



**DECAL
EARLY HEAD START
PARTNERSHIP**

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
WWW.DECAL.GA.GOV

Community Assessment

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Abstract

Since July 2015, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) has been serving young children and families through the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP). Through this partnership, over 200 infants and toddlers and their families have been served.

The following report outlines the strengths and needs of the communities in which these programs operate. Based on the data collected through a variety of methods and from various sources, it is clear that the partnership has succeeded in improving comprehensive services for infants, toddlers, and their families. However, it is also clear that additional supports may be needed for programs, children, and families served by the partnership.

This report will guide the partnership's continuous quality improvement activities to ensure that an integrated array of services and supports are available for the participating early education programs and the children and families they serve. This includes children enrolled in the participating programs who are not enrolled in Early Head Start. The report highlights how Georgia has used and aligned additional Child Care and Development Fund resources to extend the benefits of the EHS-CCP to all infants and toddlers enrolled at child care learning centers and family child care learning homes participating in the project.

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Introduction: Overview and Summary of Project

In 2014, the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) was awarded an Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership Grant (EHS-CCP). The purpose of the grant was to increase access to high-quality early education, including comprehensive services, for low-income infants and toddlers and their families. Also, the partnership would help raise quality in programs offering Early Head Start services. Not only would children enrolled in Early Head Start benefit, but also the other infants and toddlers enrolled in participating early education programs. A critical component of the partnership model is the layering of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) monies with Early Head Start resources.

The grant created the DECAL Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership (DEHSP). The initial goals of DEHSP included: 1) providing access to high-quality, early childhood education and comprehensive services for infants, toddlers, and their families; 2) connecting families to additional resources and services to support them in meeting their family goals; 3) supporting mothers and fathers in their role as primary caregivers and teachers of their children, and families in meeting personal goals and achieving self-sufficiency across a wide variety of domains; and 4) mobilizing communities to provide the resources and environment necessary to ensure a comprehensive, integrated array of services and support for families.

Since fully implementing the grant in 2015, the partnership has been successful in meeting these goals and serving children and families. Critical to its success has been the DEHSP organizational structure. DECAL serves as the grant administrator and contracts directly with early education programs to offer Early Head Start services. To ensure that these programs meet all high-quality standards and have the capacity to offer comprehensive services, DECAL contracts with two “hubs.” One hub serves child care learning centers (CCLC), and one hub serves family child care learning homes (FCCLH). While both models (CCLC and FCCLH) serve low-income families, the FCCLH model specifically targets learners whose home language is Spanish. A Policy Council oversees this strong organizational model. This council is composed of proportionate representation from the parents of children currently served by the DEHSP.

To ensure that DEHSP could continue meeting the stated goals and continue serving children and families in a way that is responsive to their needs, DEHSP conducted a Community Assessment (CA) in early 2017. This CA thoroughly examined community and state level data using direct feedback from partnership focus groups and stakeholder engagement efforts. The result is a thorough examination of the areas where Early Head Start services are offered that includes the needs of those communities along with a “cataloging” of resources, utilized and underutilized.

This CA will benefit the partnership in several ways. First, DECAL will use the assessment to make informed decisions and refine the partnership’s strategic plan. This refinement includes adapting enrollment procedures to make sure that each program targets children and families who can benefit the most. Second, the CA will help DECAL respond to new federal regulations

and initiatives and support other EHS-CCP grantees by providing data and a methodology to help in their organization's strategic planning. Third, and most importantly, the assessment will help DEHSP leadership mobilize community resources and partnerships. This mobilization includes ensuring that each program has access to all available services and programs in each respective region. In short, the CA provides DEHSP leadership the opportunity to assess the needs and resources of eligible families, programs, and the community.

This report details the results of this CA. The findings demonstrate a continued need for expanding services because a significant number of eligible infants and toddlers living in the targeted areas are not currently being served by the partnership. Additionally, for those children currently being served, more resources could be utilized to benefit their families. The results also reveal a continued need to increase the quality of early learning in these targeted areas.

In summary, the implementation of DEHSP has been a success. DECAL began services six months after receiving the grant and had filled all slots funded by the grant by October 2015. Since implementation, DECAL has conducted a self-assessment of the services provided and has implemented an engaged and passionate Policy Council. The CA's critical findings as outlined in this report are a critical next step as DECAL continues focusing resources and supports to strengthen this already successful model.

DEHSP Community Assessment Methodology

To conduct this Community Assessment, DECAL utilized a multimethod, iterative approach. This approach included compiling and analyzing administrative and community level data, reviewing results from the 2016 Self-Assessment and conducting focus groups with key stakeholders from all levels of the partnership. Embedded in all of the above were the continual "feedback loops" needed to conduct a thorough community assessment.

The CA process was led by DECAL's internal Research and Policy Analysis team. A strength of DECAL is having this internal unit that oversees the agency's research agenda and has knowledge and experience working across all of DECAL's early education programs and initiatives. Another strength of the process was DECAL's efforts to align community and state level data with Georgia's Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS) to streamline data sharing and accuracy within the early childhood domain.¹

The first step in the process was convening an assessment team that included representatives from all levels of the partnership. This representation included DEHSP leadership familiar with the early education programs offered in the state, Policy Council members, and specific early education providers offering DEHSP services. By utilizing the results from the 2016 EHS-CCP

¹ Data and data sources identified for the DEHSP Community Assessment will align with Georgia's Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS) and will be compiled into a "Community Assessment Data Dictionary". This will be especially helpful in providing and facilitating data for other Early Head Start Grantees.

Self-Assessment, families and teachers were also included in the CA. To facilitate an approach that would not only benefit DEHSP but other Early Start Head grantees and Georgia’s Head Start community at large, the team also included Georgia’s Head Start State Collaboration Office Director.²

The second step of the process was identifying the specific data needed to conduct a thorough Community Assessment. The assessment team identified data points such as community-level poverty rates, the racial/ethnic breakdowns of the service areas, unemployment levels, and needs for dual language learner services. Identified data needs also included information about children and families currently being served in the program along with data collected from the 2016 Self-Assessment.

For the third step of the process, the identified data was collected, compiled, and (where appropriate) analyzed. A key component of this step was identifying the best approach to presenting and understanding the data. The assessment team determined that an analysis related to the geographic areas that also differentiated by provider type (center vs. family) was the best approach to understand the DEHSP community needs.

Concurrent with the third step, DEHSP leadership convened a “focus group” for all partnership leadership levels to identify specific community supports and resources available to Early Head Start programs. The assessment team compiled and conducted research on the resources that were identified. The last step of the process involved compiling the various data analyses and results from the focus group and the review and approval process from the Policy Council.

In summary, DEHSP’s CA process included many data points from a variety of sources – including data collected specifically for this assessment. These data sources are detailed in Appendix B. By utilizing various data sources, DECAL was able to thoroughly examine the strengths, needs, and current challenges facing families in the areas served by the partnership. As outlined in the following sections, a substantial need exists to continue the work done through the DEHSP and to expand these services to serve more young children in high-quality learning environments.

DEHSP Partnership and Program Information

Since DECAL serves as the lead agency for DEHSP, the department is able to utilize and blend additional statewide resources to support the work. For example, DECAL is the lead agency for Georgia’s Early Learning Challenge grant and administers Georgia’s Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). DECAL also oversees the Georgia Program for Infant and Toddler Care, the child care resource and referral system, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Georgia’s universal Pre-K program, and Quality Rated, the state’s quality rating and

² The names and brief description of additional team members are listed in Appendix A.

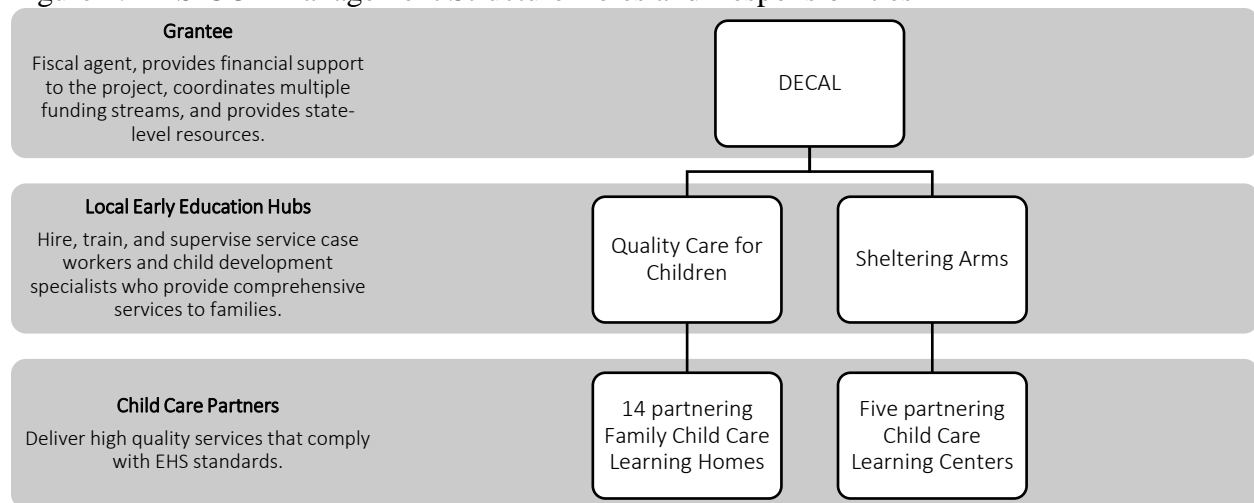
improvement system. Additionally, DECAL houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office. All of these resources have been mobilized to strengthen the services offered through DEHSP.

For the aforementioned hubs, DECAL selected partners Sheltering Arms, Inc. and Quality Care for Children, Inc. for their experience in providing quality early education services. Through these hubs, the partnership is able to provide comprehensive services such as supporting family financial planning and budgeting assistance, ensuring access to health care, providing nutrition support, and offering career assistance. Sheltering Arms, Inc. works with the participating child care learning centers (CCLH) and Quality Care for Children, Inc. works with the family child care learning homes (FCCLH).

Currently, nineteen Child Care Partners (five CCLH and 14 FCCLH) offer high-quality early education services through DEHSP. Since full implementation in 2015, the DEHSP has served over 200 infants and toddlers with 199 currently enrolled in the program.

Figure 1 details the organizational structure of DEHSP.

Figure 1. EHS-CCP Management Structure Roles and Responsibilities



A key component of the CA process was compiling and reviewing specific data about the individual child care partners providing the Early Head Start services. This information provides DEHSP leadership the opportunity to review the needs and resources of current families and programs. The self-assessment completed in 2016 also provided additional data. Responses from the self-assessment indicated that the child care partners had done an excellent job providing access to high-quality early education. Families reported high satisfaction with the program and the services they are receiving. Specifically, 81% of families reported being happy with their child’s EHS program, and 92% felt that their child’s program helps them be a better parent.³

³ A copy of the 2016 self-assessment can be found at: <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/ChildCarePartnership.aspx>

There are five child care learning center (CCLC) partners. Table 1 lists each DEHSP CCLC partner, the number of EHS slots, the licensed capacity, the estimated percentage of capacity served in Early Head Start, and the most recent Quality Rated star level achieved by the program. Licensed capacity is not necessarily synonymous with enrollment.

A center’s licensed capacity is based on its physical size and the usable space per child determined by DECAL. Licensed capacity provides a “rough estimate” of the potential enrollment; therefore, the percentage of slots that are Early Head Start is also an estimate. Licensed capacity is determined by DECAL and allows for more children than what is required by the Early Head Start standards. Therefore, CCLC programs probably serve a higher percentage of their capacity than the data would indicate. While DECAL collects enrollment information for Early Head Start and Georgia’s Pre-K Program, the state does not collect enrollment data for other classrooms licensed by DECAL.

Quality Rated (QR) is Georgia’s voluntary tiered quality rating and improvement system. Each participating early education program is assigned a one, two, or three-star rating based on a portfolio submission and an independent observation using one or more of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). DEHSP requires that participating programs become Quality Rated within a sufficient amount of time.

As seen in Table 1, all of the CCLC programs have less than 50% of their licensed capacity served by Early Head Start slots, and all but one are less than 30%. This suggests that, with additional funding, these programs could expand and enroll more children in Early Head Start. All of the programs have received a Quality Rated star rating, and two of the five centers are rated two stars. None of the programs have achieved a three-star rating. Therefore, these ratings demonstrate both the programs’ commitment to raising quality but also the potential for raising quality even more.

Table 1: Child Care Learning Centers (CCLC)

Program Name	County	EHS Slots	License Capacity (LC)	% of LC served in EHS Slots	Quality Rating Star Rating
Atlanta Technical College Early Education Center	Fulton	24	84	29%	1
Childcare Network #206	Clayton	40	208	19%	2
Our House Genesis	Fulton	24	91	26%	2
Scottdale Early Learning, Inc.	DeKalb	16	91	18%	2
Sheltering Arms - Dorothy Arkwright	DeKalb	48	113	42%	3

*Administrative Data housed at DECAL (2017)

**For all of the above, Sheltering Arms serves as the hub.

Similarly, Table 2 provides information about the 14-family child care learning homes (FCCLH) providing Early Head Start services. As noted in the table, most of the programs are located in

Gwinnett County, which houses a large number of dual language learners – especially families whose home language is Spanish. More information about DEHSP’s service areas is provided in the next section.

Table 2: Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH)

Program Name	County	EHS Slots	License Capacity	% of LC served in EHS Slots	Quality Rating
Acosta, Flor A	Gwinnett	3	6	50%	2
Avila, Alba R	Gwinnett	4	6	66%	1
Carmenaty, Mariela	Gwinnett	3	6	50%	3
Cinthyas Angels Group Day Care, Cinthya Martinez	Gwinnett	5	10	50%	3
Cross, Dayana C	Fulton	3	6	50%	2
Escudero, Francly M	Gwinnett	3	6	50%	3
Estrada, Gleydis	Gwinnett	4	6	66%	3
Garcia, Noemicia A	DeKalb	2	6	33%	2
Lopez, Emma	Gwinnett	3	6	50%	3
My Little Geniuses, Maria Claudia Ortega	Cobb	5	10	50%	3
Rivera, Yadira	Gwinnett	2	6	33%	3
Rojas, Elsa Cely	Gwinnett	3	6	50%	2
Sierra, Maria G	Gwinnett	3	6	50%	2
Valdivia, Roxana E	Gwinnett	4	6	66%	2

*Administrative Data housed at DECAL (2017)

**For all of the above, Quality Care for Children serves as the hub.

As shown in the table, participating FCCLH providers serve a much larger percent of their licensed capacity with Early Head Start slots than participating CCLC programs. These numbers also demonstrate that there is a need for children eligible for Early Head Start to be served in FCCLH whose home language is Spanish. As with CCLC programs, all FCCLH programs are Quality Rated with many achieving the highest star rating. Specifically, of the 14 participating FCCLHs, 7% are one star, 43% are two star, and 50% are three star.

A critical Early Head Start requirement is for programs to offer year-round, full-day services. It is also important for the partnership to ensure that programs offer services to infants and toddlers. FCCLH programs may also offer services for three-year-olds. To meet the needs of working families with low incomes, DEHSP provides full-day, full-year services. As illustrated in Tables 3 and 4, all programs operate five days a week for a minimum 10 hours per day.

Table 3: EHS Classes and Days of Operation for CCLC

Site	# of Classes Serving EHS Children	Class Age Groups	Days of Operation	Hours of Operation
Atlanta Technical College Early Education Center	3	12 weeks - 12 months	Monday- Friday	7:45 a.m.- 6:30 p.m.
		12 - 24 months		
		24 - 36 months		
Child Development Schools dba Childcare Network #206	5	6 weeks - 12 months	Monday- Friday	6:30 a.m.- 6:30 p.m.
		12 - 24 months		
		24 - 36 months		
Our House-Genesis	2	6 weeks - 12 months	Monday- Friday	7:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.
		12 - 24 months		
Scottsdale Child Development and Family Resource Center	2	6 weeks - 12 months	Monday- Friday	7:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.
		12 - 24 months		
Sheltering Arms-Dorothy Arkwright Model Infant Toddler Center	6	6 weeks - 12 months	Monday- Friday	6:30 a.m.- 6:30 p.m.
		12 - 24 months		
		24 - 36 months		

*Administrative Data housed at DECAL (2017)

Table 4: EHS Classes and Days of Operation for FCCLH

Site	# of Classes Serving EHS Children	Class Age Groups	Days of Operation	Hours of Operation
Alba Rocio Avila	1	12 - 48 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Cinthya's Angels Group Day Care, Cinthya Martinez	2	6 weeks - 18 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
		18 - 48 months		
Dayana Cross	1	12 - 36 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Elsa Cely Rojas	1	12 - 24 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.
Emma Lopez	1	24 - 36 months	Monday- Friday	7:00 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.
Flora Alba Acosta	1	24 - 36 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Francy Perez Escudero	1	12 - 36 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Gleydis Estrada	1	36 months - 48 months	Monday- Friday	7:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m.
My Little Geniuses, Maria Claudia Ortega	1	12 - 24 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.
Maria Gloria Sierra	1	24 - 36 months	Monday- Friday	8:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.

Table 4: EHS Classes and Days of Operation for FCCLH

Site	# of Classes Serving EHS Children	Class Age Groups	Days of Operation	Hours of Operation
Miriela Carmentay	1	12 - 36 months	Monday-Friday	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Noemicia Garcia	1	24 - 36 months	Monday-Friday	8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Roxanna Valdivia	1	12 - 36 months	Monday-Friday	8:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
Yadira Rivera-Delgado	1	24 - 36 months	Monday-Friday	8:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.

*Administrative Data housed at DECAL (2017)

As seen in both tables, all programs meet Early Head Start guidelines. However, none of the 19 partners operate later than 6 p.m. and none on the weekend. This may suggest that the operating schedules do not meet some families’ needs. However, most early education programs do not operate later than 6 p.m., so this is an issue across the early education system.⁴ Both tables show that the partnership is serving all eligible age groups.

In terms of meeting family “scheduling” needs, the data are inconclusive. Based on DECAL administrative data, in January 2017, 85% of the families served were single parents. With regard to job and school schedules, 146 (74%) of the parents were employed, and 61 (31%) were enrolled in job training or school when their children enrolled. Twenty-four percent of families do not have a high school diploma. These family circumstances are all strong indicators of toxic stress for children and families, demonstrating a strong need for additional Early Head Start services in the DEHSP service area.

Finally, it is important to note that DECAL has aligned its child care subsidy program policies in order to leverage the EHS-CCP funding to build the quality and expand the capacity of early childhood education programs serving infants, toddlers and their families with low incomes in order to enhance child well-being and school readiness outcomes. Ninety-seven (49%) of the infants and toddlers had CCDF subsidies layered with Early Head Start funding to support the delivery of comprehensive services. Therefore, families receiving subsidies benefit from full-day, full-year Early Head Start comprehensive services, including low ratios and small class sizes, qualified teachers in relationship-based learning environments supporting each and every child’s growth and development through the provision of health, educational, nutritional, social, and family support services. The quality of partnering early education programs improves as the programs meet the rigorous HSPPS. Early education program capacity is increased because the

⁴ More than 75% of child care learning centers and family child care learning homes operate 12 months per year; 10.9% of family child care learning homes and 2.8% of child care learning centers offer care on weekends (Saturday or Sunday), while larger percentages (20.6% and 7.7%, respectively) offer care in the evenings. DECAL (2016) *Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Georgia*

EHS-CCP grantee agency funds and supports comprehensive services for infants, toddlers, and their families by partnering with existing early education programs.

From a community needs perspective, the data in this section suggest several specific findings and recommendations. First, programs are serving a sufficient number of children in Early Head Start in terms of numbers (child care learning center partners) or percentages (family child care learning homes). The data from the CCLC partners indicate that they, if funding was available, could possibly serve more children in Early Head Start slots. What is not known from the data is if the providers have the classroom space or would be willing to convert preschool or Pre-K slots to Early Head Start. FCCLHs are serving a high percentage of their licensed capacity with Early Head Start slots, so expansion may not be an option in these sites. However, the fact that they are full suggests that there is a need for more early learning services in Spanish.

Second, all providers are meeting the Quality Rating provision, with 50% of FCCLHs achieving the highest star level. Third, in terms of operation, all providers are meeting Early Head Start standards. It cannot be shown from this data if the lack of weekend and weeknight operating hours hinders access for some eligible families.

Finally, in terms of providing additional resources through child care subsidies, the data suggest that this has been a successful strategy in increasing access to high-quality early education and comprehensive supports.

Regional and Community Level Data

The data in this section supports the continued demand for children and families with high needs to access high-quality early learning. The first subsection outlines the service area and the rationale for targeting specific counties. The second subsection provides a visual of where the sites are located within each county. The third section demonstrates the need to serve more eligible children within the counties, and the last section provides a more detailed look at the DEHSP program communities.

DEHSP Service Area

Georgia has a substantial need for high quality comprehensive services for infants, toddlers, and their families statewide. DECAL's current population forecast estimates that the state has 394,714 children under age three.⁵ Based on the poverty rate of 26.9% for children under age five in Georgia,⁶ an estimated 106,178 children under age three are in poverty. This poverty rate is higher than the national poverty rate (14.7%), the statewide poverty rate (17.2%), and the statewide poverty rate for children under 18 (24.7%). Georgia has only 4,272 Early Head Start

⁵ DECAL produces forecasts of the under-five population using annual SEER single year of age county population estimates, based on a model provided to DECAL in: Fortner, C. K. (2013). *Forecasting the Under-5 Population in Georgia Counties: 2013*. Atlanta: Georgia State University.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates.

slots serving approximately 4% of eligible children across all grantees currently funded in Georgia. Also, Georgia's child care subsidy program currently serves approximately 17,000 infants and toddlers a month. Considering that the income threshold is higher for subsidy eligibility (approximately 140% Federal Poverty Level), an estimated 11,000 of the infants and toddlers receiving subsidies could also be eligible for Early Head Start services. Even though child care subsidies are a source of considerable support for many families, the lack of a family co-pay and the additional comprehensive services offered through Early Head Start demonstrate how DEHSP could be a valuable resource for many families. In short, the data suggest that significantly more families in Georgia could benefit from Early Head Start services.

Similar to the state, the metro Atlanta area is in need of high quality learning opportunities for Early Head Start eligible children. For the purposes of this project, the metro Atlanta area is defined as the five counties directly around the City of Atlanta in which Early Head Start services are provided (Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett counties). This area includes 39% of all licensed child care and 35% of all Quality Rated child care in Georgia. Metro Atlanta contains large numbers of children and families with high needs, including areas with high concentrations of poverty. Additionally, other populations are considered high priority by the federal Office of Head Start (OHS). This includes children who are dual language learners and children living in families experiencing homelessness within the metro Atlanta area.

Figure 2 on the following page shows the five most populous metro Atlanta counties where the partnership offers Early Head Start services. As the graphic demonstrates, the partnership serves counties with high poverty rates and families with high needs.

Table 5 lists the five counties served by the partnership. The table includes the following data points: (a) the poverty rate for children under 18 for each county; (b) an estimate of the number of EHS-eligible infants and toddlers by county; (c) number of infants and toddlers receiving subsidies in each county; (d) current total of EHS slots in the county (e) an estimate of the number of EHS-eligible children not currently served; and (f) the number of requested EHS-CCP slots.

As illustrated in the table, the county poverty rate exceeds the state average in the counties served by the partnership for all counties except Fulton County, which includes high-poverty zip codes and a large homeless population, and Gwinnett County, which includes the FCCLHs that serve dual language learners (DLLs). Early Head Start programs selected in these counties serve a specific need: families who are homeless and dual language learners respectively. The estimated number of eligible children in the five counties served by the two hubs receiving subsidies (25,844) is higher than the total number of Early Head Start slots the state currently receives (4,272). Based on these numbers, it is clear that a substantial need exists for continuation and expansion of the current EHS-CCP services.⁷

⁷ Cobb County is included in the current Community Assessment for the following reasons: 1) The family child care learning home currently in Cobb County relocated there and was able to expand the number of children she could serve; 2) it is located in one of the most populous counties; 3) it includes a significant dual language learner population.

Figure 2: DECAL Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Locations

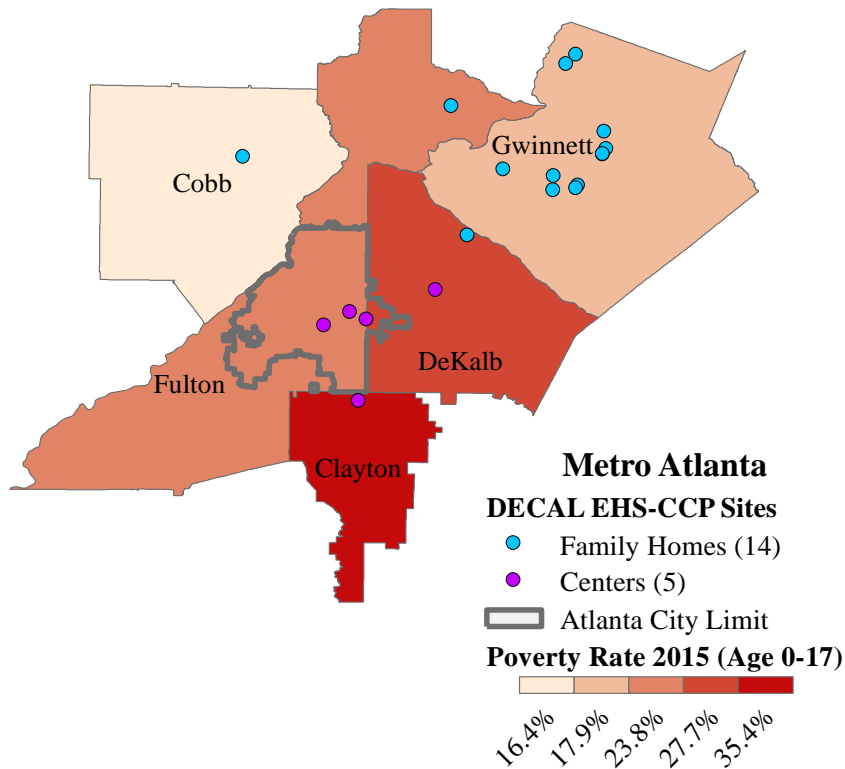


Table 5: Poverty, Eligibility, and EHS Slots by County

Counties Served by the Partnership	Child Poverty Rate 2015 (Age 0-17)	EHS-eligible Children	# of EHS Slots served in DEHSP	Total EHS Slots	EHS-eligible Children Receiving Subsidies	EHS-eligible Children Not Served
Clayton	35%	4,356	40	112	1,109	3,135
Cobb	16%	4,758	5	16	724	4,018
DeKalb	28%	9,024	66	295	1,835	6,894
Fulton	24%	9,151	51	602	2,404	6,146
Gwinnett	18%	6,388	37	84	651	5,653
Five Metro Counties	36%	33,676	199	1,109	6,723	25,844
Georgia	25%	116,835	199	4,272	14,550	98,013

*DECAL produces forecasts of the under-five population using annual SEER single year of age county population estimates based on a model provided by Fortner (2013). The estimated EHS-eligible children reflects the 2016 county-level birth through age two population multiplied by the county child poverty rate (Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program (2015, November).

The following community-level data are examined to provide a greater understanding of the population the DEHSP is serving to ensure that the partnership is targeting children and families most in need of Early Head Start services and to help the DEHSP leadership mobilize community resources and partnerships. Specifically, data presented and discussed for the five counties include: a) birth and population data; b) language, race/ethnicity data; c) foster care and homelessness data; d) data about children with diagnosed disabilities; and e) additional poverty and unemployment data.⁸

Birth and Population Data

As indicated in Tables 6, 7, and 8, the five counties served by the DEHSP contain substantial numbers of young children. Since 2011, the population and birth rates have remained relatively stable. These numbers indicate the number of children who might be eligible for DEHSP services.

Table 6: Population by Age and County

County/Age	< 1 Year	One Year	Two Years	Three Years
Clayton	3,816	4,167	4,242	4,231
Cobb	9,704	9,566	9,431	9,865
DeKalb	11,008	10,801	10,527	10,629
Fulton	13,220	12,732	12,356	12,653
Gwinnett	11,622	11,925	11,815	12,378

*This is the total population of children 0-3 by county. Data was provided by the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program (2015, November).

Table 7: Birth Rates by County Since 2011

Year	Statistic	Clayton	Cobb	DeKalb	Fulton	Gwinnett
2011	Count	4,256	9,501	10,978	12,928	11,654
	Rate	46.1	40	45.8	39.8	41.1
2012	Count	4,155	9,365	11,003	12,622	11,215
	Rate	44.4	39.2	45.5	37.8	38.8
2013	Count	4,121	9,175	10,894	12,371	11,351
	Rate	44.6	38	45	36.9	38.7
2014	Count	4,234	9,658	10,943	12,732	11,656
	Rate	45.3	39.3	44.8	37.6	39
2015	Count	4,341	9,463	11,182	12,593	11,949
	Rate	45.4	38.2	45.2	36.7	39.3

*The birth rate statistics is births per 1,000 females ages 10 – 55. The data was provided by the Georgia Department of Public Health; Office of Health Indicators for Planning (2011 - 2015).

⁸ Data represents information at the county level. When available, Atlanta Public School data is used in place of Fulton County data as it is a more accurate representation of the communities participating in the EHS-CCP.

Table 8: Pregnancies and Pregnancy Rate by County

Year	Statistic	Clayton	Cobb	DeKalb	Fulton	Gwinnett	Total
2011	Count	5,623	12,594	15,691	19,448	15,104	68,460
	Rate	60.9	53.1	65.5	59.9	53.3	58.1
2012	Count	5,533	12,388	15,324	18,432	14,660	66,337
	Rate	59.1	51.8	63.4	55.2	50.8	55.4
2013	Count	5,493	12,048	15,164	18,498	14,639	65,842
	Rate	59.4	49.9	62.7	55.2	49.9	54.7
2014	Count	5,567	12,438	15,097	18,753	15,046	66,901
	Rate	59.6	50.6	61.8	55.4	50.3	54.8
2015	Count	5,716	12,338	15,475	18,505	15,268	67,302
	Rate	59.8	49.8	62.6	53.9	50.3	54.4
Total	Count	40,178	87,323	108,822	132,845	106,676	475,844
	Rate	61.5	51.8	64.1	57.5	52.7	56.9

*The pregnancy rate statistics is pregnancies per 1,000 females ages 10 – 55. Data was provided by the Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of Health Indicators for Planning (2011 – 2015).

Language and Race/Ethnicity Data

Table 9 displays language data for children ages 5 to 17 in the five counties served by DEHSP. The data is reported for “all children” and “children below poverty.” The data demonstrate that significant populations of children living below poverty in the metro Atlanta area speak a language other than English. As noted above, only 22% of children 5-17 years of age speak a language other than English in Georgia compared to 53% of Gwinnett children 5-17 years of age. For this reason, the DEHSP has focused resources in English and Spanish to support DLLs in FCCLHs.

Table 9: Languages Spoken by Children 5-17 Years by County

	Distribution by Language	Speak only English	Speak Spanish	Speak other Indo-European languages	Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	Speak other languages	Total Non-English
Clayton	Below Poverty	79%	18%	2%	1%	0%	21%
	All	78%	17%	1%	4%	1%	22%
Cobb	Below Poverty	62%	29%	4%	2%	3%	38%
	All	79%	15%	4%	1%	1%	21%

	Distribution by Language	Speak only English	Speak Spanish	Speak other Indo-European languages	Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	Speak other languages	Total Non-English
DeKalb	Below Poverty	62%	21%	2%	7%	8%	38%
	All	77%	13%	2%	3%	4%	23%
Fulton	Below Poverty	86%	9%	0%	1%	4%	14%
	All	83%	8%	3%	3%	2%	17%
Gwinnett	Below Poverty	47%	45%	4%	2%	2%	53%
	All	65%	23%	4%	5%	2%	35%
Metro Total	Below Poverty	67%	24%	2%	2%	4%	33%
	All	76%	15%	3%	3%	2%	24%
Georgia	Below Poverty	78%	18%	1%	1%	1%	22%
	All	84%	11%	2%	2%	1%	16%

* Data was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau (2015).

Tables 10 and 11 display racial/ethnic characteristics for the counties served by DEHSP and compare these to the metro and statewide populations. Table 10 reports actual estimates while Table 11 reports percentages. Both are important to review as they demonstrate the large percentage and number of children who are either Black or Hispanic.

Table 10: Number of Children Ages Birth to Two by Race/Ethnicity by County

County	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic			Total	
		American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black		White
Clayton	2,463	22	499	8,101	1,140	12,225
Cobb	5,897	70	1,694	9,088	11,952	28,701
DeKalb	5,074	66	2,494	16,988	7,714	32,336
Fulton	4,782	83	2,684	18,771	11,988	38,308
Gwinnett	10,513	62	3,577	10,226	10,984	35,362
Five Metro Counties	28,729	303	10,948	63,174	43,778	146,932
Georgia	59,217	917	16,338	139,201	175,323	390,996

*The table represents estimates for the 0-2 population. Data was collected from the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program (2015, November).

Table 11: Percent of Children Ages Birth to Two Race/Ethnicity by County

County	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic				Total
		American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Black	White	
Clayton	20.1%	0.2%	4.1%	66.3%	9.3%	100.0%
Cobb	20.5%	0.2%	5.9%	31.7%	41.6%	100.0%
DeKalb	15.7%	0.2%	7.7%	52.5%	23.9%	100.0%
Fulton	12.5%	0.2%	7.0%	49.0%	31.3%	100.0%
Gwinnett	29.7%	0.2%	10.0%	28.9%	31.1%	100.0%
Five Metro Counties	19.6%	0.2%	7.5%	43.0%	29.8%	100.0%
Georgia	15.1%	0.2%	4.2%	35.6%	44.8%	100.0%

*This is for the 0-2 population, from SEER 2015 population data (Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program, 2015, November).

Based on current DEHSP data, approximately 21% of children served by DEHSP were categorized as Spanish DLLs. Seventy-five percent were classified as Black, and 20% were classified as African Americans.

Foster Care and Homelessness Data

Tables 11 and 12 display information on children in foster care and children experiencing homelessness. This data can be used to inform DEHSP leadership on the needs of these two priority populations.⁹

Table 11: Children in Foster Care by County

⁹ Data is not readily available to show the number of children in the child welfare system who are also enrolled in the DECAL Early Head Start Partnership; however, in January 2017 the partnership served at least two infants and toddlers who were in foster care. Georgia’s Cross Agency Data System (CACDS) will be able to report those numbers by the end of 2017.

County	Number of Children Aged Birth to 5 in Foster Care
Clayton	166
Cobb	351
DeKalb	587
Fulton	395
Gwinnett	346
Five Metro Counties	1845
Georgia	8650

*Child's age was calculated on their first day in custody during Calendar Year 2016. Foster Care Data comes from DHS Division of Family and Children Services (Georgia Department of Human Services, 2016).

Homelessness is defined using the McKinney-Vento definition of “homeless children and youth.” The following data comes from the Georgia Department of Education. In January 2017, DEHSP served 25 (13%) infants and toddlers whose families were experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, one of the partner child care learning centers, Our House-Genesis, is located within an Atlanta homeless shelter providing access to Early Head Start services for the families living in the shelter.

Table 12: Children Experiencing Homelessness by School District

County	K-3 Homeless Children
Clayton County	391
Cobb County	242
DeKalb County	274
Gwinnett County	355
Atlanta Public Schools	637
Five School Districts	1,899
Georgia	8,167

*PK-12 Homeless Children and Youth Student Enrollment, System and State Level. October 2015 Full Time Equivalent Data Collection System (Georgia Department of Education, 2015, October).

Data Related to Children with Disabilities

Tables 13 and 14 display information on children with disabilities. Table 13 specifically lists the number of children in Georgia’s Pre-K Program receiving IDEA, Part B (619) services. The number demonstrates that a significant number of four-year-old children enrolled in Georgia’s Pre-K Program receive IDEA services. Since children with disabilities are a priority group for Early Head Start services, children in the DEHSP service area could have received Early Head

Start services earlier in their life. Table 14 displays children who could be eligible, based on their disability status, for services today.

Table 13: Pre-K Children with a Disability by School District

County	IDEA Part B 619, Pre-K Students
Clayton County	180
Cobb County	762
DeKalb County	553
Gwinnett County	1,145
Atlanta Public Schools	157
5 School Districts	2,797
Georgia	10,380

*Data was collected from the Georgia Department of Public Health (2016, December 1st).

Table 14: IDEA Part C (Babies Can't Wait) by Public Health District

Public Health District	Child Count	% of total
3-1 Cobb-Douglas	713	9%
3-3 Clayton (Jonesboro)	337	4%
3-5 DeKalb	706	9%
3-2 Fulton	644	8%
3-4 East Metro (Lawrenceville)	924	11%
Five Metro Counties (District 3)	3,324	40%
Georgia	8,301	100%

*Babies Can't Wait (special needs ages birth through two) December 1st, 2016 count (Georgia Department of Public Health, 2016, December 1st).

**Data is reported by the Department of Public Health District which does not always correspond perfectly to county level reporting.

According to year-to-date data (July 2016 – March 2017), DEHSP served 19 children (10%) with diagnosed disabilities and another 12 children (6%) who had concerns identified. For children with disabilities who receive services through Part B from the local education agency, the local education agency coordinates transportation to and from the site. For children who receive services through Georgia's IDEA Part C program, Babies Can't Wait, DECAL coordinates with the Department of Public Health (DPH). In addition to coordinating Babies Can't Wait, DPH also administers Children 1st which is a single point of entry to ensure that children with high needs receive services and supports to promote good developmental outcomes. To serve children with disabilities, DEHSP leadership also works with Parent 2 Parent of Georgia and the statewide parent-child care referral center, 1-888-All GA Kids, to refer eligible families for Early Head Start services. Specifically, the Eligibility, Recruitment,

Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Specialist and Family Service Specialists at the hubs receive referrals, provide information to families, and help families enroll in the program.

All children enrolled in DEHSP receive periodic screening to identify children with potential issues. Program staff screen all children ages birth to three years in partnership sites. Children receive periodic sensory and developmental screening including screening for social-emotional concerns. Hub coordinators and Family Service Specialists work with Children 1st to coordinate referrals and track follow-up.

Other County Level Indicators

Earlier in the assessment, the child poverty rate was shown to demonstrate the number of children who could potentially be served in an Early Head Start program. Table 15 includes the unemployment rate, the percent of births to females with less than a 12th-grade education, and the percent of children under age three living in single-parent families. As demonstrated in the following table, each of the five counties meet or exceed the unemployment rate in Georgia. Each county has greater than 11% of children born to mothers with less than a 12th-grade education.

Table 15: Additional County Level Child and Family Demographics

County	Poverty Rate 2015 (Age 0-17)	Unemployment Rate	% Births to Females <12th Grade Education	% under 3 in Single Parent Families
Clayton	35%	6%	22%	62%
Cobb	16%	4%	11%	20%
DeKalb	28%	5%	14%	39%
Fulton	24%	5%	12%	35%
Gwinnett	18%	5%	11%	23%
5 Metro Counties	22%	N/A	13%	32%
Georgia	25%	5%	15%	32%

Poverty Rate 2015 (Age 0-17): U.S. Census (2015)

Unemployment Rate: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016)

% Births to Females <12th Grade Education: Georgia Department of Public Health; Office of Health Indicators for Planning, (2011-2015)

% under 3 in Single Parent Families: U.S. Census (2015)

Quality

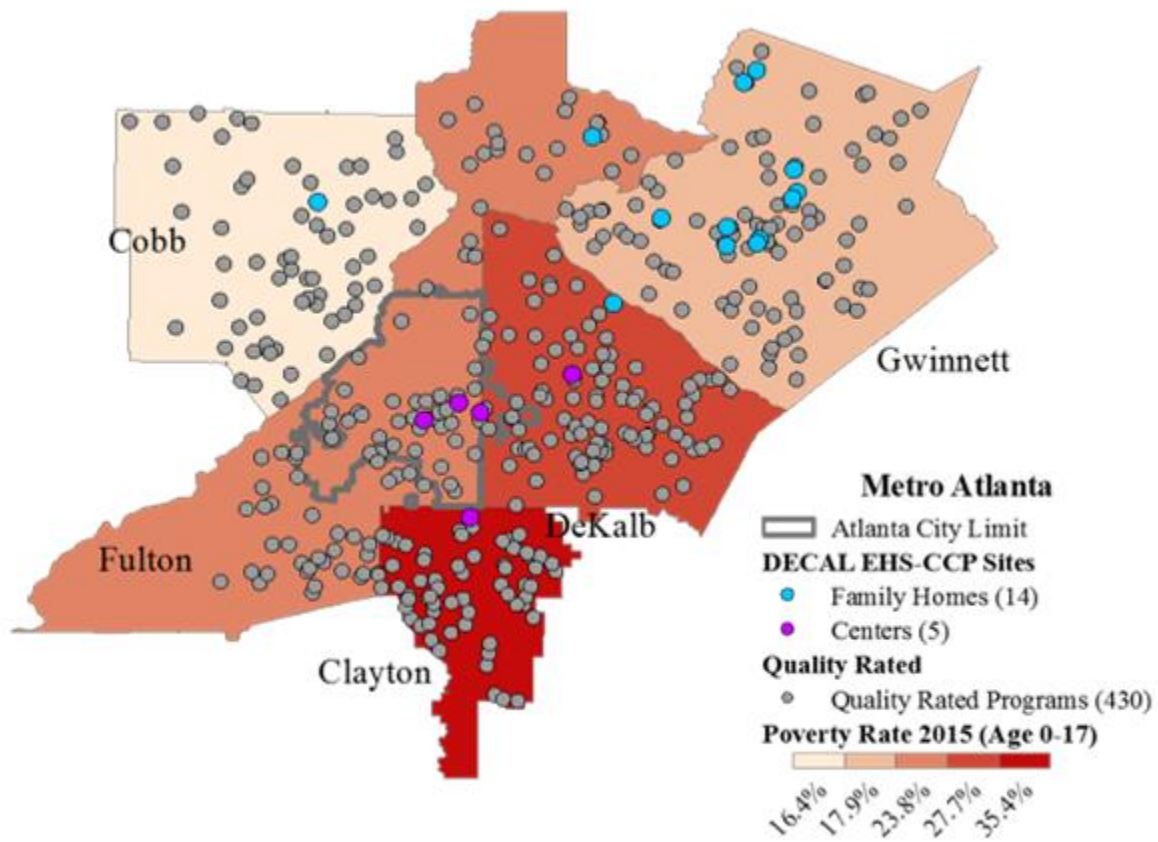
Over the past two decades, Georgia has devoted significant resources to increase the quality of early childhood education programs across the state. While increasing quality is important, it is just as important to increase access to these quality programs. With the goal of providing access to high-quality, early childhood education and comprehensive services for infants, toddlers and

their families, DEHSP provides support to raise quality and to increase the access that children and families have to high-quality early childhood programs. The following section outlines what was done to increase the quality of these programs and provides data to demonstrate the need for on-going support to increase the quality of programs.

As part of DEHSP, all child care partners are required to participate in the state’s tiered quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated (QR), and to engage in continuous quality improvement that will lead to progressively higher ratings. This requirement helps position the programs to meet the Early Head Start standards and ensures high-quality care for all children enrolled in the partnership programs, not just those enrolled in Early Head Start. Additionally, this participation allows DEHSP to leverage the technical assistance and funding for quality improvements already imbedded in the Quality Rated process to support the partner programs. This drive toward quality is particularly important considering the scarcity of Quality Rated child care programs in high-poverty communities.

The map on the following page displays all Quality Rated programs in the five counties where DEHSP provides services. While the number of Quality Rated programs visually appears high based on Figure 3, only 22% of eligible programs in the five metro counties are Quality Rated.

Figure 3: Quality Rated Programs in the Five Metro Atlanta Counties



The number of Quality Rated programs is particularly concerning when you compare it to the number of eligible children in these counties who are not currently being served in Quality Rated programs.¹⁰ Table 16 shows the percent of programs participating and rated in Quality Rated. “Participating” means that the program is working to improve quality but is not yet rated; “rated” means that the program has completed the rating process and earned a star level. Table 16 also shows the number and percent of children ages birth through two years who receive CCDF subsidies and are enrolled in rated programs.

Table 16: Quality Rated Participation in Five Counties with DEHSP Programs

	% Programs Participating in Quality Rated	% Programs Rated	Subsidy Children Ages 0-2 in Rated Programs	% Subsidy Children Ages 0-2 in Rated Programs
Clayton	66%	33%	591	35.90%
Cobb	52%	18%	342	28.00%
DeKalb	61%	22%	627	23.80%
Fulton	56%	18%	740	22.60%
Gwinnett	57%	27%	440	36.20%
Five Metro Counties	58%	22%	2,740	27.40%
Georgia	57%	24%	7,058	30.60%

* Data was collected from the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning’s administrative data (2017).

** Quality Rated figures are current as of 2/17/2017. CAPS data from Special Certificate Extract current as of 12/2016.

As seen in Table 16, the percent of children (ages 0-2) who receive CCDF subsidies and are enrolled in a Quality Rated program in the five metro counties is lower (27.4%) than the state average (30.6%). Considering the estimated 25,844 EHS eligible children in the five metro counties who are not currently served in either Early Head Start or Georgia’s CCDF subsidy program, it is imperative that the current EHS sites continue to provide services and continue to work toward increasing the quality of these services. In other words, there is a need for additional supports to raise quality in these five populous metro Atlanta counties.

¹⁰ QR eligible programs include all licensed programs as well as license-exempt programs with other forms of government oversight (such as Head Start or military bases) except Georgia’s Pre-K sites operated by local education agencies.

Comprehensive Services, Resources, and Supports

To identify resources available for DEHSP hubs and programs, DECAL hosted a partnership/stakeholder focus group in February 2017. A portion of the meeting was specifically geared toward identifying resources available in each of the DEHSP service areas. The focus groups identified resources available at the state level and those that may be specific to a service area or that provide services to a critical constituency. Most importantly, stakeholders also identified where resources and supports are needed.

The following details the resources identified at the partnership focus group meeting. The list includes additional early education programs, specific state services, and community resources. Many of the identified resources demonstrate the strength of Georgia's early childhood education system but display a need for better alignment.

Identified Community Resources and Supports Needs

In the focus group, stakeholders and partners identified specific “areas” where Early Head Start programs and eligible children and families need additional supports, services, and resources. Identifying these areas is critical for DEHSP strategic planning.

- **Additional Services for Dual Language Learners.** DLLs often need services beyond translation services. While some paperwork and resources might be provided in a home language, actually connecting families with a person who speaks the language and can help them become aware of and access services is often difficult.
- **Additional Translation Services.** Due to the number of families who speak Spanish as their first language, a substantial need exists to provide additional translation services. While some resources are available in Spanish, in many instances families are unable to find materials or services in their home language.
- **Communication about Inclusion Services.** Participants in the focus groups noted the need for further communication about inclusion practices in the classroom.
- **Connections to Legal Services.** While contact information for legal services might be listed for families and children, the focus group expressed a need for connections to these services. Often, contacting someone on a resource list did not lead to rendering of services.
- **Mental Health Resources for Families and Staff.** Mental health resources have been an important service for DEHSP. However, these resources are not always extended to families and staff. It is important to support DEHSP as a whole in providing these services.
- **Money for Vital Records.** To access certain services and resources, it is necessary to provide vital record documentation such as birth certificates. However, these vital records can sometimes be hard to obtain. Additionally, some families attempting to obtain these vital records do not have the financial resources to do so.
- **Resources for Children and Adults with Special Needs.** Participants in the focus groups cited a need for additional resources for children and adults with special needs.

- **Stable Housing Resources.** Many of the families reported concerns about housing. Therefore, it was not surprising that many of the hub directors specifically reported a need for additional stable housing resources. In particular, the center that operates within the homeless shelter reported getting multiple calls an hour requesting housing.
- **Transportation.** Transportation limitations in the communities where Early Head Start programs offer services are a serious barrier to resources and services. While some of the programs have easy access to the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), these programs cite limitations in families' use of the public transit. Stakeholders also noted the limited locations and schedules of MARTA, indicating that it would take some families more time to use MARTA than to walk to programs and services.

Not only did participants identify the resources/services needed, but they also described for services to be aligned and linked. Furthermore, while many of the services and resources listed above are provided to children and families in some capacity, many times there are gaps or limitations in DEHSP children and families actually being served. Therefore, this Community Needs Assessment has resulted in a catalog of services to develop a network of support and resources that can be better accessed by Early Head Start providers in the future.

Identified Community Supports and Resources

Participants of the focus group compiled specific resources that may provide additional supports for DEHSP participants. Following are statewide resources, regional and community resources, and additional resources available through the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

Statewide Resources

The following list details many of the agencies and groups that administer services and supports statewide. While not an exhaustive list, these organizations and services do show the various supports and resources that programs and families could access if provided connections and communications.

- **All Georgia KIDS – Quality Care for Children’s 877-ALL-GA-KIDS.** This statewide child care referral center is a tool for families to find convenient and affordable quality care for their children. Families can call the toll-free number or search on the website.
- **Catholic Charities Atlanta (CCA).** CCA provides help and creates hope for those in need through professional services that eliminate barriers to self-sufficiency, stabilize families, and transform lives. CCA serves the community by understanding that each person they aid comes from unique backgrounds and circumstances.
- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agencies.** CCR&Rs, located across Georgia, support quality early learning by providing targeted coaching, training, and technical assistance for child care programs working toward a Quality Rated star rating.

- **Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions and Services (GRITS).** GRITS is used to collect and maintain accurate, complete and current vaccination records to promote effective and cost-efficient disease prevention and control.
- **Habitat for Humanity.** This nonprofit builds houses for families in need so that they have more to spend on food, medicine, child care, and education.
- **Local Education Agencies (LEA).** As required by the Every Student Succeeds Act, the Georgia Department of Education has established an LEA monitoring and technical assistance unit responsible for interpreting state and federal laws and for providing federal funding to low income schools with children identified as having the greatest need. LEAs provide Part B services to children age three and older who have disabilities.
- **Local County Health Departments.** The Department of Public Health (DPH) is involved with all 159 county level state departments including 18 public health districts. DPH's mission is to prevent disease, injury, and disability and provide prenatal care and emergency medical services. Local Board of Health departments help families in need through programs such as Healthier Generations Project and Safe Kids, focusing on the well-being and prosperity of young children and families.
- **Libraries.** Georgia's public libraries offer a wide variety of programs tailored to assist families and local communities. Most libraries have a set schedule of events posted on their websites for convenient access. Class content ranges from preschool story time and yoga to assisting adults on tax preparation and providing computer training
- **Local Housing Authorities.** Georgia consists of eight different housing authorities encompassing the following areas: Americus, Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Calhoun, Decatur, DeKalb, and Savannah. Atlanta, Decatur, and DeKalb Housing Authorities are within the DEHSP service area. The goal of local housing authorities is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. These efforts work to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers
- **Rollins Center.** This professional learning center supports teachers of children whose situations include ongoing lack of access to educational opportunity and who may have the greatest risk of illiteracy. As the Atlanta Speech School's professional development center, Rollins has been training teachers of children birth to third grade for over a decade.

Regional Resources

The following section details regional or specific community resources that may be available to programs and families/children.

- **Center for Black Women's Wellness (CBWW).** The CBWW focuses on providing improved health and wellness for underserved black women and their families. CBWW recognizes that empowering black women leads to empowering families, in turn, creating a long-term, positive impact on the community. This organization envisions a citizenry where women are whole, healed, and well and where babies are healthy and thrive in safe, supportive, and nurturing environments.

- **Community Action Agency – Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority (FACAA).** FACAA serves the public by mobilizing resources through a number of organizations that fall under Emergency Financial Assistance programs and services. This agency educates the community at large to the needs, interests, and aspirations of low-income people and provides access to decent housing.
- **Food Banks.** As just one of seven food banks in Georgia, the Atlanta Community Food Bank works with more than 600 nonprofit partners to distribute 60 million meals to more than 755,000 people in 29 counties across metro Atlanta and north Georgia, including child care centers.
- **Latin American Association (LAA).** The LAA serves the needs of immigrants from Latin America living in metro Atlanta through a variety services and programs. These services include immigration and legal services, English classes, emergency assistance, and computer literacy courses.
- **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).** In conjunction with the Fulton Atlanta Community Action Authority (FACAA), LIHEAP provides assistance to low-income families through initiatives that help with the cost of energy. As a seasonal program operating from November through March, LIHEAP provides in-person appointments to discuss ways to save on power bills. Additionally, they provide online resources to help families start saving more immediately.
- **Marcus Institute – Marcus Autism Center.** This institute is a not-for-profit subsidiary of Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. The center serves more than 5,500 children with autism and related disorders a year and offers families access to the latest research, comprehensive evaluations, and intensive behavior treatments.
- **Metro Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA).** Atlanta’s bus and rail system is an important resource for many families living in Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton counties.
- **United Way.** Among other initiatives, United Way of Greater Atlanta is working to increase the number of qualified education and child care substitutes through courses, first-aid certification, background checks, continuing education, and paid internships. Thousands of graduates are now qualified to start a career in early childhood education thanks to these programs.
- **Ser Familia.** Dedicated to strengthening Latino families, Ser Familia provides programs that help the target community thrive and enjoy healthy family environments. This organization’s services include providing educational programs to increase family member communication skills and decrease risky behaviors; assisting families in crisis; serving as advocates for Latino families; and supporting other organizations that help Latinos through culturally competent means.
- **Strengthening Families Georgia (SFGA).** This organization utilizes early childhood caregivers as a means to prevent child abuse and neglect and works to embed Strengthening Families Protective Factors framework throughout all systems, programs, and services supporting families. Working alongside parents and grant funded project partnerships, SFGA works to shape policy that will benefit families with young children
- **Early Childhood Education Associations.** A number of early education associations support programs and practitioners. The Georgia Child Care Association (GCCA) is a non-

profit that serves as a voice for Georgia’s licensed child care providers by advocating, communicating, and educating on the importance of quality child care. The Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC), the state affiliate of the National Association on the Education of Young Children, is a professional membership organization that promotes high-quality early learning by connecting practice, policy, and research. The Professional Family Childcare Alliance of Georgia (PFCCA) offers professional development, support, networking, and advocacy.

State Agency Resources

Focus group members noted the following programs, many of them federally funded, administered by state agencies. While most of these were familiar to all DEHSP hub staff, many reported experiencing barriers for specific families or staff needing assistance. Additional cross-agency collaboration was noted as a definite need in providing access.

- **Better Brain for Babies.** This collaboration of state and local, public and private organizations promotes awareness and education about the importance of early brain development to ultimately improve the potential of young children. The initiative has goals across four key areas: education, training, advocacy, and evaluation.
- **Georgia Department of Public Health - Babies Can’t Wait.** To help families obtain additional health and education resources, Babies Can’t Wait provides a coordinated, comprehensive, and integrated system of services for babies and toddlers with special needs. Early identification and screening are integral to enhancing the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their child(ren).
- **Georgia Head Start Association.** Georgia Head Start Association is a non-profit organization that enhances the capability of local Head Start programs to deliver quality comprehensive services to children and their families. The Georgia Head Start Association operates through the following committees: Marketing and Public Relations, Membership, Professional Development, Training and Technical Assistance, Transportation, Technology, Finance/Fund-Raising, By-Laws/Nominations, Issues/Advocacy and Legislative Committee, and Awards and Scholarships.
- **Medicaid.** There is no cost for the services provided by PeachCare for Kids® for children under age six eligible for Medicaid. These preventative and medical services ensure that Georgia’s youngest learners are healthy during their most critical years of education.
- **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).** For qualifying women and children, WIC provides special checks to buy healthy food; information about nutrition and health; support for and information about breastfeeding; and help in finding other services. Having healthy, nutritious meals is an important part of early learning, and these services increase access for pregnant and new mothers.

Additional DECAL Resources

A strength of DEHSP is the alignment between Early Head Start services and other critical early learning programs. Focus group members specifically mentioned the following early learning programs housed at DECAL.

- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).** Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the CACFP ensures that children and adults have access to nutritious meals while they are in child care and adult day care settings to improve the nutritional status of Georgia's most vulnerable citizens.
 - **Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS).** Funded by the federal Child Care and Development Fund, CAPS helps low or no income families afford and enroll their children in high-quality child care programs, allowing families to become self-sufficient by attending work or schooling. Additionally, CAPS supports DECAL's efforts in increasing positive school readiness outcomes.
 - **Georgia's Pre-K Program.** This preschool program enhances school readiness skills for children before starting kindergarten. Funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education, the program is open to four-year-old children regardless of family income. The program operates as a public-private partnership to give families options for the type of preschool education they want for their child(ren).
 - **Head Start State Collaboration Office.** The Head Start State Collaboration Office builds collaborative partnerships between federally funded Head Start programs and state-funded early childhood programs to improve the quality of services to low-income children and their families in Georgia.
 - **Rising Pre-K Program.** This program offers additional academic support to DLL children in the summer before their Pre-K year. The additional family support and resources focus on reducing the achievement gap by focusing on high-need populations before children start Pre-K in the fall.
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP).** Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the SFSP provides eligible children under age 18 or over 18 with qualifying disabilities access to free, nutritious meals during the summer months when school is not in session.

The previous pages detail some of the services and resources available to certain communities. While some of these services and resources are available to all, many are not available in all areas of Georgia. Additionally, while some of these services have a contact number, additional supports are needed to ensure services are delivered. As such, DEHSP leadership and staff aim to find ways to provide the requested resources as well as strengthen the connections and linkages for those that are already available.

Conclusion

By analyzing community data, program data, and family information, the EHS-CCP was able to create a Community Assessment that accurately represents the strengths, needs, and challenges of the communities served. The evidence provided in the assessment confirms that a substantial need to continue and expand services in the targeted communities exists.

Looking forward, the CA will help inform decisions to refine DEHSP's strategic plan. The assessment will help ensure that DEHSP recruits and enrolls children and families most in need of Early Head Start services. For example, based on the enrollment and population data in the targeted communities, it is clear that a large number of eligible EHS children and families are not currently being served in high-quality programs. To ensure that these children have access to high-quality early education and comprehensive services, DEHSP will continue to apply for additional funding and look for ways to support and extend current EHS programs.

Additionally, the CA will help DECAL respond to new federal regulations and initiatives. For example, the data collected through the assessment informs DEHSP sites about increasing services aligned with CCDF dollars. Beyond informing DECAL, this CA can be used to support other EHS-CCP grantees by providing data and a methodology to assist in their own strategic planning.

Lastly, this assessment will help DEHSP leadership reflect on current community resources and partnerships and examine ways in which these resources and partnerships can be strengthened or extended. By understanding the larger community in which these partnership sites operate, DEHSP will be better equipped to tailor comprehensive services to the needs of the specific communities. By examining the communities' strengths and needs, DEHSP reflected on ways in which the current partnership sites are utilizing community resources. However, it is also apparent that there are significant gaps in services and resources. By addressing these gaps, DEHSP will be able to ensure that each program has access to all available services and programs in each respective region.

The Community Assessment is a powerful tool to analyze the greater community within which the partnership sites operate. By taking time to locate, compile, and analyze the data from a variety of sources, DEHSP gains a greater understanding of the strengths, needs, and resources of the communities. This knowledge will provide a baseline for future analysis and a starting point to work toward supporting programs in the most effective, efficient, and successful ways.

Appendix A: Community Assessment Team

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Appendix B: Community Assessment Data Sources

Internal Data

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2017). Age, race, ethnicity, and dual language learning status for children served by the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership; Collected using ChildPlus, a system used to track and fund Early Head Start. Atlanta, Georgia.

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. (2017). Georgia Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Programs by County, Quality Rating, and License Capacity. Atlanta, Georgia.

External Data Sources in the Community

Georgia Department of Education. (2015, October). Pre-K-12th grade Homeless Children and Youth Student Enrollment, System, and State Level, Atlanta Georgia.

Georgia Department of Public Health; Office of Health Indicators for Planning. (2011-2015). Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS). Maternal Child Health Indicators (MCH): Live Births, Births to Females with <12th grade education, pregnancies and pregnancy rate. Atlanta, Georgia.

Georgia Department of Public Health. (2016, December 1). Counts of children participating in IDEA Part B by county. Atlanta, Georgia.

Georgia Department of Public Health. (2016, December 1). Counts of children participating in IDEA Part C, Babies Can't Wait, by county. Atlanta, Georgia.

Census Data/Other Population Figures

Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program. (2015, November). Georgia County Population Estimates by Age and Ethnicity, Georgia.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Age and Language Spoken at the Home for the Population 5 Years and Over, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, Georgia.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). Own Children Under 18 Years by Family Type and Age, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, Georgia.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). Age by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months, American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates, Georgia.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). Small Area, Income, and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), Georgia.

Data Sources on Underserved or New/Emerging Populations