



**Brian P. Kemp**  
Governor

**Amy M. Jacobs**  
Commissioner

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**Georgia Increasing Children Served through CAPS Program by 10,000  
and Expands Eligibility**

*Bonus Payments to Quality Rated Providers Increasing by 15-percent based on Star Level*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (October 18, 2021)** – To provide additional support to Georgia’s families and child care providers and ensure more children have access to quality early educational opportunities, Governor Brian P. Kemp and Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs today announced that Georgia will expand its Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program by 10,000 children, beginning November 1, 2021. The CAPS Program serves 50,000 children from families with no to low incomes and helps them with the cost of child care. The expansion, which continues through October 1, 2024, is paid for through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) passed by Congress earlier this year.

This increase in the number of children also includes an expansion of CAPS eligibility limits, making more children and families eligible for the program. New guidelines will increase the entry income threshold from 50% of the State Median Income (SMI) to 85% of SMI.

“Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, we have made child care a top priority in Georgia for assisting first responders, essential workers, and other hard-working families who could not stop their important work or work from home during this challenging time,” said Governor Kemp.

“CAPS is a great example of a public initiative that helps families, their children, and the providers caring

for their children. Our children are our greatest resource, and we always want to put them first. This expansion will allow us to serve more families while also helping more providers become Quality Rated.”

To support providers in raising their quality, Commissioner Jacobs said CAPS is increasing its tiered bonus payments to Quality Rated providers by 15%, based on their star level. Programs who are one-star will increase from 10% to 25%; two-star programs will increase from 20% to 35%; and three-star programs will increase from 40% to 55%. Child care providers who are on their way to achieving a rating, including those in a probationary or provisional status, will receive a 15% increase from current CAPS base rates. “This is to help in their efforts to increase their quality and successfully achieve a star rating,” said Commissioner Jacobs.

Awarding CAPS Scholarships is based on whether families qualify for at least one priority group. For the “Very Low-Income Priority Group,” CAPS will increase the percentage of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) Guidelines that determines eligibility from 50% FPL to 150% FPL, vastly increasing the number of eligible Georgia families.

In May, DECAL announced a special initiative called ACCESS - Awarding Child Care Education Scholarship Supplements. ACCESS is intended to temporarily alleviate the financial burden of child care for families in the CAPS program. As part of this funding, CAPS family fees -- the portion of child care paid for by families -- are waived under the ACCESS initiative through October 2, 2022. Families will not pay their provider any tuition related fees or co-payments for child care services. CAPS will pay child care providers their full published rate for the type of care provided, including the family fee.

According to [Childcare Aware of America](#), the average annual price for full-time infant care in a child care center in Georgia is approximately \$8,729 or \$168/week.

Since March 2020, DECAL has waived certain CAPS policies to support families and child care providers impacted by COVID-19. More information, call 1-833-4GA-CAPS (1-833-442-2277). To learn more about CAPS Policies and Procedures, visit <https://caps.dec.al.ga.gov/en/>.

### **About DECAL**

The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning 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 and 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.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).