

Decidedly DECAL

Highlighting the Events That Shape Who We Are



DECAL By the Numbers

- 4,407 - Licensed child care programs in Georgia
- 3,782 - Licensed child care programs applying for STABLE Round 3
- 2,477 - Quality Rated child care programs in Georgia
- 66,537 - Children enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program
- 29,067 - Social media followers
- \$165 million - Distributed by DECAL to licensed child care programs in Georgia impacted by COVID-19
- 5,437 - School-age children awarded a SOLVE scholarship to assist with the cost of completing virtual learning from a childcare program

Follow DECAL on Social Media



New Episodes Every Wednesday

DECAL Download Mentioned in AJC

Our weekly podcast, DECAL Download, got a nice mention in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's political blog, The Jolt, recently. Here's what they had to say:

"The state Department of Early Care and Learning reached a milestone this week when the agency's weekly DECAL Download podcast entered its third season.

The program, hosted by Commissioner Amy Jacobs and communications guru Reg Griffin, features conversations about the agency's work and interviews with guests like Gov. Brian Kemp."

Children's Mental Health Week Is May 3-7, 2021

DECAL is celebrating Children's Mental Health this year by designating May 3 - 7 as Children's Mental Health Week.

The early years in a child's life provide a key opportunity to establish safe and secure relationships and support healthy social and emotional development. DECAL is excited to provide a week full of activities for all ages including a list of age-appropriate books promoting mental health, products to create a Calm Corner or Zen Den, and fun giveaways for child care providers from Children's Health Care of Atlanta, Scholastic, and Lakeshore Learning.

DECAL will also offer seven opportunities for Pre-K and 3's classes to sign up for the Feelings Puppet Show presented by Mental Health America of Georgia.

Stay tuned to the DECAL website and social media outlets to learn more about this event and participate in Children's Mental Health Week!

Remember, everyone who touches the life of a child can promote healthy social and emotional development!

Supporting and guiding the mission and vision of Bright from the Start:

Board of Early Care and Learning

VACANT

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Susan Harper, Albany
Second Congressional District
(Chair)

Kathy Howell, Carrollton
Third Congressional District
(Secretary)

Phil Davis, Stone Mountain
Fourth Congressional District
(Vice Chair)

Kristy Beam, Ed.D, Atlanta
Fifth Congressional District

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Sixth Congressional District

Kristin Morrissey, Cumming
Seventh Congressional District

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Warner Robins
Eighth Congressional District

Cristina Washell, Ed.D.,
Cleveland
Ninth Congressional District

Theresa Magpuri-Lavell, Ed.D.,
Milledgeville
Tenth Congressional District

Jen Bennecke, Atlanta
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Twelfth Congressional District

Melissa Boekhaus, M.D.,
Smyrna Thirteenth
Congressional District

Debra Brock, Calhoun
Fourteenth Congressional
District

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Commissioner's Corner

by Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs



Dear DECALers,

Since becoming commissioner of DECAL, many states and national organizations have contacted me about how the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning came to be. In these conversations I've always used the word *evolved*, because DECAL today doesn't look anything like it did when it began.

And the reason DECAL today looks different is because we've added or adapted programs and services to meet the changing needs of Georgia's children and families as one millennium ended and a new one began.

The Office of School Readiness (OSR), the forerunner of DECAL, was created in 1996 primarily to administer the popular, lottery funded Georgia's Pre-K Program, to license child care centers that offered Pre-K, and to administer the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for child care programs. By 2004 the agency had grown in personnel, programs, and responsibility to the extent that the Georgia General Assembly created a new department of state government, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

And today, we're providing services and administering programs that weren't even on our radar in those initial years: CAPS, Quality Rated, Inclusion and Behavior Supports, Infant Toddler Supports, training and technical assistance, scholarships, incentives, massive federal grants, public service campaigns like LOOK AGAIN.

This brings me to one of our newest areas of emphasis: **children's mental health**. The week of May 3-7, DECAL will encourage providers and families to celebrate Children's Mental Health. For decades we've worked to enhance children's physical, academic, nutritional development by supporting high quality early care and education environments. But we know that children's mental health also matters. So, we look forward to promoting children's ability to express a range of emotions and form strong attachments with trusted adults, so they can learn and thrive in all areas of their lives.

I hope you find it exciting to be part of an organization that is willing to grow and evolve the way OSR/DECAL has. By adapting and changing...even through difficult economic times and pandemics...we've remained relevant, useful, and beneficial to children, families, and the early care and education industry in our state.

And if we remain open and willing to change, I predict the DECAL of 2050 will look much different than our department today.

Thank you for your forward thinking and flexibility,

P.S. Since writing this letter, I've received yet another request from a consulting firm working with one of our neighboring states to talk about Georgia's "robust early education system." We can all be proud that other states continue to envy having a department like DECAL.

State Employee Recognition Week (SERW) is May 2-8, 2021

DECAL is celebrating State Employees Recognition Week- May 2-8, 2021. The purpose of this week is to recognize and celebrate you--our employees and the work you do for the citizens of the State of Georgia.

Last year was like no other. You demonstrated extraordinary leadership and customer service during the pandemic, and this celebration provides an excellent opportunity to highlight the achievements and contributions you've made on a daily basis.

Several fun activities have been planned by the Employee Advisory Committee to thank you for your dedication, hard work and commitment to excellence. These virtual events include:

- DECAL Bingo
- Pet/Owner Match Game
- Flat CALi
- Employee Kudos
- And MORE!



DECAL Conducting Georgia Child Care Market Rate Survey

Once again, DECAL and Care Solutions are compiling data on the prices Georgia families are paying for child care and early education. DECAL conducts this type of study every few years to determine an accurate cost of child care in the various regions of Georgia and to help us determine CAPS reimbursement rates.

In March, DECAL and Care Solutions e-mailed more than 6,000 licensed and exempt child care programs with a survey. The findings from the survey will help DECAL prepare Georgia's Child Care and Development Fund State Plan as well as a new Economic Impact Study.

"It is critically important to share with the public and with Georgia's policymakers what quality child care actually costs and what a major component the work of the early care and education industry is to our state's economy," said Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs.

Child care providers can complete the survey online or on paper... in English or in Spanish. If a provider has not received the e-mails, they can contact Care Solutions toll-free at 1-800-227-3410 or e-mail GAMRSurvey@caresolutions.com. DECAL hopes to complete the survey this month. As an incentive, Care Solutions will enter everyone who completes the survey into a drawing for one of five \$100 gift cards.

The last Georgia Child Care Market Rate Survey was conducted in 2016-2017. The federal Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care granted an extension in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CCDF State Plan Public Hearings Go Virtual This Month

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) will hold two virtual public hearings this month on the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan. The purpose of the CCDF is to increase the availability, affordability, and quality of child care services.

The CCDF State Plan describes how Georgia will administer CCDF services from October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2024, specifically explaining how funds will be used to 1. help low income, working families find and pay for child care; and 2. enhance the quality and availability of child care in Georgia.

Two virtual public hearings will be held during which time the public can comment on the proposed State Plan that was written by DECAL, the lead agency for the CCDF in Georgia.

Below are the dates, times, and links to access the public hearings. Tue, May 4, 2021 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

EDT- <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/regi.../4699122895098294286>

Thu, May 6, 2021 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

EDT- <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/regi.../1789045469863657486>

A draft of the proposed CCDF State Plan is available for your review at: <http://www.decals.ga.gov/BftS/CCDFPlan.aspx>

If they public cannot participate in either of the virtual hearings, they can still comment on the State Plan by submitting comments to CCDFStateplan@decals.ga.gov.

All comments will be reviewed and considered; however, because of the number of comments, DECAL will not respond to comments made at the public hearings or online.



Faces of DECAL

DECAL faces featured in the banner of this issue are (L-R) Aleisha Golden, Ebony Ford, Marcie Singletary, Catherine Broussard, and Shannon Curtis.

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