



2024 CAPS and Quality Rated Payment Estimator Tool

Instruction Guide & FAQs

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has collaborated with Civitas Strategies to develop a Payment Estimator Tool to support child care businesses in navigating the CAPS and Quality Rated rate changes taking effect in fall 2024. This Instruction Guide is an aid for Tool users. Follow the steps below to get estimates of your new rates.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The Payment Estimator Tool was developed to give providers an idea of how the CAPS and Quality Rated rate changes might affect their business. Providers should consider its calculations to be only estimates of future CAPS and Quality Rated payments. They should not rely on the results as a guarantee from DECAL of what those payments will be. Additionally, the tool cannot calculate and account for all of the unique enrollment situations individual programs might have or face in the future. For help with those circumstances, please contact the CAPS Provider Relations Team at CAPSProviderSupport@dec.al.ga.gov or 1-833-442-2277, or the Quality Rated Provider Help Desk at qualityrated@dec.al.ga.gov or 1-855-800-7747.

Using the Payment Estimator

Complete the **YELLOW** fields to preview estimates of your anticipated changes in CAPS and Quality Rated rates. Rates provided are estimates to guide child care business owners in navigating the rate changes and assume an average family fee of \$11 per child.

STEP 1: Enter Your 5-Digit Zip Code

Enter your 5-Digit ZIP Code:	
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STEP 2: Select Your Provider Type

1. Child Care Center
2. Family Child Care Home
3. Informal Care Provider
4. Exempt

Select your provider type:	<SELECT PROVIDER TYPE>
	<SELECT PROVIDER TYPE> Child Care Center Family Child Care Home Informal Care Provider Exempt

STEP 3: Enter the Number of CAPS-Served Children in Full-Time Care Per Week During the School Year and Summer, for Each Age Group Listed

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Previously, providers with a probationary and provisional status were eligible for a Quality Rated payment. Though providers with those status designations will no longer be eligible because of the 2024 changes, this information is still necessary to show the difference in payment.

STEP 4: Select Your Quality Rated Status

- Star-Rated
- Probationary
- Provisional

Select your current Quality Rated Status:	<SELECT QUALITY RATED STATUS>
	<SELECT QUALITY RATED STATUS> Star-Rated Probationary Provisional

STEP 5: Enter “Yes” to Acknowledge

You can only select “Star-Rated” as your status if your Star Level is “1-Star”, “2-Star”, or “3-Star.” If you do not have a Star Level, you must select “Probationary” or “Provisional.” For example, you cannot be:

- Probationary + 1-Star
- Probationary + 2-Star
- Probationary + 3-Star
- Provisional + 1-Star
- Provisional + 2-Star
- Provisional + 3-Star

STEP 6: Select Your Quality Rated Star Level

- Not Star-Rated
- 1-Star
- 2-Star
- 3-Star

Enter your current Quality Rated Star level:	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <SELECT QUALITY RATED STAR LEVEL> ▾ </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-top: 2px;"> <SELECT QUALITY RATED STAR LEVEL> Not Star-Rated 1-Star 2-Star 3-Star </div>
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STEP 7: Enter the Total Number of Eligible Staff Employed at Your Business

- Eligible staff include family child care learning home administrators and assistants, child care center (includes Exempt) directors/administrators and assistant directors/administrators, lead and assistant teachers, classroom floaters, and program support staff such as cooks, bus drivers, and custodians, etc. (includes school-age only programs).

STEP 8: Review the Before and After CAPS Rates (also known as State Maximum Reimbursement Rates) and Commitment to Quality (C2Q) Payment Percentages

- Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursement Weekly Payments are phasing out in 2024. There will no longer be any weekly payments moving forward.
- Instead, Commitment to Quality (C2Q) Quarterly Payments are taking their place. These are only eligible for 2-Star and 3-Star rated CAPS providers.

	Before	After
STATE MAXIMUM REIMBURSEMENT RATES AND QUALITY PERCENTAGES	2019	2024
County	No Valid ZIP Entered	No Valid ZIP Entered
Zone	No Valid ZIP Entered	No Valid ZIP Entered
Full-Time		
Infant (birth – 12 months)		
Toddler (1 – 2 years)		
Preschool (3 – 5 years)		
School age (6 years & older)		
Before and After School Care		
Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursement Weekly Payment Percentage		N/A
Commitment to Quality (C2Q) Quarterly Payment Percentage	N/A	

STEP 9: Review the Before and After Estimated Payments You Will Receive

ESTIMATED PAYMENTS: School Year (assumes 37 weeks)	2019	2024
Full-Time		
Infant (birth – 12 months)	\$ 145.00	\$ 199.00
Toddler (1 – 2 years)	\$ 137.00	\$ 188.00
Preschool (3 – 5 years)	\$ 125.00	\$ 180.00
Before and After School Care	\$ 65.00	\$ 68.00
CAPS Estimated Reimbursement	\$ 472.00	\$ 635.00
Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursement (per week)	\$ 42.80	N/A
Commitment to Quality (C2Q) Payment (per quarter)	N/A	\$ -
Total WEEKLY Payment	\$ 514.80	\$ 635.00
Total SCHOOL YEAR Payment	\$ 19,047.60	\$ 23,495.00

STEP 10: Review the Estimated Changes and Differences in Payments

The estimated differences in your weekly and quarterly payment totals are outlined below. As a reminder, weekly payments will no longer be quality payments - these will be paid separately on a quarterly basis.

SCHOOL YEAR	
Estimated Change in Weekly Payments	\$ 120.20
Estimated Difference in School Year Payments	\$ 4,447.40
SUMMER/HOLIDAY	
Estimated Change in Weekly Payments	\$ 169.70
Estimated Difference in Summer Payments	\$ 2,545.50
ANNUAL	
Estimated Difference in Annual Payments	\$ 6,992.90

STEP 11: Review Your Total QR Workforce Bonus (QRWB)

- This is applicable to only 1-Star, 2-Star, and 3-Star rated providers.

QR Workforce Bonus (QRWB)	
Total Bonus	\$ 500.00

For additional training and support in this area, [register](#) for the Navigating the CAPS-QR Policy Changes Small Study Group offered by Civitas through the DECAL Thriving Child Care Business Academy.

CAPS and Quality Rated Transition Frequently Asked Questions

General Information

Why are changes being made to reimbursement rates?

DECAL has been working to make thoughtful decisions on how to allocate reduced federal funds across its programs while adhering to new requirements. To ensure available funding is used effectively, rates and payments are being adjusted in line with Commissioner Jacobs' priorities that focus on meeting the needs of families, providers, and the child care workforce.

How does the ACCESS program ending affect me?

The ACCESS program, funded by federal COVID-19 relief dollars since 2021, has provided full payment of family fees and additional amounts to cover child care provider published rates. However, these relief funds are set to expire on September 29, 2024, bringing the ACCESS program to an end. As a result, you may experience a financial shift. Please refer to the information below for more details on how this may impact your payments.

I am not sure how my rates will be changing. How can I find out?

With the increase in CAPS rates and QR payments, most providers will see an overall increase in payments from pre- to post-pandemic levels. Though 1-star Quality Rated providers will no longer receive quality payments, most will still see an increase resulting from CAPS rate changes. Using the new Payment Estimator Tool that DECAL will introduce in fall 2024, you can get an idea of your total payments. Details about the Payment Estimator Tool are coming soon.

What is the new Quality Rated Workforce Bonus?

DECAL recognizes the critical role skilled staff play in delivering quality child care. To reward their excellence, support their efforts, and promote their retention, the agency is introducing the \$500 annual Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB) for eligible staff of 1-, 2-, and 3-star Quality Rated providers. Eligible staff include family child care learning home administrators and assistants, child care center (includes Exempt) directors/administrators and assistant directors/administrators, lead and assistant teachers, classroom floaters, and program support staff such as cooks, bus drivers, and custodians, etc. (includes school-age only programs).

Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)

Why are Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) rate payments changing?

Federal and state requirements have changed which necessitate changes to CAPS rates, also known as the State Maximum Reimbursement Rates (SMRRs). Despite having limited funding, DECAL is increasing CAPS rates overall as of October 1, 2024, with the most significant increases occurring in full-time reimbursement rates.

Quality Rated System

How will Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursements change?

Starting October 1, 2024, Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursements will be replaced by Commitment to Quality Payments (C2Q), paid to 2- and 3-star providers to offset higher costs associated with delivering quality care at those levels. The Quality Rated 1-star providers, as well as those with provisional or probationary status, will no

longer receive a quality payment. Quality Rated 1-star providers are still eligible for the Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB).

Will 2- and 3-star rated programs still receive Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursement payments with their CAPS reimbursements?

No, unlike Quality Rated Tiered Reimbursements, the new C2Q Payments will be paid quarterly in one lump sum, separately from CAPS payments, to promote reinvestment in maintaining or improving quality of care.

I heard some Quality Rated providers won't receive quality payments anymore, is this true?

Yes, 1-star, provisional, and probationary providers will no longer receive a quality payment, however most providers will receive more funds overall through increased CAPS Rates.

Are there still benefits to being a Quality Rated provider?

Yes, being a Quality Rated provider is a significant differentiator in the child care market and a key resiliency strategy for successful businesses. Families may prefer providers who are Quality Rated because the star rating clearly demonstrates a strong commitment to quality care. Additionally, there are extra payments for 2- and 3-star providers to support quality investments, further reinforcing the value of achieving and maintaining the highest standards of care.

What can I do to increase my star level?

In the coming years providers will have expanded opportunities to work toward raising their Quality Rated star rating. Elevating your rating not only distinguishes your business as a leader in providing high-quality care, but also opens the door to additional financial incentives and increased trust from families seeking the best care for their children. It is an excellent chance to enhance your business's reputation and resilience. To stay informed about these opportunities and important updates, be sure to check the QR website regularly at <https://www.decal.ga.gov/QualityInitiatives/QualityRated.aspx>

Free Resources

I heard there are free resources from DECAL to help with this transition—what are they?

The CAPS Provider Relations Team has developed many useful informational resources for providers related to the new rate policies and has posted recordings of the [3-part Webinar Series](#) outlining them. Also, you can visit the [CAPS Provider Relations Team website](#) to get help with enrollment services; provider supports; quality assurance and payments; and education and outreach. The Team also offers weekly GACAPS 101 Sessions in GaPDS or at <https://caps.decal.ga.gov/en/ProviderRelations/>. Contact CAPS Provider Support at 1-833-4GACAPS (1-833-442-2277) or email CAPSProviderSupport@decal.ga.gov for help.

Additionally, trainings and tools have been added to the [DECAL Thriving Child Care Business Academy](#) (the Academy) to support providers during this transition and to position their businesses for long-term success. Through the Academy, providers can receive training to help with:

- creating an action plan to cut costs, diversify revenue, and make strategic investments to navigate this transition effectively
- connecting with other providers to learn how they're approaching the changes
- learning strategies from business experts to enhance your program's financial resiliency and sustainability
- discussing options with families

What specific resources in the Academy are available for providers navigating this transition?

- **Navigating the CAPS-QR Policy Changes Small Study Group Track:** This live, virtual 4-session series will help you navigate the new CAPS and QR payment policies by teaching you how to understand the

impact of the new rates on your business, adapt to the changes, and build resiliency. You'll also learn to create a transition plan and effectively communicate these changes to families. Like the other small study groups in the Academy, stipends and training hours are available for providers who complete this training.

- **One-on-One Coaching:** Personalized coaching is available to provide tailored guidance and support as you navigate this period of change.
- **CAPS and Quality Rated Payment Estimator:** This tool will allow you to compare pre-pandemic and new rates, with the ability to calculate estimates for the school year, summer, and annual projections. DECAL will unveil the tool in fall 2024. Please note that the Payment Estimator Tool was developed to give providers an idea of how the CAPS and Quality Rated rate changes might affect their business. Providers should consider its calculations to be only estimates of future CAPS and Quality Rated payments. They should not rely on the results as a guarantee from DECAL of what those payments will be. Additionally, the tool cannot calculate and account for all of the unique enrollment situations individual programs might have or face in the future. For help with those circumstances, please contact the CAPS Provider Relations Team.

What other resources are available through DECAL's Thriving Child Care Business Academy?

The Academy Handbook describes all the FREE resources and supports that help child care businesses strengthen their business practices, including:

- **Live, Virtual Trainings:** Get basic knowledge on a number of business topics including, but not limited to, financial planning, staff recruitment and retention, marketing, and leadership. Training hours are available for completion.
- **Individual Coaching:** Register for one-on-one technical assistance tailored to business needs.
- **Self-Study Business Guides and Videos Resource Library:** Download bilingual print and video guides on 80+ business topics.
- **Small Study Groups:** Providers can take deep dives into a business topic with peers through four live sessions that involve book study and homework assignments, led by a business expert. Choose from 11 topics and earn training hours and a stipend for completion.

Additional FAQs are posted on the CAPS Provider Relations Webpage at https://caps.dec.al.ga.gov/Assets/downloads/CAPS_WebinarSeries_FAQ.pdf.