Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning
BRIGHT FROM THE START



Child Care Services
Fall 2026 Newsletter

Dear Child Care Provider,

DECAL, in partnership with Child Trends, a leading nonprofit and nonpartisan research organization dedicated to improving the lives and prospects of children, youth, and families, will host a series of regional road shows for child care providers in October 2026.

It will be a chance for you to connect with DECAL staff and learn about the latest agency updates, resources, and professional learning efforts. It will feature breakout learning opportunities and a 17-booth exhibition hall showcasing all the services and supports available to you.

We encourage all Family Child Care Learning Home owners and Child Care Learning Center owners/directors to attend!

Please watch the informative video below for more details.



Don't Wait! Register Now.

October 15, 2026: Tifton

October 20, 2026:Cartersville

October 22, 2026: Morrow

October 29, 2026: Statesboro

Questions?

Take Care,

Pam Stevens

Pam Stevens
Deputy Commissioner
for Child Care Services

Child Care SERVICES

CONTACT US

Recent Rule Changes

Effective October 1, 2026

On October 1, 2026, Child Care Services' proposed rule changes were officially adopted for Support Centers, Family Child Care Learning Homes, and Child Care Learning Centers. You may access the updated rule books and updated indicator manuals by clicking on the buttons below.

Support Centers Updated Rule Book

FCCLH Updated Rule Book

CCLC Updated Rule Book

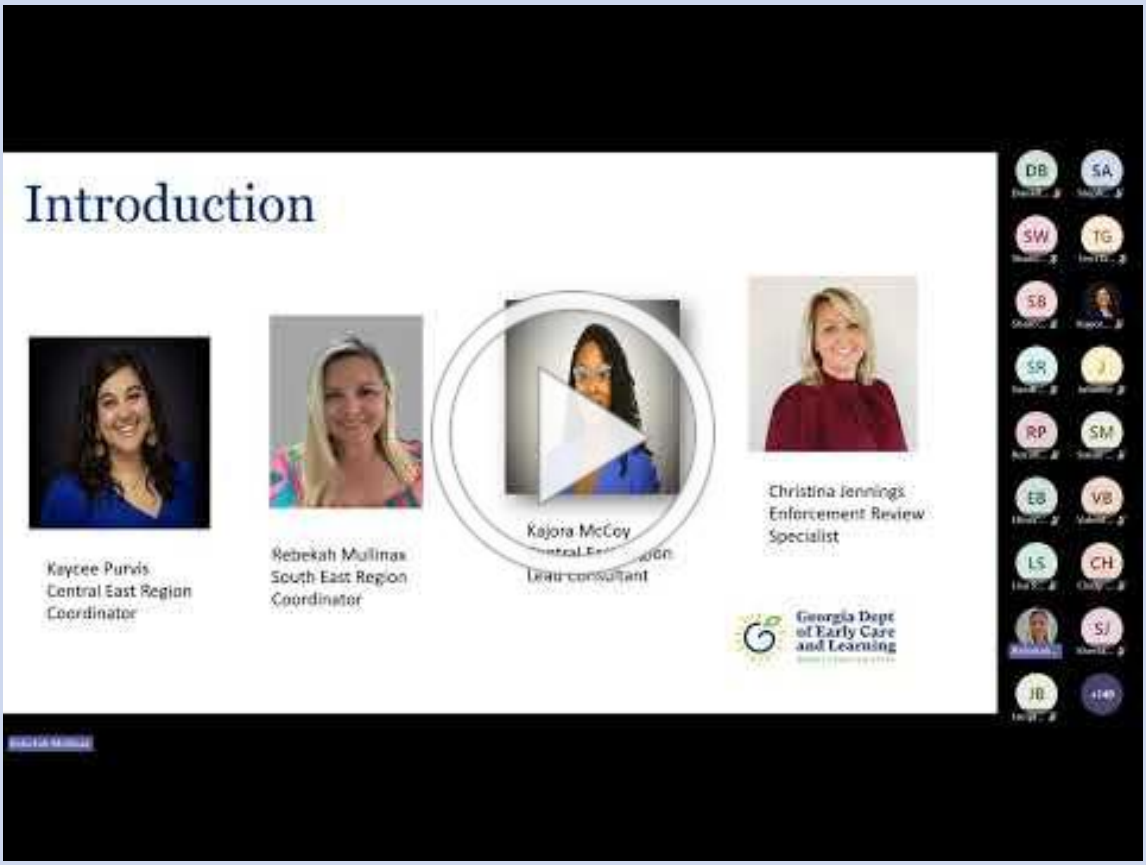
FCCLH Updated Indicator Manual

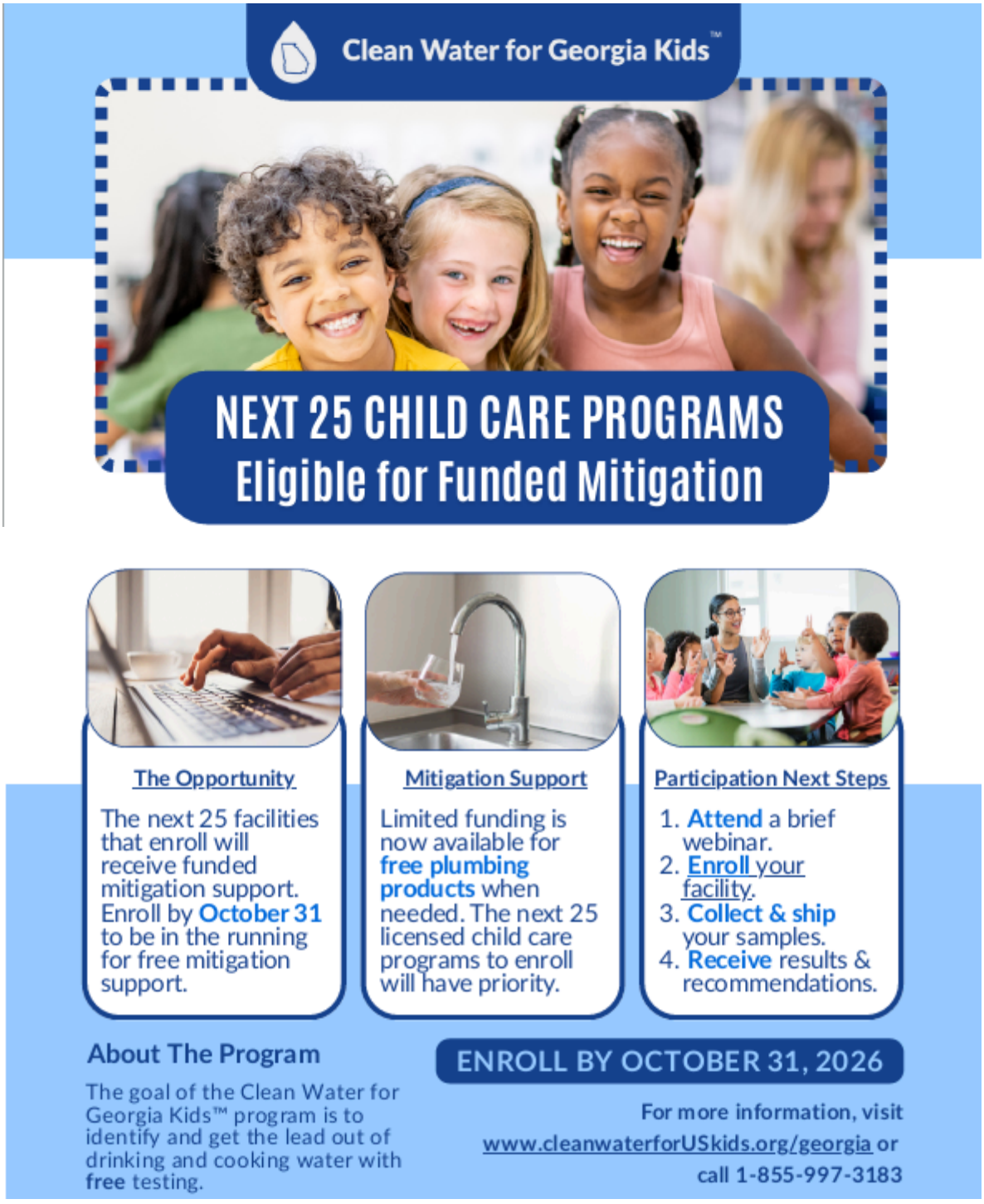
CCLC Updated Indicator Manual

Beyond the Fingerprints:

Understanding Comprehensive Background Checks

Originally Recorded September 2026





Georgia Dept of Early Care and Learning
BRIGHT FROM THE START

RTI INTERNATIONAL

GaDOE
Georgia Department of Education

Supporting Healthy Feeding Development While Keeping Babies Safe

Written by Monica Griffin MS, RD, LD
Nutrition Education and Physical Activity Supervisor

Exposing infants to a variety of tastes and textures is critical for their development. Relying on pureed foods or “baby foods” for too long can lead to future feeding challenges, including picky eating, food aversions, a lack of development of oral feeding

skills, and tooth decay. Here are some ways you can expose infants to texture in a safe way:

Between about 6-8 Months Old:



Once baby has gotten the hang of smooth purees, add texture gradually by:

- Preparing purees with less liquid to make them thicker, or moving from ‘stage 1’ to ‘stage 2’ store-bought baby foods
- Preparing infant cereal using less breastmilk or formula
- Switching to regular, unsweetened applesauce instead of apple puree from the baby aisle
- Introducing mashed foods with small (less than ¼ inch) lumps, for example, mashed banana, avocado, skinless sweet potatoes, and beans
- Serving plain yogurt and cottage cheese

Between about 8-12 Months Old:



Most infants will show signs of readiness for fingers foods between 8-12 months. Baby will be able to pick up a piece of food between their fingers and place it in their mouth. If baby cannot pick up a piece of food and get it into their own mouth, continue with pureed and mashed foods until they can. Safe finger foods include:

- Soft, cooked vegetables, meats, fish, beans, and eggs that have been cut into pieces no larger than ¼ inch
- Soft, ripe fruits, like banana, berries, and peaches, cut into pieces no larger than ¼ inch. Hard fruits, like apples, need to be cooked until soft
- Shredded cheese
- Crispy rice cereal
- Small ¼ inch strips of toast, bagel, biscuit, roll, pita bread, tortilla, pancake or waffle
- Lentils, refried beans, and hummus
- Firm or extra firm tofu, cut into pieces no larger than ¼ inch
- While pasta and rice are safe for babies, they are not part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern for infants, so would not count toward part of a reimbursable meal or snack

Once baby has developed the skills needed for finger foods, it’s best to move beyond purees. Self-feeding a combination of textured spoon foods and finger foods is not only good for them nutritionally, it also provides important fine motor skill practice and builds the mouth muscles needed for speech. However, they are still infants, and the size of the finger foods they are served must remain ¼ inch or less to prevent choking (about the size of a small green pea). For more choking prevention tips, visit https://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/choplooklisten.aspx.

Keep in mind that starting solids is a decision initiated by the child’s parent or family, and what they are served should comply with the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). DECAL CCS’s rule guidance 591-1-1-.15(2)(c), states, “Staff should not feed solid foods to an infant until the center has obtained written instructions from the child’s parent. These instructions should be developmentally appropriate and based

on the recommendations of the child's primary health care provider. When infants are fed solid foods before they are developmentally ready, it could lead to allergies, digestive problems, and increased risk of choking. Typically, age-appropriate solid foods are introduced around 6 months of age but could be introduced sooner or later based on each child's developmental status. Staff should communicate with each infant's parents to ensure successful feeding and to determine which solid foods the parents have introduced and are feeding to the child." For information about the CACFP Infant Meal Pattern, signs of readiness for solid foods, and more about feeding infants, download Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Visit DECAL's Nutrition Webpage

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).

Click Here to Enroll

Interested?

Interested in reading newsletters from other departments within DECAL? Click Below!

Nutrition
Pre-K

Agency | **Programs** | **Families** | **Teachers** | **Providers** | **Contact**

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!