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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Sponsors Needed to Serve Meals to Children in Summer 2016**

*Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) served over 5.7 million meals during Summer 2015*

**Atlanta, Ga., (December 1, 2015)** – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is looking for eligible organizations to sponsor the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) in their communities in 2016. The SFSP, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), serves healthy meals to children during the summer months when school is not in session. DECAL administers the SFSP in Georgia.

“Providing healthy meals to children during the summer months is critical to the continued development and overall health and wellness of Georgia’s youngest citizens,” said DECAL’s Nutrition Services Director, Falita Flowers. “The success of the Summer Food Service Program is directly impacted by the organizations that partner with the state as sponsors to ensure children have access to nutritious meals throughout the summer.”

The SFSP reimburses non-profit and government organizations for providing free meals to eligible children in low-income areas during the summer months. According to Flowers, “Sponsoring organizations ensure that children have access to healthy, well-balanced meals during the summer. We were excited that the number of meals served in summer 2015 increased significantly, but we need more sponsoring organizations to expand access to summer meals for more children across the state next summer.”

In 2015 nine of Georgia’s 159 counties had no meal service through the SFSP or the Department of Education’s Seamless Summer Option (SSO). For this reason, DECAL is targeting the following counties for 2016: Calhoun, Clinch, Glascock, Lanier, Oglethorpe, Schley, Seminole, Taliaferro, and Webster. Over 78 percent of the children in each of these counties qualify for free/reduced rate meals. Many of these children do not have access to nutritious meals when they are not in school.

The following entities can qualify as sponsors: public or private nonprofit schools; universities, colleges or camps; units of local government; private nonprofit organizations, including faith-based organizations considered tax exempt by the IRS. Sponsors can operate the program and feed children at various sites such as schools, churches, recreation centers, community and migrant centers, and other areas where children congregate. Mobile meal sites are also an option for sponsors – particularly those in rural areas of the state.

Sponsors receive training and support relating to the application process; setting up and operating a successful SFSP; and nutrition education. They also receive technical assistance while the program is operating.

For more information on becoming an SFSP sponsor, visit DECAL's website at <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/SFSPBecomingASponsor.aspx> or contact the Summer Food Service Program team toll free at 1-855-550-SFSP (7377) or via e-mail at [SFSP@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:SFSP@dec.al.ga.gov). In accordance with federal law and USDA policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

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- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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## **About Bright from the Start**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages the voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.decal.ga.gov](http://www.decal.ga.gov).