

New Beginnings, Happy 2017!



Spring 2017

Exemptions Newsletter

Volume 2 Number 2

Closing the Word Gap: Georgia's Talk With Me Baby Initiative

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We all know that growing babies need food to sustain them and help them grow healthy and strong. Just as food nourishes a growing child's body, language interactions nourish a child's brain. That's language nutrition.

The best predictor of a baby's future academic achievements is the number of words spoken to the baby and the amount of time spent in active engagement from birth to three years of age.

Children from low-income families hear approximately 600 words every hour, whereas children from higher-income families hear 2,000 words an hour. Over the course of three years, it adds up to a 30 million word gap between low-income children and children from higher-income families. This 30 million word gap contributes to critical disparities in academic performance and is influenced by a generational lack of access to education and language nutrition.

According to a study done by University of Kansas researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley, both quantity and quality of language are essential for vocabulary development, which is a predictor of third grade reading proficiency. Up to third grade, children learn to read. After third grade, children read to learn. Children who cannot read by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. In Georgia, two-thirds of our children are not achieving third grade reading proficiency.

Guided collectively by a team of leaders from the Georgia Department of Public Health, the Georgia Department of Education, Emory University's School of Nursing and Department of Pediatrics, the Marcus Autism Center at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the Atlanta Speech School's Rollins Center for Language and Literacy, and Get Georgia Reading - the state's campaign for grade level reading - Georgia's Talk With Me Baby (TWMB) is dedicated to making sure every child born in Georgia receives essential language nutrition as a strong foundation for cognitive ability, social-emotional competency, school readiness, third grade reading proficiency and high school graduation, and ultimately lifelong success.

The good news is that the 30 million word gap can be bridged. TWMB helps build that bridge by introducing language nutrition in early childhood settings by training staff in health care, public health and WIC clinics, and early learning centers. Staff can then transfer that

knowledge to parents and caregivers, teaching them about the importance of early language exposure and talking to their babies.

For more information about language nutrition and TWMB, visit talkwithmebaby.org.

Visit the DECAL website



Spring will soon be here, and we are encouraging everyone to continue your routine to **Look Again**. Children should never be left unattended in a vehicle regardless of weather conditions. When the temperature drops, leaving a child in the car with the heat on can be just as dangerous as hot weather. Remember, when you arrive at your destination, always **Look Again** for children left in your vehicle. When your vehicle is not in use, keep the vehicle doors locked. For more information visit the [BFTS Look Again Campaign](#).



"Every child is a different kind of flower, and all together, make this world a beautiful garden." -

Author Unknown

Newsworthy: "The T in STEM: Creating Play-Based Experiences That Support Children's Learning of Coding and Higher Order Thinking" from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Feb. 2017 (NAEYC)

New Leadership for the Exemptions Unit

Please welcome **Nikiesha Neil** as the new CCS Exemptions Unit Manager effective, February 1, 2017. Ms. Neil joins the Exemptions Unit



from the CCS Enforcement Unit and has been with Bright from the Start for 11 years.

Friendly Reminders

- The exemption rules changed in December 2012. If DECAL approved your program's exemption **BEFORE January 2013**, you need to resubmit your exemption application and the supporting documentation. Also, if a number of years have passed since you have communicated with DECAL, your file may require an update to include new information and supporting documentation. If you are unsure of your current exemption status, contact us at 770-293-5977. Our team will let you know what is needed to retain your exemption approval.
- The program number, or **EX-####** identifies for the program as a whole. The **EXMT-####** specifically relates to the exempt category. It is possible for one program to have multiple exemptions on file with DECAL. Multiple categories for an exempt program are listed according to the EXMT number under the program number on file.

Exciting changes for exempt programs: DECAL KOALA coming soon!

Soon, exempt programs will have access to a database where you can create your own online profile to maintain department access and to make changes such as:

- director information
- email address changes
- program emails up to four addresses
- submit comprehensive background checks for staff of exemption category 14 and categories #1 and #7 that accept CAPS.

The database is called **DECAL KOALA**. Until DECAL KOALA is implemented for exempt programs, you may contact us to make these changes by emailing CCSExemptions@decalfga.gov.

In the meantime, you can submit **background check applications to the Criminal Records Check unit at CRCHelpDesk@decalfga.gov**. Be sure to note your program's Exemption number (EX-####) on the application to expedite the process. If you don't know your program's exemption number, contact the Exemptions unit, and we will help you locate your program number.

For more information on the new Health and Safety Orientation Certificate required for programs that accept CAPS subsidies, visit: [Health & Safety Orientation Requirements](#). Even if your program does not accept CAPS subsidies, the online training will help any program serving children to be aware of health and safety factors.

Policy and Procedure Review

We will continue our review of the exemption category definitions, which will help when completing exemption applications. In this edition, we will review categories #2 and #3.

Category #2 is defined as:

Private non-public educational programs with an established curriculum for children five (5) years and older that operate during the school term for the customary school day, as defined by Georgia law.

Category 2 is for programs operating as private schools during the customary school term (180 days per year) during typical school hours (7.5 hours each day) for children aged 5 years and older. Programs applying for Category 2 are required to submit documentation that clarifies program operations such as parent handbook, enrollment form, policies and procedures, advertisement information along with the notice that notifies families that the program is exempt from state licensure.

Category #3 is defined as:

A private non-public school which provides education in any grades from kindergarten through 12th grade, meets the requirements under Georgia law for private schools (See O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690), and is accredited by one or more of the entities listed in O.C.G.A. § 20-3-519(6)(A) and which provides care before, after, or both before and after the customary school day, as defined in Georgia law, to its students as an auxiliary service to such students during the regular school year only.

The accrediting entities listed in O.C.G.A. § 20-3-519(6)(A) are:

- (i) The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools;*
- (ii) The Georgia Accrediting Commission;*
- (iii) The Georgia Association of Christian Schools;*
- (iv) The Association of Christian Schools International;*
- (v) The Georgia Private School Accreditation Council;*
- (vi) The Southern Association of Independent Schools;*
- (vii) The Accrediting Commission for Independent Study. (O.C.G.A § 20-3- 519(6.1)(A)."*

Category 3 is similar to Category 2, in that Category 3 exempt programs have received accreditation and also provide before care, after care, or both before and after the school day care for the students enrolled in the private school. The application for exemption must include the same documents as those required for Category 2 and also the certificate of accreditation.
