

SOLVE PROGRAM FAQs

OVERVIEW

What is the SOLVE Program?

SOLVE stands for **Supporting Onsite Learning for Virtual Education**. The Program is part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding given to Georgia through the CARES Act in response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. It is administered by the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program located in the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).

How does the SOLVE Program help families?

The SOLVE Program provides financial assistance to families with students enrolled in a Georgia public school, a locally approved charter school, or a state charter commission school that is providing **primarily virtual learning** (meaning 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grades kindergarten through 7th).

What are SOLVE Scholarships?

A SOLVE Scholarship is a financial award for qualifying families to pay for a specific child (ages 5-12 or up to age 22 for students with a qualifying disability, enrolled in kindergarten through 7th grade) to attend a licensed child care program that offers full-time care for school-age students or a licensed exempt day camp program while the child is engaged in virtual learning. Families with a student with a qualifying disability may be approved for another type of provider.

Who is eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship?

Working families with children ages 5-12 (kindergarten through 7th grade), or up to age 22 for students with a qualifying disability, can receive SOLVE Scholarships to help them pay for the care, supervision, and support of those students at a licensed child care program or licensed exempt day camp program while they are engaged in virtual learning. The students must be enrolled in a school system that is providing **primarily virtual learning** (meaning 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grades kindergarten through 7th).

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

What are the requirements to qualify for a SOLVE Scholarship?

Families must meet four requirements:

- Students must attend a school system that is providing **primarily virtual learning** (meaning 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grades kindergarten through 7th).
- Students must be ages 5 through 12 (kindergarten through 7th grade) or up to age 22 for students with a qualifying disability.
- Family income may not exceed 85% of the state median income (SMI) unless the family has a student with a qualifying disability.
- Parents must be involved in an approved activity, such as working, attending school, or a combination of the two.

Am I eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship if my child attends a charter school?

Families are eligible for a SOLVE scholarship if their child attends a Georgia public school, a locally approved charter school, or a state charter commission school. However, these school systems must offer a primarily virtual learning model, meaning 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grades kindergarten through 7th.

How can I apply for a SOLVE Scholarship?

Families apply through the Georgia Gateway System at <https://gateway.ga.gov/access/>. Eligibility will be verified by CAPS staff. Families must select a provider when they apply.

Do SOLVE Scholarships cover the entire cost of full-time care?

Depending on the provider, SOLVE Scholarships may only pay for a portion of the care. Therefore, providers that accept SOLVE Scholarships may require families to pay the difference between the SOLVE Scholarship rate and the provider's stated rate.



Will the SOLVE Scholarships cover the costs of care for the entire school year?

The Scholarships are good for three months. This period may be extended if the school system continues to provide **primarily virtual learning** (meaning 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grades kindergarten through 7th).

How can I find a list of eligible school systems? How often is this listed updated? A list of currently approved virtual only school systems can be found here:

http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf

This list is provided by the Georgia Department of Education and updated by DECAL on the SOLVE website and in Georgia Gateway. While the list cannot be updated in “real time,” it will be updated as soon as possible in both places.

My school system is offering in-person learning for certain grade levels but not all grade levels. Does this mean that I am not eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship?

If a school system does not offer in-person learning for kindergarten through 7th grade, that school system is eligible for SOLVE Scholarships since many families in these schools are not able to participate in in-person learning. A list of all eligible school systems is available at

http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf.

My school system gave me the option to send my child to school or take virtual classes from home. I am worried about the risk of coronavirus infection at school and I work full time, so I chose the virtual learning option. Am I eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship?

Only students whose school systems are **primarily using a virtual learning model** (meaning 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual) are eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship. Families will not be eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship if their school system uses a primarily in-person learning model (meaning that over 50% of classroom instruction is in-person) or gives them a choice between classroom and virtual learning. However, suppose a school system only offers in-person learning for certain grade levels, but not all grade levels kindergarten through 7th. In that case, families in that school system are considered eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship, pending other eligibility requirements.

If a school system transitions to a primarily virtual model later in the school year, will affected families be eligible for SOLVE Scholarships?

Yes, if school systems change to a primarily virtual model (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7th), then families in those school systems will be able to qualify for SOLVE Scholarships as long as funding is available. A list of all eligible school systems is available at

http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf.

If a school system switches from a virtual-only model to a hybrid model, does that mean that those families no longer qualify for SOLVE Scholarships?

Once awarded, SOLVE Scholarships are good for three months. If the school system changes to a primarily in-person learning model (meaning that over 50% of classroom instruction is in-person), affected families would no longer be eligible for the SOLVE program after their current scholarship expires. However, if the school system only offers in-person learning for certain grade-levels, but not all grade levels kindergarten through 7th, families who attend that school system would still be eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship, pending other eligibility requirements. Additionally, if the school system returns to a primarily virtual learning model (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual) for any grade level after the scholarship has expired and there is still funding available, families may apply again and qualify for SOLVE Scholarships.



If I have more than one child in a school that is providing primarily virtual learning, can I get SOLVE Scholarships for all of them?

Yes, families may receive a SOLVE Scholarship for any eligible child.

Do families whose school system is providing primarily virtual learning qualify for SOLVE Scholarships if their child is at an eligible provider located in a different school district?

Yes. SOLVE Scholarships will pay for the care of a student whose school system is providing **primarily virtual-only learning** (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7th), even if the care is provided at an eligible facility that is outside the student's assigned school district. Parents must attest that the child is enrolled in the eligible school system.

My child's school recently switched to a primarily virtual learning model, but when I complete my SOLVE application in Georgia Gateway, it says my child is ineligible because they are not in an approved school system. How do I resolve this?

The list of school systems that are providing primarily virtual learning is provided by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). DECAL works closely with GaDOE to get the list of eligible school systems updates as soon as possible. A list of eligible school systems is available at:

http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibleSchoolsDistricts.pdf

DECAL updates the list of eligible school systems to the SOLVE website and in Georgia Gateway. While the lists cannot be updated in "real time", they are updated as soon as possible. If you experience the error described above, try checking again the next day to allow time for the system to update.

Please note that if your school system is offering in-person learning for certain grade levels, but not all grade levels kindergarten through 7th, your school system is approved for SOLVE Scholarships. Additionally, if your school system uses a hybrid model where virtual learning constitutes at least half of all classroom instruction, then your school system is recognized as using a primarily virtual learning model and will be included in the list of eligible school systems.

Am I eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship if my school offers in-person learning for part of the week?

If your school system is using **virtual learning for 50% or more of classroom instruction per week**, you are eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship, pending other eligibility requirements. This includes:

- School systems that alternate between in-person and virtual learning each week,
- School systems that offer in-person learning for less than half of each school day, and
- School systems that use other hybrid models where in-person learning constitutes less than half of the days of the week.

Once a school system begins using **in-person learning for more than 50% of classroom instruction per week**, the SOLVE program will no longer recognize that school system as being eligible for SOLVE Scholarships. New applicants in those schools will not be eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship, and scholarships for existing families will not be extended upon expiration.

NOTE: If your school system is **using in-person learning in certain, but not all, grade levels kindergarten through grade 7**, your school system will be included in the list of eligible school systems.

Can I use a SOLVE Scholarship at any child care facility?

SOLVE Scholarships can be used at licensed child care learning centers, licensed family child care learning homes, government-owned-and-operated child care facilities, and providers with an approved day camp exemption. Eligible providers have to offer full-time care for school-age students while they are engaged in virtual learning. Any participating child care facility must also be an eligible CAPS provider and currently accepting CAPS Scholarships. Families with a student with a qualifying disability may send their student to another type of provider, as approved by SOLVE staff. Information on this type of provider can be found at the following link:

http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_InformalProviderRequirements.pdf.

What is the difference between a CAPS Scholarship and a SOLVE Scholarship?

SOLVE Scholarships are separate from CAPS Scholarships. While the SOLVE Scholarship requirements and benefits follow many of the CAPS rules and processes, there are important differences:

- **FEES:** Many families who receive a CAPS Scholarship are assessed a family fee. SOLVE Scholarships do not include a family fee. However, recipients of both CAPS Scholarships and SOLVE Scholarships may be responsible for paying the difference between the Scholarship and the Provider's stated rate.
- **BENEFIT TERMS:** CAPS Scholarships provide a 12-month benefit for children under the age of 13 (with some exceptions) that can be renewed annually until the family no longer meets eligibility requirements or until the family no longer needs child care. SOLVE Scholarships are only available to school-age students (ages 5–12, or up to age 22 for students with a qualifying disability) for a three-month eligibility period, while their school systems provide primarily virtual learning (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7th).

Where can I find a provider that accepts SOLVE Scholarships?

Families should search for eligible providers by visiting <http://qualityrated.org> and selecting the “fulltime care for school age children” check box on the search page. Families can also call 1-877-255-4254 and talk to a referral specialist.

Can a child hold a CAPS Scholarship and SOLVE Scholarship at the same time?

No, children cannot hold a CAPS Scholarship and a SOLVE Scholarship at the same time. DECAL will work with the families eligible for both scholarships to ensure a seamless transition between the two if needed.

Can I convert my CAPS Scholarship into a SOLVE Scholarship?

The CAPS Scholarship is a 12-month benefit for children under the age of 13 (with some exceptions) that assists a family in paying for child care as long as the family meets CAPS eligibility criteria. While some families may pay less for care under a SOLVE Scholarship than a CAPS Scholarship, it is important to remember that the SOLVE Scholarship is a temporary benefit offered while schools provide primarily virtual learning (meaning that 50% or more of classroom instruction is virtual for all grade levels kindergarten through 7th). Families with CAPS Scholarships who want to transition to the SOLVE Program would have to close their CAPS Scholarship. This would result in the loss of all CAPS Program benefits, even after the SOLVE Program ends. DECAL will work with the families eligible for both scholarships to determine the best option for them and to ensure a seamless transition if needed.

Will the providers who accept SOLVE Scholarships require or furnish masks? Will providers enforce social distancing guidelines to protect the students from COVID-19?

All providers offering care and education services to children and school-age students engaged in virtual learning must follow the COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Providers established by DECAL and the Georgia Department of Public Health. These guidelines are posted at

http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/covid_guidanceGeorgia_ChildCare_8_12_2020.pdf.

Are SOLVE Scholarships only for families with low incomes?

SOLVE Scholarships are for families who meet the income requirement. To be eligible for a SOLVE Scholarship, a family's income may not exceed 85% of the state median income (SMI) unless their student has a qualifying disability. Income limits can be found in the SOLVE Family Eligibility document located at:

http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibilityRequirements.pdf.

How can I figure out if my family income exceeds 85% of the state median income (SMI)?

A chart found at the link below will help you determine if your family income meets the SOLVE Scholarship eligibility requirements. Final determination is made by a DECAL Scholarship specialist.

http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/SOLVE_EligibilityRequirements.pdf

Can SOLVE Scholarships be applied retroactively to payments for students who have already started school under a virtual-only model and are enrolled in full-time care at a provider?

A SOLVE Scholarship begins payments on Monday of the week the application is approved. The SOLVE Scholarship will not pay retroactively to the date of enrollment if that was before the date the application was approved.

How can I extend my SOLVE Scholarship once I reach the end of my eligibility period?

Parents cannot extend or renew their SOLVE Scholarships. Instead, SOLVE will systematically extend scholarships if the family remains eligible. The family will receive an email notification at the email address on file in the SOLVE application prior to the scholarship being extended or terminated.

The SOLVE Program reviews the following criteria when determining eligibility for an extension:

- The child's age (ages 5-12, or up to age 22 for students with a qualifying disability)
- The school system is primarily virtual (the school must be on the current SOLVE Eligible School Systems list).

If all components are met at the time of the SOLVE Scholarship expiration, SOLVE will extend the family's scholarship.

My child's SOLVE Scholarship has recently expired, and my family is no longer eligible for a scholarship because our school system is currently offering both in-person and virtual learning. Since my family elected to participate in virtual learning initially, we cannot transition our child back to in-person learning at this point. Does this affect our renewal eligibility?

We understand how challenging it is to navigate your child's care as school systems shift between in-person and virtual learning. However, the SOLVE Scholarship renewal system does not have the capacity to extend or renew scholarships if a school system is not currently on the list of SOLVE eligible school systems. We recommend checking the SOLVE eligible schools list regularly, because DECAL updates the list when schools transition to primarily virtual learning models.

INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS

What requirements do I have to meet to be eligible to accept SOLVE Scholarships?

Providers accepting SOLVE Scholarships must be:

- a licensed child care learning center, a licensed family child care learning home, a government-owned- and-operated child care facility, or a facility operating with an approved day camp exemption from DECAL (other providers may be approved by CAPS staff for students with a disability).
- an eligible CAPS provider currently accepting CAPS Scholarships.
- listed as open and providing full-time care for school-age students in DECAL's KOALA System.

How do I indicate that my facility is open and providing full-time virtual learning for school-age students?

Providers interested in accepting SOLVE Scholarships should follow these instructions to update their DECAL KOALA accounts to indicate that their facility is open and providing virtual learning for school-age students:

- Log in to your DECAL KOALA account at www.decalkoala.com
- On the green Menu Bar, click Facility Update
- Click Operating Details
- Enter your program's COVID-19 information in the blue area, including dates closed and open
- Indicate whether your program is open to serve school-age students all day to facilitate supervised distance learning

How can I become eligible to accept SOLVE Scholarships if I do not currently meet the licensing requirements?

Providers not meeting the licensing requirement need to apply for a license or day camp exemption through DECAL's Child Care Services (CCS) division. Application instructions for licensing and information about day camp exemptions are available at <http://www.decals.ga.gov/CCS/Exemptions.aspx>. For additional information, interested providers can call 404-657-5562 or email ChildCareServices@decals.ga.gov. Individuals caring for students with a qualifying disability must complete the enrollment process and obtain a satisfactory criminal record check for themselves and all other adults who live in the home where care is provided.

How can I become eligible to accept SOLVE Scholarships if I do not currently meet the CAPS requirements?

CAPS Registration and documentation requirements are available at <https://caps.decals.ga.gov/en/CAPSProviderHowTo>.

What reimbursement rates will apply if I accept SOLVE Scholarships?

Providers will be reimbursed at current CAPS rates. Quality Rated providers accepting SOLVE Scholarships will receive the Tiered Reimbursement amount. Providers caring for students with a qualifying disability may be reimbursed at a higher rate, based on the location, star rating, and type of provider.

Will children at my facility who already have CAPS Scholarships be eligible for SOLVE Scholarships as well?

Children will not be able hold a CAPS Scholarship and a SOLVE Scholarship at the same time. DECAL will work with the families eligible for both scholarships to ensure a seamless transition, if needed.



My facility has an exemption, but not for a day camp. I also have indicated in KOALA that I am providing supervised distance learning for school-age students. Can I accept SOLVE Scholarships?

Providers with day camp exemptions and those that are government-owned-and-operated are the only license-exempt facilities that can accept SOLVE Scholarship. Although other parents searching for full-time care for school-age students on qualityrated.org can find and choose your facility, parents who are SOLVE Scholarship applicants can only select exempt providers with a day camp exemption or that are government-owned and operated.

Information about whether you may qualify for a day camp exemption is available at

<http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/CCS/Exemptions.aspx>. Other providers may serve eligible students with a disability, as approved by CAPS Staff.

What personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing accommodations will I need to make in my facility for the school-age students with SOLVE Scholarships?

All providers offering care and education services to children and school-age students engaged in virtual learning must follow the COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Providers established by DECAL and the Georgia Department of Public Health, posted at

http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/covid_guidanceGeorgia_ChildCare_8_12_2020.pdf.

How are these CARES Act funds different from the funds distributed earlier by DECAL through the STABLE Grants?

Both the SOLVE Scholarships and the STABLE Grants provide financial assistance to support families and child care providers during the COVID-19 health crisis. However, STABLE Grants provide financial assistance to child care providers whereas SOLVE Scholarships provide financial assistance to families who need full-time child care while school systems offer virtual-only learning. A provider will only receive payments through the SOLVE Program if the provider cares for a family with a SOLVE Scholarship.

Will DECAL provide more STABLE Grant funds in the future?

STABLE grants were DECAL's initial effort to provide support to child care providers impacted by the COVID-19 health crisis with CARES Act funds. DECAL intends to offer additional funding opportunities in the future and will inform providers when these opportunities become available.

Where can I get more details?

DECAL will provide additional information for families about the SOLVE Scholarships, including details about income eligibility and activity requirements, at <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/CAPS/Solve.aspx>. If you have additional questions, please email us at solve@dec.al.ga.gov or call 1-833-442-2277.