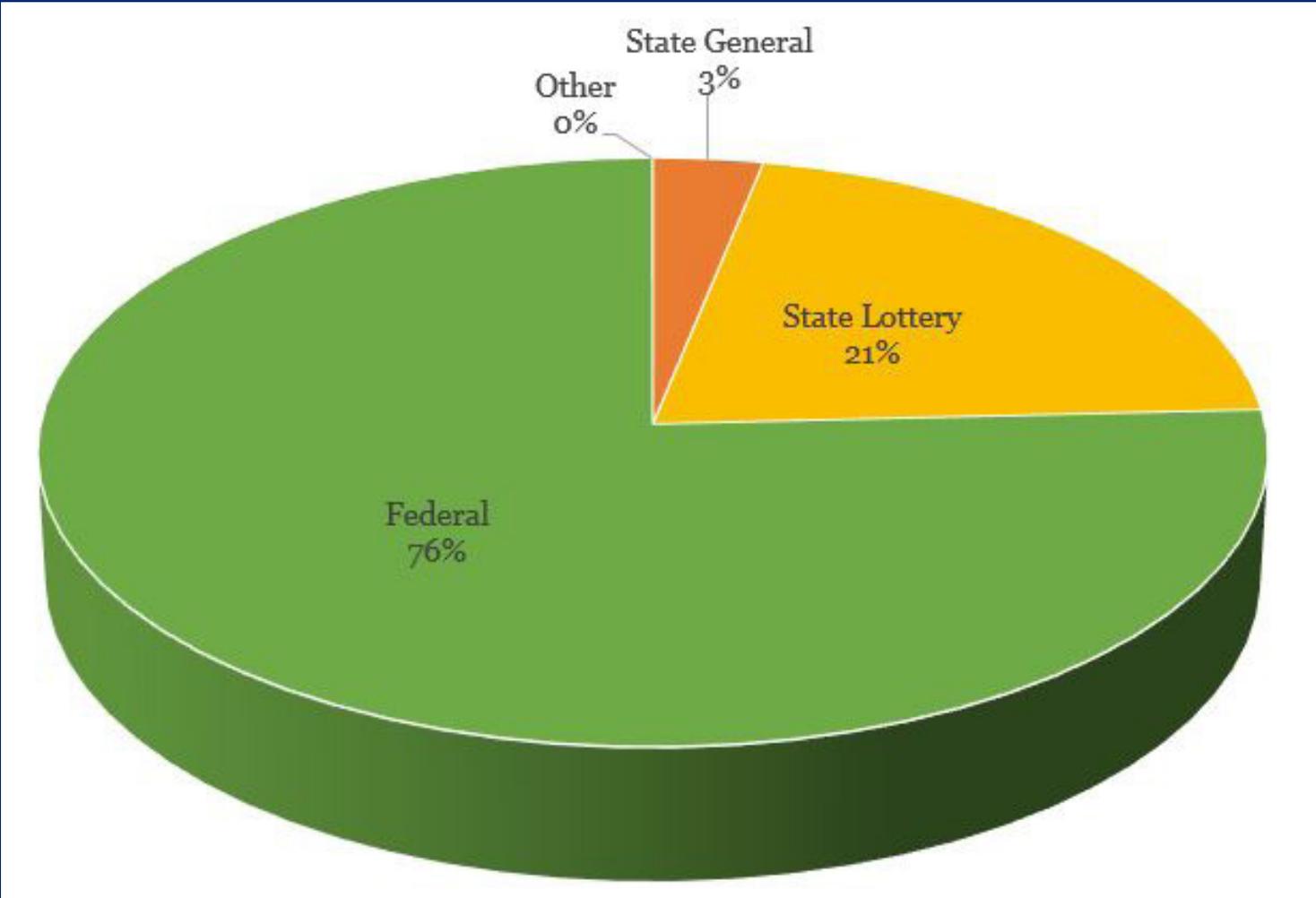
The SEEDS Helpline
received **1,002** calls
resulting in **2,165**
coaching visits from the
Inclusion and Behavior
Support team.

Financial Highlights

FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET BY FUNDING SOURCE

State General	\$61,541,817
State Lottery	\$408,900,881
Federal	\$1,472,496,596
Other	\$334,178
Total Budget	\$1,943,273,472

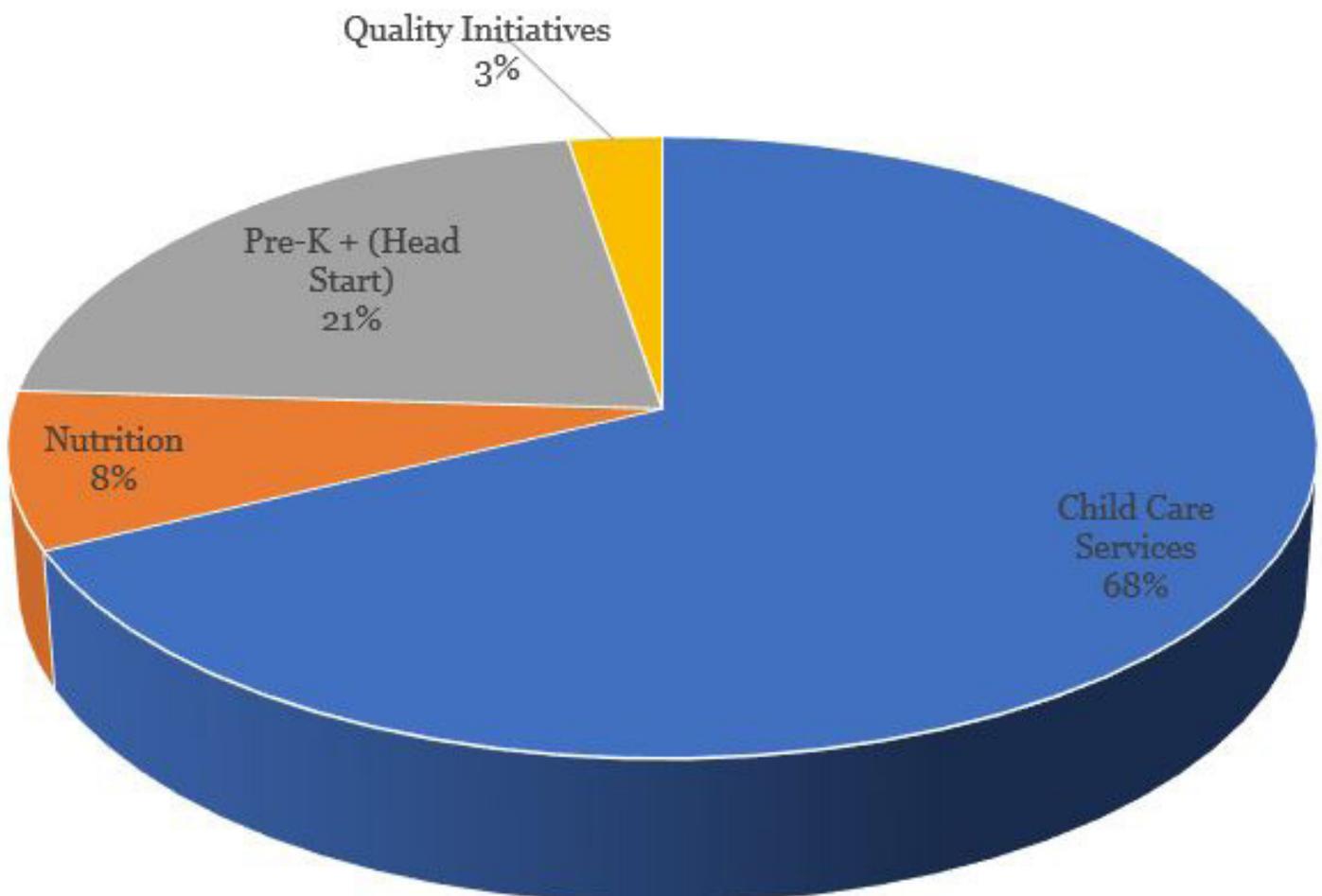
BUDGET BY FUNDING SOURCE



FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET BY PROGRAMS

Child Care Services	\$1,316,518,867
Nutrition	\$159,097,107
Pre-K + (Head Start)	\$416,912,154
Quality Initiatives	\$50,745,344
Total Budget	\$1,943,273,472

BUDGET BY PROGRAMS



Enhancing School Readiness

Goal: Contribute measurably to school readiness for children birth to age 5



During FY 23, **Georgia's Pre-K Program** made a significant impact, serving 73,462 children across all 159 counties. With 1,835 sites and 3,708 classrooms in both public and private settings, the program ensured that children received high-quality preschool experience. This comprehensive approach prepared children throughout Georgia for success as they entered kindergarten.

DECAL's **Summer Transition Programs** offered 70 classes for Rising Pre-K students and 324 classes for Rising Kindergarten students serving approximately 4,600 students.

As an **Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership** grantee, DECAL delivered health, early education, nutrition, mental health, disability, and family support services to 209 infants and toddlers.



Increasing Quality and Access

Goal: Increase the number of high-quality, affordable child care programs statewide, thereby improving access and better addressing the needs of all children

DECAL's Inclusion and Behavior Support Program responded to 1,002 calls from families and providers on the **SEEDS for Success Helpline** resulting in 451 child care providers receiving coaching and training.

Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) approved 4,694 student parent applications, with a 37% approval rate for the student parent priority group, enhancing child care access for families to further their educational goals.

CAPS continued the ACCESS (**Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements**) initiative, benefiting 58,085 CAPS families and 3,160 Georgia child care providers.

On July 1, 2023, 80,745 children with a CAPS scholarship (91.4%) were enrolled in Quality Rated care. 2,432 providers serving children with a **CAPS scholarship** were Quality Rated.



Quality Rated began reviewing processes to update the program.

Quality Rated conducted 1,787 **on-site observations**.

DECAL awarded 2,203 **grants** totaling \$39.1 million to support providers preparing for Quality Rated observations.

Child Care Services (CCS) created nine online training modules for CCS staff and providers.

CCS provided 629 hours of **onboarding training** to 17 new CCS staff, and 294 hours of training to CCS veteran staff.

CCS provided 359 **technical assistance visits to child care providers** for compliance improvement and 96 training sessions for 1,672 teachers and staff.



DECAL's Community Coordinators hosted 72 **Child Care Engagement Network** meetings for child care providers to offer early learning support and share meaningful resources like STABLE, ACCESS, and Community Impact Grants.

Through the LITTLE grant program (**Lifting Infants and Toddlers Through Language-rich Environments**), DECAL's Infant Toddler team supported 70 educators in 42 classrooms in early learning programs with funding from the Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy.

Supporting Workforce Development

Goal: Develop, engage, and retain a capable, well trained, and effective workforce for the early care and education industry and for DECAL

DECAL Specialists provided **Pyramid Model training** and professional learning communities to more than 259 educators in collaboration with Infant Toddler, Inclusion and Behavior Support, and Georgia Pre-K teams.

DECAL's **Inclusion and Behavior Support Program** responded to 1,002 calls from families and providers on the SEEDS for Success Helpline resulting in 451 child care providers receiving coaching and training.

The **DECAL Scholars program** awarded approximately \$2.65 million in financial support to 3,154 unique participants pursuing a degree or credential in early childhood education.



The number of users in the **Georgia Professional Development System** increased 11% to a total of 176,591 users.

DECAL organized and supported 55 **Peer Support Network** sessions for providers participating in or interested in becoming Quality Rated.

The **Georgia Training Approval Unit** approved 1,517 trainings.

The **Online Learning Library Initiative** (OLLI) expanded online trainings for the early learning workforce and DECAL staff to 851 trainings.

The **Professional Learning Community** (PLC) Training Initiative certified 33 PLC facilitators and hosted 40 certified PLC facilitators at the first annual PLC Symposium.

Coordinating Services

Goal: Build a framework that aligns and coordinates DECAL programs and services across regions for children from birth to age 8

DECAL's **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH)** Task Force continued working to increase access to mental health services for young children and their families by training clinicians in evidence-based trauma treatments for preschool children.

DECAL began an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) pilot to provide child care centers with **mental health consultation** to address mental health concerns for staff, children, and families.

CAPS launched **Find Help Georgia** in collaboration with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and Prevent Child Abuse Georgia. More than 82,000 searches conducted on the Find Help Georgia portal aided families and child care providers.

DECAL's network of **Family Peer Ambassadors** shared information about child development, developmental milestones, Quality Rated, CAPS, and other critical early childhood services with more than 2,253 Georgia families.



QIP and CAPS participated in a **2Gen Summit** with the Technical College System of Georgia and Ascend at the Aspen Institute.

DECAL partnered with Georgia State University School of Social Work to host the 3rd Annual Summit on Trauma and Resilience, **Building a Community Response to Early Childhood Trauma**.



Technological Advancements

DECAL's Information Technology (IT) Unit developed new functionality for or modified almost all DECAL program applications (KOALA, Quality Rated, CACDS, PANDA, ATLAS, GaPDS, and GELDS) to interface more efficiently with each other and with external systems.

These new or modified systems enhanced DECAL services provided by DECAL staff to Georgia families, early care and education teachers and providers, sponsors, stakeholders, and the public.

KOALA Applications

- Implemented the DECAL KOALA Phase 9 CCLC Online Change of Ownership (COO) and Change of Location (COL) applications for CCS, Quality Rated, and Pre-K
- Completed several new Criminal Records Check (CRC) enhancements required to monitor Criminal Background Check (CBC) expirations
- Developed and implemented new interface with Fieldprint, which replaced the previous fingerprinting system GEMALTO. Enhancements included real-time API calls to send demographic data, registration and appointment information, fingerprint results with and without history, and rejection alerts
- Modified STABLE process to add new Georgia Child Care Operating Cost Survey
- Completed STABLE quarterly reporting modifications and data collection throughout the year
- Completed the PDG Project, which displays consolidated compliance information to the public on the Quality Rated website
- Developed and deployed the KOALA integration with GACAPS Salesforce system

Quality Rated

- Completed the Path and Cohort Assignment functionality
- Developed and deployed the Quality Rated integration with GACAPS Salesforce system

CACDS

- Developed and implemented a new interface with ChildPlus for gathering Head Start data
- Replaced all historical data using this interface to improve quality
- Completed the contract with DFCS and began implementing the interface to include foster child data in CACDS
- Developed new dashboards on the CACDS website to replace the antiquated SSRS reports
- Continued to optimize the Azure environment to improve system performance

PANDA

- Implemented a password lock enhancement along with additional password edits to increase security of the PANDA system
- Revised RPK (Rising Pre-K) and RK (Rising Kindergarten) business rules so that the decision of whether to display the Family Services fields on the Add Student screen can be configurable
- Significantly improved the process of identifying and resolving potential Teacher Duplicates by re-designing this logic to replicate the same functionality of the Student Duplicate screen
- Completed more than 250 hours of recordings of system discovery sessions in support of the Pre-K re-write project in Salesforce

ATLAS

- Provided Implementation Guidance: Summer 2023 Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Area. During the SNA Legislative Action Conference, USDA provided new guidance regarding non-congregate meal service in rural areas for Summer 2023. Worked with newly renamed vendor, EMS/LINQ, to implement changes to ATLAS Project# 2023-118
- Updated SFSP Site Applications to capture Non-Congregate Meal Services in Rural Areas

GAPDS

- Made significant modifications to the Peer Support Network (PSN) workflow in GAPDS, which enabled a seamless process for the PSN Ambassadors to configure and deliver their training sessions
- Provided ability for Professional Learning Community (PLC) registrants to receive training certificates for partial attendance
- Provided the capability to register for the Thriving Child Care Business Academy trainings from the Thriving Child Care website
- Continued to implement measures to improve performance

GELDS

- Deployed the new GELDS (Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards) website, which incorporates the functionality of the previous GELDS and PEACH applications
- Developed integration with the GAPDS system, which allows Admin users the ability to simulate the user experiences when researching issues

Other

- Completed 100+ system design documents of the in-house applications in support of the Salesforce project
- Deployed more than 200 content changes. Developed 14 new pages to support various agency initiatives
- Distributed nearly 500M bulk emails
- Implemented Salesforce and many ancillary systems around it to support the applications.
- Migrated Maximus Payment system to Salesforce



DECAL Executive Cabinet

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Board of Early Care and Learning

**Phil Davis, Savannah
First Congressional District
(Chair)**

**Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District**

**VACANT
Third Congressional District**

**Karla Zisook, Decatur
Fourth Congressional District**

**VACANT
Fifth Congressional District**

**Kristy Beam, Atlanta
Sixth Congressional District**

**Kristin Morrissey, Cumming
Seventh Congressional District
(Secretary)**

**VACANT
Eighth Congressional District**

**Cristina Washell, Ed.D., Cleveland
Ninth Congressional District**

**Joanna Hill, Watkinsville
Tenth Congressional District**

**Jen Bennecke, Atlanta
Eleventh Congressional District**

**Kimberly Neville, Brooklet
Twelfth Congressional District**

**Melissa Boekhaus, M.D., Smyrna
Thirteenth Congressional District**

**Debra Brock, Calhoun
Fourteenth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)**





Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning

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