



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

Brian P. Kemp
Governor

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DECAL’s “Look Again” Campaign Spotlights
Dangers of Leaving Children in Vehicles**

*Families, Child Care Providers, and the Public Reminded
How to Prevent Vehicular Heatstroke*

ATLANTA, Ga., (April 29, 2024) – For the eleventh consecutive year, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is reminding families and caregivers of children to increase their awareness of the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles. The goal of this year’s “Look Again” campaign is to ensure that families, child care providers, and the public understand how to prevent pediatric vehicular heatstroke and are vigilant when transporting children during Georgia’s hottest months.

DECAL will join the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) and the National Highway Safety Traffic Administration (NHTSA) for a news conference on **Wednesday, May 1, 2024, at 11:00 AM** at the DeKalb Fire Safety Administration Building, 1611 W. Exchange Place, in Tucker. Speakers at the event include DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs, GOHS Director Allen Poole, and NHTSA Deputy Regional Administrator Alex Cabral. SAFE Kids DeKalb will have a thermometer placed inside a vehicle with a display showing the temperature inside the vehicle versus the outside temperature during the news conference.

Commissioner Jacobs said hundreds of thousands of children in Georgia are cared for daily by licensed child care providers, most of whom regularly transport children. “Nationally, 29 children died from pediatric vehicular heatstroke in 2023, including a 14-month-old girl in Newton County, Georgia, who was left in a vehicle by her mother on October 10, 2023. The mother was charged with second-degree murder and issuing a false statement,” she explained. “These deaths can be prevented if we all Look Again.”

During FY2023, eight children were left in vehicles by child care providers statewide. So far in FY2024, as of mid-April, nine children have been left in vehicles. Thankfully, these children were discovered in time; none of them were seriously injured.

“All vehicular heatstroke deaths are preventable, and that is why it is important for anyone who transports children to always look before they leave their vehicle, especially when there is a change in their daily routine,” Allen Poole, GHOS Director said. “The Governor’s Office of Highway Safety is proud to partner with DECAL in our joint mission to prevent any child from being left inside a parked vehicle.”

Jacobs said “Look Again” is a message not only for child care programs and teachers but for anyone caring for a child – parents, grandparents, other family members, neighbors, and friends – to always account for the children in their care as they drive them from place to place. “When you arrive at your destination, check the front and back of your car, and after you have looked, just to be sure, Look Again. There is absolutely no reason for a child to suffer or die in these conditions,” she stressed.

Jacobs said technology is helping in the effort: “Sensors in car seats and vehicles and phone apps signal reminders when you reach your destination,” she said. “These technological resources help build habits to check the backseat after driving. And if these aren’t options, you can always place a stuffed animal in your passenger seat as a reminder that your child is in the back.”

This summer, thanks to a \$30,000 grant from GOHS, DECAL will use billboards, radio, and other mass media to take the Look Again message to the public.

Officials also remind the public to act responsibly and quickly if they see a child left alone in a vehicle by calling 911 immediately; emergency personnel are trained to respond.

For more information, visit www.decals.ga.gov or www.noheatstroke.org.

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.dec.al.ga.gov.