

## Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's Spending Plan for CRRSA and ARP Funds

This document describes the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning's (DECAL) proposed plan for distributing remaining funds from the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act and from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act. The Appendix provides an update of current or past projects related to these legislative acts as well as funding provided through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

**Through CRRSA, DECAL has received \$403,660,875.** The purpose of CRRSA funds is to help mitigate negative financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Georgia's child care industry and to provide additional supports to Georgia families in accessing child care.

**Through ARP, DECAL has received \$1,573,679,980.** DECAL received ARP funding through two distinct awards with different funding requirements and spending deadlines:

**\$968,278,648 of ARP funds are earmarked as stabilization funds** to support eligible child care providers as the state continues recovering from the pandemic. These funds will help ensure the stability of Georgia's child care industry.

**\$605,401,332 of ARP funds are allocated as additional Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) dollars.** These funds can also be used to support child care providers, families with young children, and the state's early care and education (ECE) workforce while also adding resources to support the state's ECE infrastructure, raising child care quality, and increasing access to care.

**Following are projects that DECAL is implementing to support Georgia's child care providers, early care and education workforce, families with young children, and other groups.** These projects are based on feedback DECAL received through formal statewide stakeholder engagement with child care providers, the ECE workforce, families, and other stakeholders. These projects address the priorities of stabilizing Georgia's child care industry through the pandemic and recovery, increasing access to high quality child care for all families of young children, and supporting the state's ECE workforce.

## Projects Supporting Child Care Providers

### Provider Rate Increase for ACCESS



Effective October 1, 2022, a **7.87% increase will be applied to the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) provider rates used to calculate the Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements (ACCESS) payments.** Through ACCESS, CAPS pays the provider their full published rate for the type of care provided, including the family fee.

To inform this increase, DECAL forecasted child care price growth for the duration of both the initial ACCESS time period from May 2021 through September 2022 and the extension of ACCESS from October 2022 through September 2023 (see page 6), based on observed market changes in the price of full day child care. This increase, combined with the 15% tier bonus increase available for all Quality Rated-eligible providers, will mean that the average weekly payment per child will have increased by 19.77% since ACCESS began in May 2021, ensuring that providers are compensated appropriately for providing high quality child care.

#### Provider Rate Increase for ACCESS Timeline

October 1, 2022	Provider rate increase goes into effect
September 29, 2023	ACCESS initiative concludes

### Health and Safety Grants

**DECAL will award grants to licensed child care learning centers (CCLC) and family child care learning homes (FCCLH) to fund health and safety enhancements in the programs.** Grant awards will range from \$5,000 - \$40,000 based on capacity and will fund facility improvements that impact compliance, injury prevention, and Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) compliance.

#### Health and Safety Grants Timeline

November 2022 – January 2023	Award grants to FCCLHs
February – May 2023	Award grants to CCLCs with capacity up to 50
June – September 2023	Award grants to CCLCs with capacity from 51-100
October 2023 – January 2024	Award grants to CCLCs with capacity from 101-200
February – May 2024	Award grants to CCLCs with capacity over 200

### Georgia's Pre-K Grants



**DECAL will award one-time grants of \$5,000 per classroom to each Georgia's Pre-K Program Provider** to support quality in Pre-K classrooms through the purchase of technology, instructional materials, approved Pre-K curricula, and classroom furniture. *Continued on next page.*

# CRRSA & ARP Spending Plan

## Georgia's Pre-K Grants Timeline

September 2022	Notify programs about the grants and guidelines for purchases
October 2022	Award grant funds
March 31, 2023	Deadline for purchases

## Quality Rated Restoration Grants



**DECAL will award Quality Rated Restoration Grants to programs scheduled to be rated through Quality Rated between July 1, 2022, and December 31, 2023.** The purpose of these grants is to support providers as they prepare for on-site observations.

Grant funds can be used to purchase materials, equipment, and professional development opportunities for teaching staff. These grants also include bonuses for eligible staff after a star rating has been achieved. Grant recipients will be awarded \$5,000 for each eligible classroom (up to 10 classrooms) and \$500 for each eligible staff person.

### Quality Rated Restoration Grants Timeline

August 2022	Programs eligible to apply for the grants
September 2022	Grant payments begin

## Strengthening ECE Business Supports

**DECAL will offer resources and training to child care providers to strengthen their business practices, support sustainability after COVID-19 relief funding ends, and increase their ability to offer high quality early education services.** DECAL will expand the existing Strengthening Business Practices (SBP) training to reach more providers and add coaching opportunities and Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

### Business Supports Timeline

December 2022 – June 2023	Pilot the new SBP training model
July 2023 – September 2024	Expand access to new SBP training model

## Projects Supporting ECE Workforce

### School-Age Project

**DECAL will increase supports to programs offering school-age care through grants, training, and coaching opportunities.** This project will enhance the quality of school-age care in Georgia through program supports and will explore options for incorporating school-age classrooms in Quality Rated. *Continued on next page.*

# CRRSA & ARP Spending Plan

## School-Age Project Timeline

October 2022 – September 2023	Offer school-age training and coaching
January – July 2023	Award school-age equipment and materials grants
January – September 2023	Explore options to include school-age in Quality Rated

## ECE Task Force

To support recruitment and retention of a skilled early care and education (ECE) workforce, **DECAL will convene a task force to review Georgia's Career Ladder and align it with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Unifying Framework** (ECE I, ECE II, ECE III). The task force will also work on methods for supporting career pathways for the ECE workforce.

### ECE Task Force Timeline

September – October 2022	Identify task force members
November 2022 – April 2023	Hold task force meetings
May – June 2023	Finalize task force recommendations

## Workforce Entry

**DECAL will implement strategies to increase entry to the ECE workforce** by expanding access to the Child Development Associate (CDA), including adjusting DECAL Scholars eligibility criteria, paying the full cost of the CDA, contracting to offer the Teachstone CDA program for Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start, and partnering with higher education institutions to explore alternative pathways (e.g., on-the-job training and apprenticeships).

### Workforce Entry Timeline

October – December 2022	Begin offering Teachstone CDA program
January 2023	Update DECAL Scholars eligibility criteria
June 2023	Begin offering alternative pathways

## Strengthening the ECE Career Pipeline

**DECAL will develop supports for ECE professionals to continue their education and maintain employment in the ECE field**, including expanding formal education pathways for infant and toddler teachers and awarding innovation grants to develop ECE career pipeline supports.

### ECE Career Pipeline Timeline

October – November 2022	Innovation grant application period
December 2022	Award Innovation Grants
January – December 2023	Develop infant and toddler formal education pathways

## POWER UP



The Providing Our Workforce Essential Recognition (POWER) program will transition to POWER UP, a program to help teachers in POWER-eligible programs attain higher credentials.

POWER UP funds will be used in conjunction with existing DECAL Scholars programs to support increased tuition reimbursement rates and to provide temporary wage supplements while pursuing a credential.

### POWER UP Timeline

January 2023 – September 2024	Implement POWER UP program
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## Mental Health Consultation Pilot

To increase support for families in accessing mental health services and for teachers in understanding mental health development and mental health supports, **DECAL will fund a cohort of infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) consultants and support up to five IECMH Consultation (IECMHC) contracts to expand community - and family-based mental health supports.**

### Mental Health Consultation Timeline

July – August 2022	Select IECMHC training participants and pilot sites
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September 2022 – May 2023	Prepare pilot sites
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September 2023 – December 2024	Implement and evaluate IECMHC pilot
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## Pyramid Model Training

To help the ECE workforce develop children's social-emotional skills, improve classroom climate, and use trauma-responsive practices, **DECAL will provide Pyramid Model training to the ECE workforce using online modules with support from DECAL specialists.**

### Pyramid Model Training Timeline

January 2022 – June 2024	Offer Pyramid Model training and support to ECE teachers
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## OLLI Courses

To support recruiting and retaining a skilled ECE workforce, **DECAL will expand the Online Learning Library Initiative (OLLI) on the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) to include training curricula for target audiences, including substitute teachers and new teachers.** DECAL will also develop courses for required Health and Safety Orientation, 40-Hour Director Training, and Ethics and Professionalism.

### OLLI Courses Timeline

September 2023	Roll out Health and Safety Orientation and 40 Hour Director Training
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October – December 2023	Roll out curricula for substitute teachers and new teachers
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## Teacher Supply Grants

To support the ECE workforce and classrooms in the upcoming school year, **DECAL will award Teacher Supply Grants of \$125 to eligible ECE professionals.** Grant funds can be used to purchase classroom and program supplies for the 2022-23 school year.

### Teacher Supply Grants Timeline

August 2022	Teacher Supply Grants begin
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## Projects Supporting Families

### Extending ACCESS



**DECAL will extend Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements (ACCESS) through September 2023.** ACCESS is an initiative in the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program helping families pay for child care while they work or attend an education program. The purpose of ACCESS is to temporarily support CAPS families by increasing access to child care and by paying the full cost of tuition. ACCESS temporarily alleviates the financial burden of child care for families in the CAPS program.

Through ACCESS, CAPS pays a child care provider's full published rate for the type of care provided including the family fee and the remaining difference between the typical CAPS rate and the amount the provider charges. Continuing ACCESS supports families who may have continuing effects of financial hardships due to the pandemic.

### Extending ACCESS Timeline

September 2023	ACCESS continues through the service period ending September 29, 2023
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## CAPS Student Parent 2Gen Pilot

**DECAL will administer the CAPS Student Parent 2Gen Pilot to support student parents at three Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) campuses.** The pilot will help student parents attain their educational and workforce training goals by providing easy access to CAPS, by helping them locate and pay for high quality child care, and by delivering services more quickly.

Using a family centered coaching approach, the pilot will help student parents connect to resources using *Find Help Georgia* and to apply for other state services through Georgia Gateway. Pilot staff will help student parents identify and remove barriers to meeting their education goals and provide information and available resources regarding their child's development.

### CAPS Student Parent 2Gen Pilot Timeline

July – December 2022	Identify TCSG partners and pilot sites; prepare site staff
January 2023 – June 2024	Conduct Student Parent 2Gen Pilot
July – September 2024	Complete evaluation of 2Gen Pilot



## Projects Supporting Other Groups

### Business Partnership Grants

**DECAL will pilot an employer child care support program through Business Partnership Grants for 8-10 Georgia businesses that have staff who work nontraditional hours and need child care.** Grant awards can be used to create an on-site child care program, expand business hours of existing local child care programs, or offer a child care stipend for employees.

#### Business Partnership Grants Timeline

October 2022	Grantees identified
January 2023 – June 2024	Business Partnership Grants project period

### Community Transformation Grants

DECAL's Community Transformation Grants (CTGs) support projects that increase access to early childhood services and resources in local communities by creating early education partnerships among community agencies and other stakeholders that will design, tailor, and implement projects that address critical local needs. **Expanding on the CTGs, DECAL will fund 10 new grants and offer extension grants to existing CTG grantees.** CTGs are funded for 18 months and will not exceed \$125,000.

#### Community Transformation Grants Timeline

September – October 2022	New CTGs application period
January 2023 – June 2024	New CTGs project period
January – December 2023	CTG extensions project period

### CAPS Research Project

**DECAL will engage in a research project focusing on CAPS from the family perspective.** This will entail studying three distinct groups: 1) families currently receiving CAPS scholarships, 2) families who apply for CAPS and are denied, and 3) families receiving CAPS who are denied at annual renewal. The project will include analyzing administrative data and interviewing and surveying families with CAPS scholarships.

#### CAPS Research Project Timeline

July – December 2022	Design research project
January 2023 – March 2024	Continue research project and issue report

## System Level Evaluation

COVID-19 relief funding has provided unprecedented opportunities to support early education. Because the funding is time-limited, **DECAL will evaluate the impacts of COVID-19 relief funding and what happens when the funding ends.**

The following will be included in the evaluation: activities related to COVID-19 relief funding (CARES, CRRSA, and ARP); the system-level impacts of DECAL’s COVID relief related projects; and research related to a recent stakeholder engagement project conducted by the Urban Institute.

### System Level Evaluation Timeline

July – December 2022	Design evaluation and identify research partner
February 2023 – September 2024	Conduct evaluation and issue report

## Conclusion

DECAL recognizes the need to invest in projects that will maximize the impact of this historic funding and will strengthen Georgia’s ECE system. DECAL also recognizes the importance of planning for what happens when the funding concludes. To that end, DECAL is committed to:

- Continuing to engage stakeholders,
- Evaluating the impacts of funding decisions, and
- Providing on-going communication related to projects funded through CRRSA and ARP.



## Appendix

### *Updates on Previous COVID-19 Relief Projects*

**Through the \$144 million provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, DECAL implemented three projects that supported child care providers and families:**

- **STABLE Rounds One and Two:** Shortly after the CARES Act was finalized, DECAL created the **Short-Term Assistance Benefit for Licensed Entities (STABLE)** project. Child care providers were able to apply for funds to help pay staff salaries, purchase cleaning and classroom supplies, and provide tuition relief to families. The purpose of STABLE was to help offset losses incurred by the pandemic. DECAL used \$122 million of CARES funds for two rounds of STABLE in summer and fall 2020 and a significant portion of a third round of STABLE in spring 2021. Evaluation results demonstrate that these funds achieved their purpose and kept many providers from closing permanently.
- **CAPS Emergency Policy Payments:** DECAL used \$19 million of CARES funds to support child care providers by offering CAPS payments based on enrollment. Providers were paid whether they were open or temporarily closed and whether a child was present or absent if the child attended at least once in person since being enrolled in CAPS. Providers were paid the full-time rate for school-age children who attended full time to complete virtual learning from a child care program. These payments kept providers from closing permanently and ensured that families had child care options to meet their needs.
- **CAPS Essential Services Workforce Priority Group:** DECAL allocated \$3 million of CARES funds to create a new priority group for essential workers. This new priority group ensured that many workers providing essential services during the pandemic could access child care options that met their needs.

**While DECAL has not allocated or expended all funds from the CRRSA and ARP, the following projects, some on-going and some concluding, have used these funds:**

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** DECAL used nearly \$250,000 in ARP funds to solicit feedback from Georgia families, ECE providers and workforce, DECAL staff, and other stakeholder groups about what supports Georgia's ECE system needed. DECAL contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct the stakeholder engagement project and used the results to inform how CRRSA and ARP funds should be allocated, contributing to the development of the projects described in this document.
- **STABLE Round 3 and STABLE 4ward:** DECAL used some CRRSA funds for a third round of STABLE in May 2021. Specifically, \$72 million was paid to providers; \$43 million were CRRSA funds. DECAL also used ARP stabilization funds for a fourth round of STABLE called STABLE 4ward in November 2021. Specifically, \$905 million was allocated for providers through STABLE 4ward. These funds will be paid out in monthly installments through September 2023.
- **COVID Test and PPE Grants:** DECAL allocated \$14 million of CRRSA funds to award grants to licensed child care providers to purchase COVID-19 test kits, personal protective equipment, and cleaning supplies. Funding was available April – June 2022 with award amounts based on provider capacity.

## Appendix Continued

- **POWER:** Through **P**roviding **O**ur **W**orkforce **E**ssential **R**ecognition (POWER), approved ECE professionals will receive up to three payments of \$1,000. (POWER Payments 1 and 2 used \$75.4 million. POWER Payment 3 will be paid in June – August 2022.) DECAL estimates that a total of \$114 million will be paid directly to ECE professionals through POWER payments.
- **Teacher Supply Grants:** DECAL allocated \$3.97 million of CRRSA funds to award grants to eligible early learning professionals to purchase classroom and program supplies. Through this initiative, over \$3.56 million was distributed to 28,494 eligible professionals.
- **SHARE:** DECAL allocated \$5 million of CRRSA funds for the **S**chool-Age **H**elp and **R**elief **E**ffort (SHARE) grant. The funding supported providers who were caring for and supporting school-age children (ages 5–12 years) throughout the school year and those providing summer academic and social enrichment programs for school-age youth. Eligible providers included DECAL licensed child care learning centers that served school age children, family child care learning homes that served school age children, and license-exempt providers who had served at least one school age child since May 1, 2019, who was enrolled in the CAPS program.

Voices for Georgia’s Children (through leadership of the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network) and the United Way of Greater Atlanta collaborated to administer and manage the school-age grants program by developing the grant application, receiving applications, disbursing funds, and designing and delivering training and technical assistance to grant recipients. DECAL awarded 1,607 SHARE grants with award amounts ranging from \$1,075 for licensed family child care learning homes to \$4,300 for license-exempt and licensed child care learning centers.

SHARE applications were available to providers from May through June 2021. Grantees were notified of award amounts in July 2021, and funds were dispersed in August 2021. Training opportunities were made available to all grant recipients in August 2021, and opportunities to apply for additional technical assistance and quality assessments will be available in October.

- **ACCESS:** DECAL has allocated \$98 million to create the **A**warding **C**hild **C**are **E**ducation **S**cholarship **S**upplements (ACCESS). The purpose of ACCESS is to temporarily support CAPS families by increasing access to and paying for child care. Through ACCESS, CAPS will pay the provider their full published rate for the type of care provided through September 2023.
- **CAPS Emergency Policy Payments:** ARP and CRRSA funding will be used to continue funding CAPS emergency policy payments (described above).
- **CAPS Expansion:** DECAL increased the number of children served by CAPS by 10,000 beginning November 2021. This increase in the number of children included an expansion of CAPS eligibility limits, making more children and families eligible for the program. The new guidelines increased the entry income threshold from 50% of the State Median Income (SMI) to 85% SMI. To be eligible for CAPS scholarships, a family must qualify for at least one priority group. For the “Very Low-Income” priority group, CAPS increased the percentage of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) guidelines that determine eligibility from 50% FPL to 150% FPL. The increase in the CAPS eligibility income limits and number of children served makes it possible for families who may not have been eligible for child care assistance before to be eligible now. This expansion provides additional support to Georgia’s families and child care providers and ensures that more children have access to quality early education opportunities. To date, DECAL has spent \$19.1 million to support an additional 10,000 children in the CAPS program.

## Appendix Continued

- **Increased Tiered Reimbursement:** To help providers raise the quality of care they provide, CAPS increased Quality Rated tiered bonus payments by 15 percentage points per star level beginning November 2021. One-star programs increased from 10% to 25%; two-star programs increased from 20% to 35%; and three-star programs increased from 40% to 55%. Child care providers in the process of achieving a rating, including those in a probationary or provisional status, received a 15% increase from current CAPS base rates to support their efforts to increase quality and successfully achieve a star rating. To date, DECAL has distributed \$21 million in additional tiered reimbursement to Quality Rated child care providers participating in the CAPS program.