



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

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Georgia Launches New Campaign to Prevent Choking in Children

ATLANTA, GA, (October 17, 2025) - The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) today announced a new statewide initiative focusing on ways child care providers, parents, and caregivers can prevent choking in children. The educational campaign, Chop, Look, Listen, highlights safety fundamentals to protect Georgia's children from the preventable danger of choking during mealtimes.

On average, a child dies every five days in the United States from choking on food, with children under age 3 at the greatest risk.

Chop, Look, Listen was developed based on data from nearly 500 child care providers across Georgia. The providers acknowledged that understanding appropriate food size by age is a critical need for keeping children safe during mealtimes. The campaign will target child care providers statewide with flyers, posters, social media, and information for parents and caregivers to encourage safe mealtime practices at home.

Key messages include:

- Chop - Prepare the food right
- Look - Observe kids while eating
- Listen - Sit with kids and engage

"This campaign provides child care providers with essential information about preparing food for young children and other actions adults can take to protect children while they eat," said Amy M. Jacobs, Commissioner of DECAL. "Keeping children safe at mealtimes takes all of us working together to apply common sense strategies related to feeding children."

Young children have an increased risk of choking because their windpipes are narrower (about the diameter of a drinking straw) than an adult's. Choking hazards exist, however, even after a child reaches the age where they are more experienced at feeding themselves. Types of food play a role, and certain characteristics, like shape, size, and texture, increase the potential for choking.

Pam Stevens, Deputy Director for Child Care Licensing, said, "Choking is preventable. Young children do not have the cognitive skills, behavioral control, or experience to chew well and eat slowly. Whether you're caring for children in a child

care program, at home, or in the community, we all can play a role in reducing choking deaths in Georgia."

The Chop, Look, Listen campaign clearly and succinctly provides information about how to chop and prepare food, what sizes are appropriate, and which foods present greater choking hazards. DECAL's nutrition team also offers hands-on training to child care providers on food safety.

DECAL encourages everyone who cares for young children to visit <https://www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/Choplooklisten.aspx> to access free resources and learn the Chop, Look, Listen safety practices. These simple practices will make mealtimes safer for Georgia's children.



About DECAL

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages Quality Rated, Georgia's community powered child care rating system.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.



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