

FFY2025-2027 Child Care and Development Fund State Plan

8 Lead Agency Coordination and Partnerships to Support Service Delivery

Coordination and partnerships help ensure that the Lead Agency's efforts accomplish CCDF goals effectively, leverage other resources, and avoid duplication of effort. Such coordination and partnerships can help families better access child care, can assist in providing consumer education to parents, and can be used to improve child care quality and the stability of child care providers. Such coordination can also be particularly helpful in the aftermath of disasters when the provision of emergency child care services and the rebuilding and restoring of child care infrastructure are an essential part of ensuring the well-being of children and families in recovering communities.

This section identifies who the Lead Agency collaborates with to implement services, how match and maintenance-of-effort (MOE) funds are used, coordination with child care resource and referral (CCR&R) systems, and efforts for disaster preparedness and response plans to support continuity of operations in response to emergencies.

8.1 Coordination with Partners to Expand Accessibility and Continuity of Care

Lead Agencies must coordinate child care services supported by CCDF with other federal, State/Territory, and local level programs. This includes programs for the benefit of Indian children, infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

8.1.1 Coordination with required and optional partners

Describe how the Lead Agency coordinates and the results of this coordination of the provision of child care services with the organizations and agencies required by CCDBG to expand accessibility and continuity of care and to assist children enrolled in early childhood programs in receiving full-day services that meet the needs of working families.

The Lead Agency must coordinate with the following agencies:

- a. State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care or similar coordinating body (pursuant to 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act). Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Georgia Children's Cabinet serves as the State Advisory Council (SAC) in Georgia. The Commissioner of the Lead Agency is the co-chair of the Georgia Children's Cabinet and as such provides applicable updates to the Cabinet as necessary and required. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing.*
- b. Indian Tribe(s) and/or Tribal organization(s), at the option of the Tribe or Tribal organization. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination, including which Tribe(s) was (were) involved: *Enter Text*
 - Not applicable. Check here if there are no Indian Tribes and/or Tribal organizations in the State/Territory.
- c. State/Territory agency(ies) responsible for programs for children with disabilities, including early intervention programs authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Describe the coordination and results

of the coordination: *Georgia's Part C program is housed in the Department of Public Health (DPH). The Lead Agency coordinates with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Coordinator to ensure that children receive coordinated supports and services in their child care setting. The Lead Agency is represented on the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA, and a representative of Part C is also a member of the Georgia Children's Cabinet, along with the Commissioner of the Lead Agency. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing. The Lead Agency coordinates services and supports with the IDEA Part B, Section 619 Coordinator at the Georgia Department of Education. Additionally, representatives from Part C for infants and toddlers and Part B, Section 619 for preschool collaborate with the Lead Agency as a part of the state's Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS). These collaborative relationships facilitate and expand the seamless transition of children between programs and link children with comprehensive services. In addition, the Lead Agency has an Inclusion and Behavior Support Program that focuses on collaboration among child care professionals, early intervention providers, and families of children with disabilities. The program provides coaching and training for professionals and supports coordinating services for children with IFSPs and IEPs. The SEEDS Helpline refers families to Part C and Part B agencies, provides resources to families, identifies programs with inclusion services, and coordinates referrals for classroom coaching and workforce training.*

- d. State/Territory office/director for Head Start State collaboration. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office which facilitates cooperation, communication, coordination, and alignment among Head Start and other CCDF-supported entities.*
- e. State/Territory agency responsible for public health, including the agency responsible for immunizations. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency collaborates with DPH, the state agency responsible for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, nutrition (including breast feeding support), and childhood obesity prevention. The Commissioner of DPH sits on the Georgia Children's Cabinet along with agency heads of all Georgia's child-serving agencies, including the Commissioner of the Lead Agency. The Georgia Children's Cabinet connects all departments and agencies serving children to align state priorities and programs. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing.*
- f. State/Territory agency responsible for employment services/workforce development. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *Housed at the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) administers Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act funds across the state and oversees the Governor's State Workforce Development initiatives. The Lead Agency will continue to work with the SWDB to align available resources to support the child care workforce. The Lead Agency also oversees a two-generation policy grant to which the SWDB and the*

Georgia Department of Labor contribute.

- g. State/Territory agency responsible for public education, including pre-Kindergarten. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) on a variety of initiatives, including participation in the state's longitudinal data system, IDEA Part B, Section 619, and the Kindergarten Readiness Check. These collaborations help ensure that services critical to CCDF-eligible children and families are aligned. The Lead Agency administers Georgia's Pre-K Program, the state-funded prekindergarten program. The Lead Agency works to ensure that instruction in B-5 programs, including Georgia's Pre-K Program, is aligned with K-3 instruction. The Lead Agency and the DOE work on aligning learning standards, curricula, and school readiness standards.*
- h. State/Territory agency responsible for child care licensing. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The child care licensing division and the CCDF subsidy division, both housed in the Lead Agency, work together closely to coordinate and align services.*
- i. State/Territory agency responsible for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and other relevant nutrition programs. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency administers the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in Georgia. CACFP and subsidy leaders work together closely to coordinate and align services.*
- j. McKinney-Vento State coordinators for homeless education and other agencies providing services for children experiencing homelessness and, to the extent practicable, local McKinney-Vento liaisons. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The state currently coordinates services among many programs serving homeless and low-income populations. First, Local Education Agencies that receive Pre-K funding must comply with McKinney-Vento's mandates by providing children who are experiencing homelessness equal access. Also, the Lead Agency provides child care subsidies, Georgia's Pre-K funding, and Summer Transition Program funding to high-quality early learning programs that serve families who are experiencing homeless and braids funding to ensure that families who are homeless have access to full-day, full-year care.*
- k. State/Territory agency responsible for the TANF program. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Executive Director of the Georgia Division of Family and Children's Services, the state's child welfare agency, and the Director of the State Office of the Child Advocate sit on the Georgia Children's Cabinet with the Commissioner of the Lead Agency. The Georgia Children's Cabinet connects all departments and agencies serving children in the state to align state priorities and programs. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing.*
- l. State/Territory agency responsible for Medicaid and the State Children's Health

Insurance Program. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency collaborates with the state agency responsible for Medicaid and the state's Children's Health Insurance Program. The Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Health sits on the Georgia Children's Cabinet along with the agency heads of all Georgia's child-serving agencies. The Georgia Children's Cabinet connects all departments and agencies serving children in the state to align state priorities and programs. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing.*

- m. State/Territory agency responsible for mental health services. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), the state agency responsible for mental health. Lead Agency staff serve on the Interagency Director's Team that is charged with creating and implementing a System of Care plan for mental health services for children and youth from birth to 21. The current System of Care State Plan includes goals to support young children's mental and behavioral health from birth to age 4 for the first time. These goals include developing and implementing strategies around early prevention/intervention, expanding the capacity of the workforce, and exploring Medicaid billing pathways to better serve young children and their families in Georgia. The Commissioner of the Lead Agency also sits on the State Mental Health Coordinating Council. In addition, the Lead Agency convenes the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Taskforce which includes representatives from all the state agencies responsible for children's mental health. The taskforce is developing a statewide System of Care for young children's mental health. Results from the taskforce include increasing access to mental health clinicians trained in early childhood trauma treatment models (i.e. Child Parent Psychotherapy) through blended funding sources. Service billing issues were also addressed by creating the Clinician Medicaid Billing Toolkit for Dyadic Treatment Models. Additionally, DBHDD is an EXPAND Grantee. EXPAND grants support families who need child care during non-traditional working hours.*
- n. Child care resource and referral agencies, child care consumer education organizations, and providers of early childhood education training and professional development. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency funds the network of child care resource and referral agencies in Georgia and closely supports and monitors their work. The Lead Agency also funds the Georgia Professional Development System that supports training and professional development for early care and education professionals in the state. Also, the Commissioner of the Lead Agency and members of the Lead Agency's leadership team meet quarterly with applicable stakeholders to seek input from key partners and providers about services, programs, and policies.*
- o. Statewide afterschool network or other coordinating entity for out-of-school time care (if applicable). Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency partners with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool*

Network (GSAN), a public/private collaborative dedicated to advancing, connecting, and supporting quality afterschool programs to promote the success of children and youth throughout Georgia. Results from this coordination include joint projects aimed at raising quality and increasing access to higher quality school-age projects. Currently, the Lead Agency is collaborating with GSAN on a project to strengthen how school-age care is part of Georgia's QRIS.

- p. Agency responsible for emergency management and response. Describe the coordination and results of the coordination: *The Lead Agency seeks input from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and distributes information to child care providers throughout the state based on GEMA's guidance.*
- q. The following are examples of optional partners a Lead Agency might coordinate with to provide services. Check which optional partners the Lead Agency coordinates with and describe the coordination and results of the coordination.
- i. State/Territory/local agencies with Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grants. Describe: *Enter Text*
- ii. State/Territory institutions for higher education, including community colleges. Describe: *The Lead Agency collaborates regularly with higher education to train staff and deliver supports and services through a Two-Generation (2Gen) framework. Through the 2Gen initiative, the Lead Agency and higher education coordinate services for student parents and refer parents who are interested in post-secondary education opportunities. The agency collaborates with the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and with individual technical colleges to help targeted audiences attain ECE credentials. This includes supporting infant/toddler teachers in attaining an infant/toddler specific credential, supporting high school students to begin a career in early learning, and piloting efforts to increase the state's bilingual workforce. The Commissioner of TCSG and the University System of Georgia's Executive Chancellor for Academic Affairs sit on the Georgia Children's Cabinet along with agency heads of all Georgia's child serving agencies, including the Commissioner of the Lead Agency. The Georgia Children's Cabinet connects all departments and agencies serving children in the state to align state priorities and programs. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing. The Lead Agency is collaborating with TCSG on a 2Gen student parent pilot where Lead Agency staff are located on TCSG campuses to enhance supports for child care assistance.*
- iii. Other federal, State, local, and/or private agencies providing early childhood and school-age/youth-serving developmental services. Describe: *The Lead Agency is the leader of the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Act Early Georgia Team, which is a collaboration focused on supporting the development of young*

children. Partners include The Georgia Department of Education, the Georgia Department of Public Health's Babies Can't Wait program, the Georgia Head Start Association, Early Intervention Services, and the Georgia Department of Human Service's Better Brains for Babies program. The Lead Agency also partners with The Rollins Center for Language and Literacy whose mission is to provide equitable approaches to building literacy skills in young children and youth within our LITTLE grant program to support language and literacy initiatives with families and early childhood professionals. The Lead Agency participates in the Office of Child Care's Infant Toddler Specialist Network meetings alongside other state agencies to build and strengthen infant toddler specialist networks and increase access to high-quality child care. The Lead Agency collaborates with the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations, a collaborative funded by the Office of Special Education, to improve state and local capacity to implement and sustain effective practices and policies to support the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of young children who have or are at risk of developmental delays or disabilities through our Pyramid Model training and coaching. The Lead Agency is the facilitator of the Pyramid Model State Leadership Team, which includes members from the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), the Georgia Association for the Education of Young Children (GAEYC), the Georgia Department of Public Health (Babies Can't Wait), the Georgia Department of Education's Teaching and Learning Supports for School Climate team and Preschool Special Education team, and early childhood faculty and administration from the University System of Georgia and TCSG.

- iv. State/Territory agency responsible for implementing the Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs grant. Describe: *The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), the state agency responsible for the Maternal and Child Home Visitation programs. The Commissioner of DPH sits on the Georgia Children's Cabinet along with agency heads of all Georgia's child-serving agencies, including the Commissioner of the Lead Agency. The Georgia Children's Cabinet connects all departments and agencies serving children in the state to align state priorities and programs. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing. Representatives from the DPH Home Visiting Program serve on the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Taskforce and participate in the Promotion/ Prevention workgroup.*

- v. Agency responsible for Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment Program. Describe: *The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), the state agency responsible for Medicaid/Early Periodic Screening,*

Diagnostic, and Treatment. The Commissioner of DCH sits on the Georgia Children's Cabinet along with the agency heads of all Georgia's child serving agencies. The Georgia Children's Cabinet connects all departments and agencies serving children in the state to align state priorities and programs. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing. The DCH Director of Behavioral Health serves as the co-chair of the Policy/Finance workgroup of the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Taskforce. Successful collaboration resulted in the creation of a billing toolkit for clinicians working with young children and families. This supports early and periodic screening, diagnostic and treatment practices and makes mental health services more accessible to children and families. The Lead Agency also serves as the ambassador for the CDC's Act Early Georgia team, which includes partnerships with the Children First program, Children's Medical Services, and the Babies Can't Wait program within the Georgia Department of Public Health, the state agency responsible for early identification and diagnostic programs for children birth through age five. Other agencies represented on the Act Early team are the Georgia Department of Education's 619 Preschool Special Education program, the Division of Family and Children Services Prevention and Community Support program, the Georgia Chapter of the American Association of Pediatrics and the Georgia State University Center for Leadership in Disability.

- vi. **State/Territory agency responsible for child welfare. Describe:**
The Lead Agency collaborates with the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the state's child welfare agency, to ensure that foster children receive top priority. The Executive Director of DFCS and the Director of the State Office of the Child Advocate sit on the Georgia Children's Cabinet with the Commissioner of the Lead Agency. The Georgia Children's Cabinet connects all departments and agencies serving children in the state to align state priorities and programs. The Georgia Children's Cabinet meets every two months to ensure ongoing communication and information sharing. Representatives from DFCS are members of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Taskforce and on the MATCH (Multi-Agency Treatment Team) Committee to ensure children with complex needs are receiving the support and services. DCFS is a member of the Act Early Georgia team, which is described above in section 8.1.1.b.iii. DCFS sits on the Pyramid Model State Leadership team (above) and works with the SEEDS Helpline Coordinator within the Inclusion and Behavior Support program to coordinate technical assistance and to help child care programs resolve issues that might result in preschool suspension or expulsion. DCFS and DECAL work with the Georgia Department of Adult Services on the Kinship Care Work Team to support relative caregivers in keeping children in their family unit when biological parents are unable to maintain custody. The agency works with Prevent Child Abuse Georgia and Georgia

State University on the leadership team of the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework and Strategic Outreach Committee, a statewide partnership of agencies that deliver trainings to parents and professionals focusing on resilience, child development, social emotional competence, and caregiver support.

- vii. Child care provider groups or associations. Describe: *The Commissioner of the Lead Agency and members of the Lead Agency's leadership team meet quarterly with the Georgia Child Care Association, the Georgia Association on Young Children, Black Child Development Institute, and the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia. The Lead Agency also convenes advisory groups throughout the year to seek input from key partners and providers about services, programs, and policy. The Lead Agency collaborates with these partners to resolve issues that may hinder accessibility or continuity of care and to improve quality in early learning programs. The Lead Agency also collaborates with the Georgia Preschool Association within our Child and Family Development unit by sharing information at local events and conferences annually.*
- viii. Parent groups or organizations. Describe: *The Lead Agency employs a Child and Family Development unit to help providers support children and families in their programs. The unit oversees the Family Peer Ambassador Program and works with parent groups and organizations to ensure that families are continually being engaged. The Lead Agency engages families by including them in focus groups, early education advisory boards, and committees. The Lead Agency provides funding through the Pre-K Summer Transition Program for a Transition Coach to work with families to provide training, support, and resources during the program. The Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Director works with the Georgia Parent Support Network (GPSN) to share information and collaborate on events. The Lead Agency works with Parent to Parent of Georgia, an organization of families of children with disabilities within the Act Early Georgia team.*
- ix. Title IV B 21st Century Community Learning Center Coordinators. Describe: *Enter Text*
- x. Other. Describe: *Enter Text*

8.2 Optional Use of Combined Funds, CCDF Matching, and Maintenance-of-Effort Funds

Lead Agencies may combine CCDF funds with other Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood development programs including those in 8.1.1. These programs include preschool programs, Tribal child care programs, and other early childhood programs, including those serving infants and toddlers with disabilities, children experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

Combining funds may include blending multiple funding streams, pooling funds, or layering funds from multiple funding streams to expand and/or enhance services for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children and families to allow for the delivery of comprehensive quality care that meets the needs of children and families. For example, Lead Agencies may use multiple funding sources to offer grants or contracts to programs to deliver services; a Lead Agency may allow a county/local government to use coordinated funding streams; or policies

may be in place that allow local programs to layer CCDF funds with additional funding sources to pay for full-day, full-year child care that meets Early Head Start/Head Start Program Performance Standards or State/Territory pre-Kindergarten requirements in addition to State/Territory child care licensing requirements.

As a reminder, CCDF funds may be used in collaborative efforts with Head Start and Early Head Start programs to provide comprehensive child care and development services for children who are eligible for both programs.

8.2.1 Combining funding for CCDF services

Does the Lead Agency combine funding for CCDF services with Title XX of the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), Title IV B 21st Century Community Learning Center Funds, State-only child care funds, TANF direct funds for child care not transferred into CCDF, Title IV-B, IV-E funds, or other federal or State programs?

No. (If no, skip to question 8.2.2)

Yes.

i. If yes, describe which funds you will combine? Combined funds may include, but are not limited to:

Title XX (Social Services Block Grant, SSBG)

Title IV B 21st Century Community Learning Center Funds (Every Student Succeeds Act)

State- or Territory-only child care funds

TANF direct funds for child care not transferred into CCDF

Title IV-B funds (Social Security Act)

Title IV-E funds (Social Security Act)

Other. Describe: *Enter Text*

ii. If yes, what does the Lead Agency use combined funds to support, such as extending the day or year of services available (i.e., full-day, full-year programming for working families), smoothing transitions for children, enhancing and aligning quality of services, linking comprehensive services to children in child care, or developing the supply of child care for vulnerable populations? *Enter Text*

8.2.2 Funds used to meet CCDF matching and MOE requirements

Lead Agencies may use public funds and donated funds to meet CCDF match and maintenance of effort (matching MOE) requirements.

Note: Lead Agencies that use State pre-Kindergarten funds to meet matching requirements must check State pre-Kindergarten funds and public and/or private funds.

Use of private funds for match or maintenance-of-effort: Donated funds do not need to be under the administrative control of the Lead Agency to qualify as an expenditure for federal

match. However, Lead Agencies must identify and designate in the State/Territory CCDF the donated funds given to public or private entities to implement the CCDF child care program.

Not applicable. The Lead Agency is a Territory (skip to 8.3.1)

1) Does the Lead Agency use public funds to meet match requirements?

Yes. If yes, describe which funds are used: *The Lead Agency uses state general funds to meet CCDF matching and MOE requirements.*

No.

2) Does the Lead Agency use donated funds to meet match requirements?

Yes. If yes, identify the entity(ies) designated to receive donated funds:

i. Donated directly to the state.

ii. Donated to a separate entity(ies) designated to receive donated funds. If checked, identify the name, address, contact, and type of entities designated to receive private donated funds: *Enter Text*

No.

3) Does the Lead Agency certify that, if State expenditures for pre-Kindergarten programs are used to meet the MOE requirements, the following is true:

- The Lead Agency did not reduce its level of effort in full-day/full-year child care services.
- The Lead Agency ensures that pre-Kindergarten programs meet the needs of working parents.
- The estimated percentage of the MOE Fund requirement that will be met with pre-Kindergarten expenditures (does not to exceed 20 percent).
- If the percentage is more than 10 percent of the MOE requirement, the State will coordinate its pre-Kindergarten and child care services to expand the availability of child care.

Public pre-Kindergarten funds may also serve as MOE funds as long as the State can describe how it will coordinate pre-Kindergarten and child care services to expand the availability of child care while using public pre-Kindergarten funds as no more than 20 percent of the State's MOE or 30 percent of its matching funds in a single fiscal year. If expenditures for pre-Kindergarten services are used to meet the MOE requirement, does the Lead Agency certify that the State or Territory has not reduced its level of effort in full-day/full-year child care services?

Yes.

No. If no, describe (optional): *The Lead Agency does not use state pre-kindergarten expenditures to meet MOE requirements*

8.3 Coordination with Child Care Resource and Referral Systems

Lead Agencies may use CCDF funds to establish or support a system or network of local or

regional child care resource and referral (CCR&R) organizations that is coordinated, to the extent determined by the Lead Agency, by a statewide public or private non-profit, community-based or regionally based, lead child care resource and referral organization (such as a statewide CCR&R network).

If Lead Agencies use CCDF funds for local CCR&R organizations, the local or regional CCR&R organizations supported by those funds must, at the direction of the Lead Agency:

- Provide parents in the State with consumer education information concerning the full range of child care options (including faith-based and community-based child care providers), analyzed by provider, including child care provided during non-traditional hours and through emergency child care centers, in their area.
- To the extent practicable, work directly with families who receive assistance to offer the families support and assistance to make an informed decision about which child care providers they will use to ensure that the families are enrolling their children in the most appropriate child care setting that suits their needs and one that is of high quality (as determined by the Lead Agency).
- Collect data and provide information on the coordination of services and supports, including services under Part B, Section 619 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Collect data and provide information on the supply of and demand for child care services in areas of the State and submit the information to the State.
- Work to establish partnerships with public agencies and private entities, including faith-based and community-based child care providers, to increase the supply and quality of child care services in the State and, as appropriate, coordinate their activities with the activities of the State Lead Agency and local agencies that administer funds made available through CCDF.

8.3.1 Funding a system or network of CCR&R organization(s)

Does the Lead Agency fund a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s)?

No. The Lead Agency does not fund a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s) and has no plans to establish one.

No, but the Lead Agency has plans to develop a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s).

Yes. The Lead Agency funds a system or network of local or regional CCR&R organization(s) with all the responsibilities outlined above. If yes, describe the activities outlined above carried out by the CCR&R organization(s), as directed by the Lead Agency: *The state's six regional CCR&Rs are tasked with supporting access to high quality child care in their respective regions. During the current state plan, their support has focused primarily on supporting child care providers, especially those receiving subsidy, to participate in Quality Rated, the state's QRIS. QRIS support has focused on recruiting providers to participate, providing technical assistance to providers through each step of the rating process, making referrals to DECAL divisions for additional program support as needed (e.g., infant toddler or inclusion), and supporting programs after the rating, especially*

programs that scored low on the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). Moving forward, in addition to continuing to support quality in each region through QRIS, quality activities will also focus on the ECE system in each region. This will include collecting data on supply and demand of child care in the region emphasizing ensuring access for targeted populations, such as children with disabilities, multi-lingual learners, or infants and toddlers; serving as workforce development hubs in the region to ensure providers and staff are receiving up-to-date, high-quality trainings on crucial topics, such as GELDS, strong business practices, and social/emotional development; supporting credential and degree attainment for ECE professionals in the region; and connecting families with high-quality child care in their areas. Because each region's needs are unique, action plans will be developed to address each of these priority areas in a way that meets the specific needs of the region. The Lead Agency also funds the toll-free 877ALLGAKIDS call center and encourages participation in community events to distribute information about accessing early education supports and to provide referrals to high-quality child care.

8.4 Public-Private Partnerships

Lead Agencies must demonstrate how they encourage partnerships among other public agencies, Tribal organizations, private entities, faith-based organizations, businesses, or organizations that promote business involvement, and/or community-based organizations to leverage existing service delivery (i.e., cooperative agreement among providers to pool resources to pay for shared fixed costs and operation) to leverage existing child care and early education service delivery systems and to increase the supply and quality of child care services for children younger than age 13.

8.4.1 Lead Agency public-private partnerships

Identify and describe any public-private partnerships encouraged by the Lead Agency to leverage public and private resources to further the goals of CCDF: *Partnerships at the state, community, and local levels are a critical part to delivering services in Georgia's early childhood education system. These partnerships are used to raise quality and expand access to high-quality early care and education programs. These partnerships are evident in the way the Lead Agency has expanded its voluntary quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated. Throughout its development and expansion, Quality Rated has relied on support and funding from private and philanthropic sources. Upon achieving a star rating, child care providers receive cash bonuses for teachers and administrative staff funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and administered by a private partner - Care Solutions Inc. Quality Rated also has an advisory committee made up of representatives from private child care providers, faith-based child care providers, family child care learning homes, Head Start providers, technical college and university operated child care providers, and the Georgia Child Care Association. The goal of this committee is for partners to share frontline experience and expertise to inform improvements to Quality Rated policies and standards. The work of the committee was put on hold temporarily but will be reinstated during the ongoing Quality Rated revision period. In 2023, the Lead Agency began developing a Quality Rated Nutrition and Physical Activity Endorsement. The endorsement will provide training and resources to child care providers to increase their capacity to appropriately support*

children's healthy growth and development. The endorsement will be piloted in 2024; the funding is being provided by DECAL's Foundation through a private philanthropic partner – The Whitehead Foundation. The Lead Agency also administers Georgia's Pre-K Program, which operates through public-private partnerships at the community level. Georgia's Pre-K Program is offered to all four-year-old children regardless of family income through funding from the Georgia Lottery for Education. A variety of providers offer Georgia's Pre-K Program, among them private nonprofit and for-profit child care learning centers, public elementary schools, Head Start sites, military bases, and postsecondary technical institutions. The Lead Agency also promotes partnership and collaboration on child care issues at the community level by funding the statewide network of CCR&Rs. Partnerships are expanded through the work of the CCR&Rs with business and education leaders in their communities who provide technical assistance to child care providers of all types to increase the quality of care offered in the community. The Lead Agency also offers Community Impact Grants: 2Gen Innovation Grants, Trauma-Responsive Care Grants, and Community Transformation Grants. The 2Gen Innovation Grants encourage communities to create alignment opportunities between workforce and child care. The Trauma-Responsive Care Grants encourage communities to pilot or expand programs that increase understanding of how early childhood trauma can impact future learning and development of children. These grants also help communities build effective networks focused on identifying and understanding the needs of children in communities who may have had adverse childhood experiences. The Community Transformation Grants encourage communities to support projects that increase access to early childhood services and resources. These grants support creating early education partnerships among community agencies and other stakeholders that will design and implement innovative projects that address critical local needs. The Lead Agency will continue to increase the number of Community Impact Grants over the next three years and add a new type of grant, 2Gen Literacy Grants, that will promote literacy development within the context of family supporting the growth and learning of parents and children concurrently. The Lead Agency's Community Partnership Coordinators work in each of DECAL's six administrative regions to coordinate the delivery of state and local services to communities that want to improve the outcomes of young children and their families. Strategies for supporting communities include engaging with local stakeholders to align early childhood systems for children ages birth to eight, fostering public awareness of early education services, and serving as a resource for and referral to all DECAL programs and services. The Lead Agency partners with a variety of community organizations such as Georgia Family Connection Partnership, United Way organizations, and other child- and family-serving nonprofits to support community capacity in improving outcomes for young children. Deliverables of these partnerships have included increased business community awareness of the importance of early care and learning and better developed community networks for sharing information and resources across the early childhood system. The Lead Agency also partners with organizations focused on raising quality and increasing access to school-age care. This includes working with the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) to provide training and technical assistance to school age providers and to build awareness on the importance and need of high-quality school age care.

8.5 Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan

Lead Agencies must establish a Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan and demonstrate how they will address the needs of children—including the need for safe child care before, during,

and after a state of emergency declared by the Governor or a major disaster or emergency (as defined by Section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5122)—through a Statewide Disaster Plan.

8.5.1 Statewide Disaster Plan updates

- a) When was the Lead Agency’s Child Care Disaster Plan most recently updated and for what reason? *The following sections of the Statewide Disaster Plan were updated on September 28, 2023. The introduction was updated to include direct links to the Plan for ease and accessibility in locating information. Section 1.4.5 for Georgia’s Pre-K Program was updated to include steps for notifying the Lead Agency and clarification regarding processing payments and communication in the event of emergency closures of the program. Section 2 was updated to add language to include emergencies and expand the definition of emergencies and disasters as sudden and serious events or unforeseen changes in circumstances that require immediate action to alleviate harm or avert imminent danger to life, health, or property and to include examples of weather-related events and public health emergencies. Section 3.1.1 was updated to provide links to sample templates of emergency preparedness plans for licensed child care learning centers (CCLC) and family child care learning homes (FCCLH). Section 3.2.3 was updated to include Lead Agency staff appropriately trained through Child Care Aware of America as DECAL-approved training vendors who may offer Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery training to child care providers. Section 4.1.1 was updated to add an additional path of action in modifying services as a response to plan execution. Section 4.1.2 was updated to add information regarding communication with DECAL to align with Lead Agency required reporting procedures. Language was added to reflect that child care providers shall immediately notify DECAL with information regarding impact to their program. The provider must follow the requirements of child care learning center or family child care learning home rules and regulations relating to reporting any cases of viruses or illnesses identified during a public health emergency; any death or serious injury of a child while in the care of the facility; any fire, structural disaster, or emergency situation that requires temporarily relocating children; and any changes in the program’s operating status. In addition, Section 4 was also updated to require that providers notify DECAL using their DECAL KOALA accounts to align with Lead Agency required reporting rules and regulations. Section 7.1.1 was updated to reflect language regarding required reporting as it relates to CCLC or FCCLH rules and regulations. Section 7.2.4 was updated to remove the 90-day requirement for the Quality Rated assessment window and to add language that allows for post recovery time needed for temporary relocations and/or damage repairs in scheduling assessments. Section 7.3.2 was updated to add local government entities such as fire marshal or building code inspections that may be needed to assess structural damage in the event of damage. Section 8.1.1 was updated to add language regarding maintaining current information within DECAL KOALA provider accounts to allow for Lead Agency communication with the provider community. Section 10 and Section 12 were updated with additional resource weblinks and correcting inactive or changed weblinks previously included.*
- b) Please certify compliance by checking the required elements the Lead Agency includes in the current State Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan.

- i) The plan was developed in collaboration with the following required entities:
- State human services agency
 - State emergency management agency
 - State licensing agency
 - State health department or public health department
 - Local and State child care resource and referral agencies
 - State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care or similar coordinating body
- ii) The plan includes guidelines for the continuation of child care subsidies.
- iii) The plan includes guidelines for the continuation of child care services.
- iv) The plan includes procedures for the coordination of post-disaster recovery of child care services.
- v) The plan contains requirements for all CCDF providers (both licensed and license-exempt) to have in place:
- Procedures for evacuation.
 - Procedures for relocation.
 - Procedures for shelter-in-place.
 - Procedures for communication and reunification with families.
 - Procedures for continuity of operations.
 - Procedures for accommodations of infants and toddlers.
 - Procedures for accommodations of children with disabilities.
 - Procedures for accommodations of children with chronic medical conditions
- vi) The plan contains procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training.
- vii) The plan contains procedures for staff and volunteer practice drills.
- viii) If any of the above are not checked, describe: *Enter Text*
- ix) If available, provide the direct URL/website link to the website where the Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan is posted:
<https://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/DECALEmergplan.pdf>