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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**3rd Annual Summer Food Service Program Summit Prepares
Sponsors to Serve Meals to Children and Youth**

New Sponsors Needed Across the State to Provide Meal Service during the Summer

Atlanta, Ga., (December 14, 2016) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) will host the 3rd Annual Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) Summit on Thursday, January 19, 2017 and Friday, January 20, 2017 at the Loudermilk Conference Center in downtown Atlanta. The day-and-a-half long summit will provide information and resources to help potential new sponsors and experienced sponsors of the SFSP offer effective and efficient meal service during summer 2017.

The SFSP, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is administered in Georgia by DECAL. Eligible community-based organizations can apply to serve free, nutritious meals to children in low-income areas during the summer months. Over 900,000 Georgia school-aged children are eligible for free or reduced lunch during the school year. Through the SFSP, thousands of these children have access to free meals to fill the gap when they are not in school.

Falita Flowers, DECAL's Director of Nutrition Services, details the importance of the SFSP and the benefit of the summit. "Without this important food program, thousands of children and young people might not receive well-balanced meals during the summer months. There is a critical need for more eligible community-based organizations to serve as sponsors and provide nutritious meals to children when school is not in session. The 3rd Annual SFSP Summit will inform organizations about the SFSP and about how to provide this valuable resource to children in their communities."

Institutions that wish to participate in the SFSP as a sponsoring organization must be a public or private non-profit school, university, college, camp, unit of local government, National Youth Sports Program (NYSP) or private nonprofit organizations considered tax exempt by the Internal Revenue Service [501(c)3].

To learn more about the SFSP and the 3rd Annual SFSP Summit, contact Shani Drake, Marketing & Outreach Manager, at or (404) 656-3221. For more information about becoming a SFSP sponsor, visit the DECAL website at <http://decal.ga.gov/BftS/SFSPBecomingASponsor.aspx#Becoming>.

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (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.

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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.