



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**
BRIGHT FROM THE START



Child Care Services

Fall 2025 Newsletter

Dear Child Care Provider,

Happy fall! This is such a great time of year with many opportunities for celebrations both at home and at child care. Often these celebrations include food. Lots of food! This fun, festive season is a great time to launch our Choking Prevention Campaign. During the holiday season that starts with Halloween and ends New Years Day, children are often eating new and different foods at new and different places. It's important to remember that our youngest children are new eaters, and safe eating is a developmental process. No matter the situation or the setting, food needs to be prepared and served to young children according to their age and developmental stage.

To support child care providers, teachers, cooks, and families, Child Care Services (CCS) has created several tools to inform and remind all the adults in a child's life how important food safety is and how to implement best practices. Over the next few months, Child Care Consultants will deliver posters, magnets, and flyers to your program. We hope these materials will be a quick and easy reminder for staff about serving food safely. We also hope you will share these resources with families.

Here's to a happy, healthy, safe, and hopefully stress free holiday season!

Take care,

Pam Stevens

Pam Stevens
Deputy Commissioner
for Child Care Services



**Child Care
SERVICES**

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Top 5 Most Often Cited Rules Chapters

By Jennifer Waters, Technical Assistance Unit Manager

From 2024 through June 2025, the most frequently cited rule chapters for both Child Care Learning Centers (CCLCs) and Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLHs) are shown below.

This data tells an important story. It helps Child Care Services (CCS) shape supports for programs, including:

- Targeted new resources in these areas
- Preventative technical assistance conversations
- Lunch and Learns on high-need topics
- Ongoing, relationship-based conversations with providers during visits

For program administrators, this list can also be a powerful tool to raise staff awareness, strengthen daily compliance practices, and ensure safe environments for children.

Most Frequently Cited Rule Chapters (2024 – June 2025)

	CCLC	FCCLH
1	Playgrounds	Physical Plant – Safe Environment
2	Physical Plant – Safe Environment	Playgrounds
3	Transportation	Children's Records
4	Staff Training	Staff Training
5	Safe Sleeping and Resting	Criminal Records & Comprehensive

Helpful Resources

Use the links below to dive deeper into these topics and their related best practices to support your staff:

CCS Regulatory Visit Overview

- [Lunch and Learn: Preparing for a Regulatory Visit- Visit Walkthrough](#)

Playgrounds

- [Playground Best Practices](#)
- [ASTM F1292 Guide](#)

Physical Plant – Safe Environment

- [Keep Out of Reach of Children: Hazardous Materials](#)
- [Childproofing Your Home: Several Safety Devices to Help Protect Your Children from Home Hazards](#)
- [Prevent TV & Furniture Tip Overs: Learn How at AnchorIt.gov](#)

Transportation

- Transportation Licensing Overview [Transportation PROGRAM Resource-2025](#)
- Fact Sheets on Specific Vehicle Types:
 - [Passenger Vans](#)
 - [Cars SUVs Minivans and Station Wagons](#)
 - [Shuttle Buses](#)
 - [Multifunction School Activity Bus](#)
 - [Large and Small School Buses](#)

Safe Sleep

- [What Does A Safe Sleep Environment Look Like?](#)

- [Safe Sleep for your Baby](#)

Staff Training

- [Training Requirements](#)
- [Training FAQs](#)
- [GaPDS- Find Trainings](#)
- [OLLI Virtual Trainings](#)
- [Language and Literacy Lab](#)

Criminal Records & Comprehensive Background Checks

- [Criminal Records Checks are Required](#)
- [Criminal Records Check Overview](#)

Children's Records

- [Record Keeping & Organization](#)
- [Sample CCLC and FCCLH Forms](#)
- [Lunch and Learn: Paperwork Prep for a Regulatory Visit with CCS](#)

As the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) says:

"The goal of monitoring is not to find non-compliance but to prevent it."

At CCS, we take this to heart. Our goal is to provide practical supports so programs can succeed—because when compliance is strong, Georgia's children are safe, protected, and thriving in their learning environments every day.

Emergency Drills

September was Emergency Preparedness Month, but October is just as active and now is the time to prepare! Georgia residents have recently passed the one year anniversary of the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene and we are presently in the middle of hurricane season.

Emergency drills are necessary to prepare children and staff on how to respond appropriately to numerous potential emergencies. "Other emergency situations" include, but are not limited to, evacuation, shelter in place, and lockdown. Routine practice of emergency drills fosters a calm, competent response to an emergency when it occurs. A child who is coached properly ahead of time will have a better chance to be safe. Documentation ensures that all children are accounted for, that emergency plans are conducted appropriately, and drills are carried out in a timely manner.

Ensure that fire drills are conducted monthly, tornado and other emergency drills (i.e., lockdown drills/shelter-in-place) are conducted every six months, and documentation of drills is maintained.

Best Practices:

- Practice drills at varying times to ensure that all children are familiar with procedures.
- Practice drills on transportation vehicles to ensure that children and staff know how to respond if an emergency occurs while they are present in the vehicle.
- Inform parents whenever emergency drills take place in the program (i.e.,

send notes home, etc.).

- Plan specifically for the evacuation of infants, toddlers, children with special needs and/or children with chronic medical conditions. The program should be able to evacuate all children to a safe location outside of the facility within two minutes or less of an emergency alarm.
- Prepare children for emergency drills prior to practicing the drills.
- Practice emergency drills using the same alarm that would be used during an actual emergency to ensure children are familiar with the sound and know how to respond. Use a different sounding alarm, such as a whistle, for a tornado drill versus a fire drill so that children and staff are not confused about which type of emergency drill is taking place.
- Notify the fire department and the fire alarm company prior to the practice of fire drills.

Georgia Statewide Child Care
Emergency Plan

DECAL's Child Care Emergency
Plan Webpage

Click to View Sample Emergency Drills
Form

Updated Weather Watch Chart Now Available

Understand the Weather

Wind-Chill



- 30° is **chilly** and generally uncomfortable
- 15° to 30° is **cold**
- 0° to 15° is **very cold**
- -15° to 0° is **bitter cold** with significant risk of **frostbite**
- -15° to -60° is **extreme cold** and **frostbite** is likely
- -60° is **frigid** and exposed **skin will freeze** in 1 minute

Heat Index



- 80° or below is considered **comfortable**
- 90° beginning to feel **uncomfortable**
- 100° **uncomfortable** and may be **hazardous**
- 110° considered **dangerous**

***All temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit



Child Care Weather Watch



Changing weather make it necessary for child care providers to monitor those changes throughout the day. Planning for daily playtime or field trips, weather safety is an important part of child care provider's daily routine. Monitoring the weather is an essential part of addressing the health and safety needs of children in child care.

Use this chart and the helpful links below to help plan for safe daily outdoor time.

Wind-Chill Factor Chart (in Fahrenheit)										
Air Temperature	Wind Speed in mph									
	Calm	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	
40	40	36	34	32	30	29	28	28	27	
30	30	25	21	19	17	16	15	14	13	
20	20	13	9	6	4	3	1	0	-1	
10	10	1	-4	-7	-9	-11	-12	-14	-15	
0	0	-11	-16	-19	-22	-24	-26	-27	-29	
-10	-10	-22	-28	-32	-35	-37	-39	-41	-43	

Comfortable for outdoor play Caution Danger

Heat Index Chart (in Fahrenheit %)														
Air Temperature (F)	Relative Humidity (Percent)													
	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100	
	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85	86	86	87
	84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96	98	100	103
	90	91	93	95	97	100	103	105	109	113	117	122	127	132
	94	97	100	103	106	110	114	119	124	129	135			
	100	109	114	118	124	129	130							
	104	119	124	131	137									

Websites:

Click to View Updated Chart

Check Out Our CCS Resource Suite!

At CCS, we know directors and teachers juggle many responsibilities each day. That's why we've created our **Resource Suite**—a growing collection of over 65 resources that let you focus on *one topic at a time* to build deeper understanding.

Our resources cover a wide variety of rule topics and best practices—and we're adding more all the time based on provider questions and feedback.

- Struggling with **Criminal Records Check policies**? We have a resource for that!
- Need help creating **developmentally appropriate schedules**? We have a resource for that!
- Want to learn about **playground best practices**? We have a resource for that too!

From interactions and relationships, free play, and classroom management to safe sleep, record keeping, and active supervision—we've got you covered.

- ☐ **Check it out today.**
- ☐ **Print and share with your teachers.**
- ☐ **Use these resources to strengthen compliance and infuse quality practices into your program every day.**





Clean Water for Georgia Kids™



Let's get the
lead
out of water!



Georgia Dept
of Early Care
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BRIGHT FROM THE START



Lead in drinking and cooking water is invisible but preventable!

Clean Water for Georgia Kids™ is a free program that offers lead testing for all drinking and cooking taps in licensed child care facilities and schools. In partnership with the Department of Early Care and Learning and GaDOE, the program provides sampling kits, testing results, and communication resources that help you throughout the process.

Get started today: bit.ly/CWGK-home or call 1-855-997-3183.



**Are You Ready to Crunch
Into the Fun?!**

Get Kids Eating, Growing & Learning
about Apples

Each October, Georgia Organics leads a statewide campaign to inspire kids to eat, grow, and learn about a locally grown fruit or vegetable. This year, we're

Get ready to celebrate apples to the core! The [Apple of Our Eye](#) Toolkit is now live and accessible to anyone! This *ap-peel-ing* toolkit is **FREE** and packed with apple-themed lesson plans, activities, cafeteria recipes, and more. Whether you're in the classroom or the cafeteria, the toolkit has everything you need to make this October a bushel of fun. Remember to ensure compliance with food service and nutrition rules found in CCLC rule chapter 591-1-1-.15 and/or FCCLH rule chapter 290-2-3-.10.

Identifying Whole Grain Rich Foods

Would you like to add a variety of whole grains to your menus? This section will highlight methods to easily identify whole grain rich foods that you may serve in your program to increase children's consumption of whole grains. Children ages 1 to 13 years old eat up to twice the amount of refined grains that they should, but not enough whole grains. Whole grains give children vitamins, minerals, and fiber to stay healthy.



All grain products served in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) must be made with whole grains or enriched meal and/or enriched flour, or bran or germ, to be creditable in the CACFP.

- Whole grains consist of the entire grain, seed, or kernel. A whole grain has 3 parts—the bran, the germ, and the endosperm.
- Examples of whole-grain ingredients include whole-grain or whole-wheat flour, brown rice, wild rice, oatmeal, bulgur, whole-grain corn, and quinoa.
- Whole grains offer a variety of vitamins and minerals, including magnesium, selenium, iron, zinc, B vitamins, and dietary fiber.

How to Identify Whole Grain-Rich Products?

Method 1: WIC Lists. Check [Georgia's WIC Approved Foods List](#). Any grain product found on a State agency's WIC-approved whole-grain food list meets CACFP whole grain-rich criteria.

Method 2: Labels. Certain breads and pastas that have the words "whole wheat" in the name are whole grain rich. Foods labeled exactly as written below are whole grain-rich:

- Whole wheat bread, rolls, and buns
- Entire wheat bread, rolls, and buns
- Graham bread, rolls, and buns (not graham crackers)
- Whole wheat spaghetti, vermicelli, macaroni, and macaroni products

Method 3: FDA Whole Grain Health Claims. Foods are whole grain-rich if their package has one of the two whole grain health claim statements from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- "Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers." *OR*
- "Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease."

Method 4: Whole Grain-Rich in Schools. Foods that are considered whole grain-rich in the School Meals program (the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program) are whole grain-rich in the CACFP. Not all grains served in the School Meals programs are whole grain-rich, so be sure to look specifically for foods that are whole grain-rich.

- Please note, the NSLP whole grain-rich criteria applies for all grain products with the exception of grain-based desserts, which are not creditable under the CACFP.
- Also remember, by October 1, 2025, CACFP operators must offer breakfast cereals that contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Method 5: FNS' Rule of Three. Foods that meet the Rule of Three are whole grain rich. To meet this rule, the first ingredient (or the second ingredient after water) must be whole grain, and the next second and third grain ingredients (if any) must be whole grains, enriched grains, bran, or germ.

Method 6: Documentation. Proper documentation from a manufacturer such as a Child Nutrition (CN) Label or a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) or a standardized recipe demonstrating that whole grains are the primary grain ingredient by weight.

Exception to Grains Requirements: Grain-Based Desserts

- To better align the CACFP meal patterns with the Dietary Guidelines for

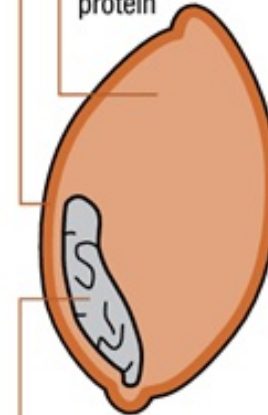
Whole-Grain Kernel

Bran

"Outer shell" protects seed fiber, B vitamins, trace minerals

Endosperm

Provides energy carbohydrates, protein



Germ

Nourishment for the seed antioxidants, vitamin E, B vitamins

Americans, grain-based desserts cannot count toward the grains requirement at any meal or snack.

- Grain-based desserts include cookies, sweet pie crusts, doughnuts, cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars, sweet rolls, toaster pastries, cakes, and brownies.
- Certain grain-based items may be considered a dessert or a savory snack, depending on how they are served. To learn more about grain-based desserts, check out the [Grain-Based Desserts in the CACFP](#) handout.

To learn more about the six [6] methods of identifying whole grain-rich foods, check out these resources:

- [How to Spot Whole Grain-Rich Foods](#)
- [Identifying Grain Ingredients](#)
- [Identifying Whole Grain-Rich](#)
- [Identifying Whole Grain-Rich Foods](#)

Understanding Digital Well-Being: A Guide for Parents & Caregivers

Article from Sesame Workshop



When considering how to manage children’s (and our own!) digital media use in realistic, healthy, balanced, and safe ways, it can help to think about healthy habits — just like we teach children good eating and sleeping habits. For digital well-being, “habits of mind” can help us create and practice healthy ways of using media.

Habits are the brain’s way of doing things automatically. Adults play an important role in guiding young children to practice healthy habits early in life to give them the best start and avoid problems. Habits that “play to our strengths” and involve what matters to us — like taking care of our bodies and minds by exercising, eating well, and getting enough rest — are habits we celebrate and build upon! These habits grow stronger when we recognize them, cheer ourselves on, and keep at them. And the more we keep them up, the easier and healthier our daily lives become.

[Click Here to Read the Entire Article](#)

Consumer Product Safety Commission Children's Products Recalls



Sign up today to receive up-to-date email notifications whenever children's products are recalled by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

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