



Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Plan

for

State/Territory Georgia

FFY 2016-2018

This Plan describes the CCDF program to be administered by the State/Territory for the period 6/1/2016 – 9/30/2018. As provided for in the applicable statutes and regulations, the Lead Agency has the flexibility to modify this program at any time, including amending the options selected or described.

For purposes of simplicity and clarity, the specific provisions of applicable laws printed herein are sometimes paraphrases of, or excerpts and incomplete quotations from, the full text. The Lead Agency acknowledges its responsibility to adhere to them regardless of these modifications.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 162.5 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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Introduction and How to Approach Plan Development

Access to stable, high quality child care and early learning experiences improves the odds of success for two generations – parents and children - who rely on child care across the country. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides resources to State, Territory, and Tribal grantees that enable low-income parents to work or pursue education and training so that they may better support their families while at the same time promoting the learning and development of their children. The CCDF also provides funding to enhance the quality of child care for all children.

On November 19, 2014, President Obama signed the bipartisan-supported Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 into law (Pub. L. 113-186)

(https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/child_care_and_development_block_grant_markup.pdf). The law reauthorizes and significantly revises the purposes of the CCDF program and requirements for State and Territory grantees. The law establishes minimum child care assistance eligibility periods, health and safety standards and training requirements for providers, monitoring, consumer information and other components that when fully implemented will strengthen child care in this country and support child and family success.

States and Territories must comply with the provisions of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act, as revised by reauthorization. The Office of Child Care (OCC) has provided interpretive guidance on the new requirements of the law through Program Instructions or responses to Frequently Asked Questions, which are available at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/ccdf-reauthorization>. Pending the issuance of implementing regulations, States and Territories are to comply with the law based on their reasonable interpretation of the requirements in the revised CCDBG statute. Further Federal clarification through guidance and regulation is forthcoming. Once final rules are issued, any States and Territories that do not fully meet the requirements of the regulations will need to revise their policies and procedures to come into compliance, and file appropriate Plan amendments related to those changes.

CCDF Plan Overview. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) re-designed the CCDF Plan to assist State and Territory grantees to plan for full implementation of the law. We recognize that the CCDBG Act of 2014 includes a significant number of changes, some of which are straightforward to implement, while others are complex and will be phased-in over several years. The level of effort needed for implementation will vary across the country depending on the number of changes a State or Territory needs to make. We encourage all States and Territories to take time to think systematically and consider large-scale changes to advance a coherent vision for their child care programs and achieve the goals of the reauthorization – that is, to improve the health, safety, and quality of child care and to improve low-income working families’ access to child care assistance and care that promotes child development. Some States and Territories will need time to enact changes through their legislatures or rulemaking processes. In addition, some requirements will take time to fully operationalize. ACF will work with States and Territories to ensure that adoption and implementation of these important changes are done in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner.

The Plan process continues to be the primary mechanism by which ACF will determine State and Territory compliance with requirements in the new law. The CCDBG Act of 2014 changed the Plan cycle from a biennial to a triennial Plan period; thus, this Plan will cover a 3-year period. (658E(b)) States and Territories are required to submit their FY 2016-2018 CCDF Plans by March 1, 2016, and approved Plans will become effective June 1, 2016. This Pre-Print will provide a tool for States and Territories to describe to ACF their implementation plans to:

1. Define CCDF Leadership and Coordination with Relevant Systems
2. Promote Family Engagement through Outreach and Consumer Education
3. Provide Stable Child Care Financial Assistance to Families
4. Ensure Equal Access to High Quality Child Care for Low-Income Children
5. Establish Standards and Monitoring Processes to Ensure the Health and Safety of Child Care Settings
6. Recruit and Retain a Qualified and Effective Child Care Workforce
7. Support Continuous Quality Improvement
8. Ensure Grantee Accountability

These organizational categories reflect key functions of an integrated system of high quality care for low-income working families. Although the Plan is divided into sections for reporting and accountability purposes, ACF encourages Lead Agencies to approach the Plan in a cross-cutting, integrated manner. The intention is that grantees and the federal government will be able to use this information to track and assess progress, determine need for technical assistance and CCDF Plan amendments, and ultimately determine compliance with specific requirements and deadlines.

For purposes of simplicity and clarity, the specific provisions of applicable laws printed herein are sometimes paraphrases of, or excerpts and incomplete quotations from, the full text. The State/Territory acknowledges its responsibility to adhere to them regardless of these modifications. The Plan contains definitions where provided by law. For terminology not defined in the law, some illustrative examples may be provided. These should only be considered examples, and not requirements, for purposes of responding. If no definitions are provided, States/Territories should respond based on their own definitions for those terms.

CCDBG Implementation Deadlines. In some cases, the CCDBG Act of 2014 specifies a particular date when a provision is effective. Where the law does not specify a date, the new requirements became effective upon the date of enactment and States/Territories have until September 30, 2016 to implement the new statutory requirement(s). ACF has determined that when a State or Territory cannot certify compliance with a specific requirement at the time of CCDF plan submission (March 1, 2016), the grantee must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with such provision(s). The implementation plan must provide sufficient information to support approval of the Plan for funding.

Specifically, as part of its implementation plan, States/Territories will be asked to describe:

- Overall target completion date (no later than appropriate effective date deadline)

- Current overall status for this section (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) including describing progress to date for any requirements already implemented and listing any unmet requirements that are not yet fully implemented
- Specific steps (activities) you will take to complete implementation of the unmet requirement(s) (e.g., secure legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.)
- Timeline for implementation including projected start date and end date for each step
- Agency/entity responsible for completing implementation of the goal/objective, and partners who will work with the responsible agency to complete implementation of the goal/objective.

We recognize that it will take multiple steps and interim activities toward complete implementation of the requirement. We have included spaces to allow respondents to outline those interim steps and associated timelines (projected start and end dates) for those interim steps to be outlined. A comprehensive summary of the topical implementation plans across sections will be generated electronically to facilitate monitoring of progress towards completion.

ACF will work with States and Territories to monitor progress towards achievement of these requirements and will conduct ongoing reviews of implementation plans until fulfillment of the requirement. Upon completion of the implementation plan, the State/Territory will submit a Plan amendment to certify fulfillment of the requirement(s). These updates and amendments can be submitted at any time prior to the effective date of the requirement. For example, States and Territories may, and are encouraged to, submit amendments to certify compliance with requirements upon completion, but no later than the effective date of the requirements (refer to the Program Instruction on Effective Dates for these deadlines <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/pi-2015-02> and corresponding timeline of effective dates <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/pi-2015-02-attachment-timeline-of-effective-dates-for-States-and-Territories-ccdbg-act-of-2014>).

Lead Agencies can access a variety of federal technical assistance resources to support implementation of the new requirements at: <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ccdf-reauthorization> In addition to these materials, States and Territories will continue to receive support through the Office of Child Care's Technical Assistance Network (CCTAN) to assist with implementation of the new law. ACF recommends reviewing these resources prior to starting and completing each section of the Plan.

CCDF Plan Submission. States and Territories will submit their Plans electronically through the ACF-118 electronic submission site. The ACF-118 site will include all language and questions included in the final CCDF Plan Preprint template approved by the Office of Management and Budget. Please note that the format of the questions in the ACF-118 site may be modified from the Word version of the document to ensure compliance with Section 508 policies regarding accessibility to electronic and information technology for individuals with disabilities (see <http://www.section508.gov/> for more information). Until the final draft is approved, States and Territories may use the draft CCDF Plan preprint templates as they work to implement the new law. In responding to questions, States and Territories are asked to provide brief, specific summary text and/or bullet points only. Do not use tables or copy and paste charts, attachments or manuals into the Plan.

All information and materials developed to support CCDF implementation and information reported in the CCDF Plan are subject to review by ACF as part of ongoing CCDBG compliance monitoring efforts. In cases where the CCDBG Act of 2014 did not change CCDF regulatory requirements (e.g., Public Hearing requirements), the CCDF regulations are still in effect and relevant questions are included in this Plan.

The CCDF Plan does not contain the Quality Performance Report (QPR) appendix included in previous Plans. The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires ongoing collection of some information that was included in the QPR. ACF will issue a separate information collection tool for public comment and approval linked to the CCDF Plan and updated based on the new requirements in the law.

1 Define CCDF Leadership and Coordination with Relevant Systems

Implementation of the requirements of the CCDBG Act of 2014 will require leadership and coordination between the child care assistance program and other child- and family-serving agencies, services, and supports at the state and local levels. ACF recognizes that each grantee must identify the most appropriate entities and individuals to lead and participate in implementation based on the context within that State or Territory. This will include those that manage various components of CCDF-funded activities and requirements (fiscal, subsidy, health and safety monitoring, and continuous quality improvement) as well as other public and private partners.

This section collects information to help ACF understand the stakeholders convened and consulted to develop the Plan, where authority lies to make policy decisions and program changes, and who is responsible for implementing the blueprint for action the Plan describes. For example, the law requires that, at the option of the Tribes, State/Territory Lead Agencies must collaborate and coordinate with Indian tribes or tribal organizations in the State in a timely manner in the development of the CCDF Plan. ACF expects that new requirements in the law will necessitate that grantees build partnerships with other agencies and organizations to better link the children and families receiving financial assistance to information, services and resources regarding other programs for which they may be eligible, including developmental screenings for children, and other resources (also in section 2). In addition, States and Territories must describe how public-private partnerships are being used to increase the supply and quality of child care services.

1.1 CCDF Leadership

The Governor of a State or Territory shall designate an agency (which may be an appropriate collaborative agency), or establish a joint inter-agency office, to represent the State (or Territory) as the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency agrees to administer the program in accordance with applicable Federal laws and regulations and the provisions of this Plan, including the assurances and certifications appended hereto. (658D, 658E(c)(1))

1.1.1 Which Lead Agency is designated to administer the CCDF program?

Identify the Lead Agency or joint inter-agency office designated by the State/Territory. ACF will send official grant correspondence such as grant awards, grant adjustments, Plan approvals, and disallowance notifications to the designated contact identified here. (658D(a))

Name of Lead Agency: **Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning**

Address of Lead Agency: **2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 754 East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334**

Name and Title of the Lead Agency Official: **Amy Jacobs, Commissioner**

Phone Number: **404-651-7432**

E-Mail Address: **Amy.Jacobs@dec.al.ga.gov**

Web Address for Lead Agency (if any): **www.dec.al.ga.gov**

1.1.2 Who is the CCDF administrator?

Identify the CCDF administrator designated by the Lead Agency, the day-to-day contact, or the person with responsibility for administering the State/Territory's CCDF program. ACF will send programmatic communications such as program announcements, program instructions, and data collection instructions to the designated contact identified here. If there is more than one designated contact with equal or shared responsibility for administering the CCDF program, please identify the co-administrator or entity with administrative responsibilities and include contact information.

a) Contact Information for CCDF Administrator:

Name of CCDF Administrator: **Ira Sudman**

Title of CCDF Administrator: **Chief Legal Officer**

Address of CCDF Administrator: **2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 754 East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334**

Phone Number: **404-463-4094**

E-Mail Address: Ira.Sudman@dec.al.ga.gov

b) Contact Information for CCDF Co-Administrator (if applicable):

Name of CCDF Co-Administrator: **Kristie Lewis**

Title of CCDF Co-Administrator: **Assistant Commissioner of Child Care Services**

Address of CCDF Administrator: **2 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 754 East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334**

Phone Number: **404-463-4309**

E-Mail Address: **Kristie.Lewis@dec.al.ga.gov**

Description of the role of the Co-Administrator: **Co-Administrator**

c) Primary Contact Information for the CCDF Program:

Phone Number for CCDF program information (for the public) (if any): **404-656-5957**

Web Address for CCDF program (for the public) (if any): www.decal.ga.gov

Web Address for CCDF program policy manual (if any): <http://odis.dhs.ga.gov>

Web Address for CCDF program administrative rules (if any):

1.1.3 Identify the agency/department/entity that is responsible for each of the major parts of CCDF administration and the name of the lead contact responsible for managing this portion of the Plan.

Outreach and Consumer Education (section 2):

- Agency/Department/Entity: **Department of Early Care and Learning**
- Name of Lead Contact: **Ray Higgins**

Subsidy/Financial Assistance (section 3 and section 4)

- Agency/Department/Entity: **Department of Early Care and Learning**
- Name of Lead Contact: **Ray Higgins**

Licensing/Monitoring (section 5):

- Agency/Department/Entity: **Department of Early Care and Learning**
- Name of Lead Contact: **Kristie Lewis**

Child Care Workforce (section 6):

- Agency/Department/Entity: **Department of Early Care and Learning**
- Name of Lead Contact: **Susan Adams**

Quality Improvement (section 7):

- Agency/Department/Entity: **Department of Early Care and Learning**
- Name of Lead Contact: **Kristin Bernhard**

Grantee Accountability/Program Integrity (section 8):

- Agency/Department/Entity: **Department of Early Care and Learning**
- Name of Lead Contact: **Ray Higgins**

1.2 CCDF Policy Decision Authority

The Lead Agency has broad authority to administer (i.e., establish rules) and operate (i.e., implement activities) the CCDF program through other governmental, non-governmental, or other public or private local agencies as long as it retains overall responsibility for the administration of the program. (658D(b))

1.2.1 Which of the following CCDF program rules and policies are set or established at the State/Territory versus the local level? In other words, identify whether CCDF program rules and policies are established by the State or Territory (even if administered or operated locally) or whether the CCDF policies or rules are established by local entities (such as counties or workforce boards) setting those policies. Check one.

All program rules and policies are set or established at the State/Territory level.

Some or all program rules and policies are set or established by local entities. If checked, indicate which entities establish the following policies. Check all that apply.

Eligibility rules and policies (e.g., income limits) are set by the:

State/Territory

County. If checked, describe the type of eligibility policies the county can set _____

Other local entity (e.g., workforce boards, early learning coalitions). If checked, identify the entity (e.g. workforce board) and describe the type of eligibility policies the local entity(ies) can set _____

Other. Describe _____

Sliding fee scale is set by the:

State/Territory

County. If checked, describe the type of sliding fee scale policies the county can set _____

Other local entity (e.g., workforce boards, early learning coalitions). If checked, identify the entity (e.g. workforce board) and describe the type of sliding fee scale policies the local entity (ies) can set _____

Other. Describe _____

Payment rates are set by the:

State/Territory

County. If checked, describe the type of payment rate policies the county can set _____

Other local entity (e.g., workforce boards, early learning coalitions). If checked, identify the entity (e.g. workforce board) and describe the type of payment rate policies the local entity (ies) can set _____

Other. Describe _____

Other. List and describe (e.g., quality improvement systems, payment practices) _____

1.2.2 How is the CCDF program operated in your State/Territory? In other words, which agency (ies) implement or perform these CCDF services and activities and how will the State/Territory ensure that Federal CCDF requirements are fully implemented by other governmental or nongovernmental agencies. ACF recommends minimizing differences in eligibility or other policies across counties or other jurisdictions to ease family burden and confusion. Check all that apply and describe the services performed by the entity and how the State/Territory ensures accountability that federal requirements are fully implemented by other agency (ies).

a) Who determines eligibility?

- CCDF Lead Agency
- TANF agency. Describe. **The Lead Agency sets the policy to determine eligibility; however, the actual determination is done through a contract between the Lead Agency and the TANF lead agency.**
- Other State/Territory agency. Describe. _____
- Local government agencies such as county welfare or social services departments. Describe: **Eligibility determination is performed by case managers at local county Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) offices.**
- Child care resource and referral agencies. Describe. _____
- Community-based organizations. Describe. _____
- Other. Describe. **Providers who are offered a grant or contract for a certain number of slots determine eligibility. Those eligibility determinations are verified by the Lead Agency. This process is also used by providers who are participating in Early Head Start Partnership grants funded through the Lead Agency.**

b) Who assists parents in locating child care (consumer education)?

- CCDF Lead Agency
- TANF agency. Describe. _____
- Other State/Territory agency. Describe. _____
- Local government agencies such as county welfare or social services departments. Describe: : **As part of the eligibility process, local DFCS agency employees are trained to direct families to the parent resource and referral call center, All GA Kids (www.allgakids.org).**
- Child care resource and referral agencies. Describe: **All GA Kids referral network (currently administered by a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency) funded by the Lead Agency operates the call center and website for referral purposes.**

Community-based organizations. Describe. _____

Other. Describe. _____

c) Who issues payments?

CCDF Lead Agency

TANF agency. Describe. _____

Other State/Territory agency. Describe. _____

Local government agencies such as county welfare or social services departments. Describe. _____

Child care resource and referral agencies. Describe. _____

Community-based organizations. Describe. _____

Other. Describe. **A private provider payment contractor working in concert with the Lead Agency.**

1.3 Consultation in the Development of the CCDF Plan

The Lead Agency is responsible for developing the CCDF plan which serves as the application for a three-year implementation period. In the development of the CCDF plan, the Lead Agency shall consult with appropriate representatives of units of general purpose local government. (658D(b)(2)) General purpose local governments is defined by the U.S. Census at https://www.census.gov/newsroom/cspan/govts/20120301_cspan_govts_def_3.pdf

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that States consult with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (pursuant to 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act). 658E(c)(2)(R) In addition, States shall, at the option of an Indian tribe or tribal organization in the State, collaborate and coordinate with such Indian tribe or tribal organization in the development of the State plan in a timely manner. (658D (b)(1)(E))

1.3.1 Check who and describe how the Lead Agency consulted with these entities in the development of the CCDF Plan (check all that apply). For example, did the entity participate in a drafting committee, review drafts, sign off on the final version, or develop a memorandum of understanding with the Lead Agency to meet requirements to share information or services for CCDF subsidy families, or other manner of participation? This list includes entities required by law along with a list of optional CCDF Plan consultation partners that Lead Agencies potentially would consult with in their developing their CCDF Plan.

[REQUIRED] Appropriate representatives of general purpose local government, which can include counties, municipalities or townships/towns. Describe: **The proposed state plan was sent to all applicable county government entities for review and comment.**

- [REQUIRED, IF APPLICABLE] State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (pursuant to 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act). Describe: **The proposed state plan was sent to the Georgia Children’s Cabinet (Georgia’s State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care) for review and comment. The Commissioner of the Lead Agency is a participating member of the Georgia Children’s Cabinet.**
- If checked, does the Lead Agency have official representation and a decision-making role in the State Advisory Council?
 - Yes
 - No.
 - If no State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (pursuant to 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act) exists in your State/Territory, describe how you consulted with any other state- or state-designated cross-agency body such as an advisory council, cross-agency commission, or council or cabinet related to child and family planning and policy _____
- [REQUIRED] Indian tribe(s) and/or tribal organization(s), at the option of individual Tribes. Describe, including which Tribe(s) you consulted with Check N/A if no Indian Tribes and/or Tribal organizations in the State
- State/Territory agency responsible for public education. Describe: **Input was solicited from the Georgia Department of Education, and agency leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory agency/agencies responsible for programs for children with special needs, including early intervention programs authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C for infants and toddlers and Section 619 for preschool). Describe: **Input was solicited from the Georgia Department of Education and Department of Public Health, and leaders of both departments were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory institutions for higher education, including community colleges. Describe: **Input was solicited from the Georgia Board of Regents and Technical College System of Georgia in developing the plan. Representatives from both entities were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory agency responsible for child care licensing. Describe: **The Lead Agency is responsible for child care licensing, and applicable staff were directly involved in developing the plan.**
- State/Territory office/director for Head Start State collaboration. Describe: **The Lead Agency houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office. The Head Start State Collaboration Office Director was provided a copy of the plan for review and comment. The state plan was provided to Head Start grantees for review and comment.**

- State/Territory/local agencies with Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships grants. Describe: **The Lead Agency was awarded funds to administer Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grants, and applicable staff were directly involved in developing the plan. The state plan was provided to other Early Head Start grantees for review and comment.**
- State/Territory agency responsible for Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Describe: **The Lead Agency is responsible for administering the CACFP, and applicable staff were directly involved in developing the plan.**
- State/Territory agency responsible for WIC, nutrition (including breast-feeding support), and childhood obesity prevention. Describe: **The Georgia Department of Public Health was consulted in the development of the plan and provided a copy for review and comment.**
- Other Federal, State, local and/or private agencies providing early childhood and school-age/youth serving developmental services. Describe
- State/Territory agency responsible for implementing the Maternal and Child Home Visitation programs grant. Describe: **The Georgia Department of Human Services was consulted in the development of the plan, and agency leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- Agency responsible for Medicaid/Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT). Describe: **The Georgia Department of Public Health was consulted in the development of the plan, and agency leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- McKinney-Vento State coordinators for Homeless Education. Describe: **McKinney-Vento State Coordinators for Homeless Education were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory agency responsible for public health. Describe: **The Georgia Department of Public Health was consulted in the development of the plan, and agency leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory agency responsible for mental health. Describe: **The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities was consulted in the developmental of the plan, and agency leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory agency responsible for child welfare. Describe: **The Georgia Department of Human Services was consulted in the development of the plan, and agency leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory liaison for military child care programs. Describe: **The state liaison for military child care programs was provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**

- State/Territory agency responsible for employment services/workforce development. Describe: **The Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Georgia Department of Labor were consulted in the development of the plan, and leaders of both departments were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/Territory agency responsible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Describe: **The Georgia Department of Human Services was consulted in the development of the plan, and agency leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- State/community agencies serving refugee or immigrant families. Describe
- Child care resource and referral agencies. Describe: **Georgia's child care resource and referral agencies were consulted in the development of the plan. Resource and referral leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan. The Lead Agency contracted with the Georgia Association of Resource and Referral Agencies to convene in-person public comment opportunities.**
- Provider groups or associations. Describe: **The child care trade organizations were consulted in the development of the plan. Association leaders were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- Worker organizations. Describe: **Professional organizations, advocacy groups, and child care provider organizations were consulted in the development of the plan. Leaders of these organizations were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- Parent groups or organizations. Describe: **Representatives from parent groups and organizations were provided an opportunity to review and comment on the plan. The Lead Agency conducted parent focus groups in the state's four early education empowerment zones regarding issues around access and quality. Results from the focus groups were used to draft policy recommendations around the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. The Lead Agency also has a family engagement coordinator on staff to ensure that parent groups and organizations were aware of the opportunity to review and comment on the plan.**
- Other. Describe _____

1.3.2 Describe the Statewide/Territory-wide public hearing process held to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under this Plan (658D(b)(1)(C)). Lead Agencies are required to hold at least one public hearing in the State/Territory with sufficient State/Territory-wide distribution of notice prior to such hearing to provide the public an opportunity to comment on the provision of child care services under the CCDF Plan. At a minimum, this description must include:

- a) Date(s) of notice of public hearing
Posted January 6, 2016

Reminder - Must be at least 20 calendar days prior to the date of the public hearing.

- b) How was the public notified about the public hearing, including how notice was accessible for people with disabilities? Please include website links if utilized to provide notice.

The Lead Agency placed the notice on its website: www.decal.ga.gov. Dates were also shared through the Lead Agency's social media platforms and through an email blast sent to all licensed child care providers.

- c) Date(s) of public hearing(s) **January 27, 28, and 30, 2016**

Reminder - Must be no earlier than September 1, 2015 which is 9 months prior to the June 1, 2016 effective date of the Plan.

- d) Hearing site(s) or method(s), including how geographic regions of the State/Territory were addressed

Athens, Georgia

Atlanta, Georgia

Savannah, Georgia

The locations selected are located in the north, central and southern regions of the state.

- e) Describe how the content of the Plan was made available to the public in advance of the public hearing(s): **The plan was posted on the Lead Agency's website: www.decal.ga.gov. Links to the plan were posted through the Lead Agency's social media platforms.**

- f) How will the information provided by the public be taken into consideration in the provision of child care services under this Plan? **All written or verbal comments made by the public will be reviewed and considered by the Lead Agency and incorporated into the plan if deemed necessary and applicable.**

- 1.3.3 Describe the strategies used by the Lead Agency to make the CCDF Plan and Plan Amendments available to the public. Check all that apply and describe the strategies below, including any relevant links as examples.

- Working with advisory committees. Describe: **Information about the plan was shared with advisory committees related the state's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System and with an Early Childhood Education Subcommittee formed to make recommendations to the Governor's Education Reform Commission.**

- Working with child care resource and referral agencies. Describe: **The Georgia Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies worked with the Lead Agency to conduct and communicate the statewide public hearings.**
- Providing translation in other languages. Describe _____
- Making available on the Lead Agency website. List the website **www.dec.state.ga.us**
- Sharing through social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, email, etc.). Describe: **Information will be posted and shared through the Lead Agency's social media platforms.**
- Providing notification to stakeholders (e.g., provider groups, parent groups). Describe: **An email blast was sent to all providers and applicable stakeholder groups with information about the public hearings and with links to the state's plan.**
- Other. Describe _____

1.4 Coordination with Partners to Expand Accessibility and Continuity of Care

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that the Plan describe how the State/Territory will efficiently, and to the extent practicable, coordinate child care services supported by CCDF with programs operating at the Federal, State/Territory, and local levels for children in the programs listed below.

- 1.4.1 Check who and describe how your State/Territory coordinates or plans to efficiently coordinate child care services with the following programs to expand accessibility and continuity of care, and assist children enrolled in early childhood programs to receive full-day services that meet the needs of working families. (658E(c)(2)(O)) Please describe the goals of this coordination, such as extending the day or year of services for families; smoothing transitions for children between programs or as they age into school, enhancing and aligning quality of services, linking comprehensive services to children in child care settings or developing supply of quality care for vulnerable populations. NOTE that this list appears similar to the list provided in 1.3.1 which focused on consultation for purposes of developing the CCDF Plan, however, this list includes entities required by law, along with a list of optional CCDF Plan coordination partners that Lead Agencies potentially would coordinate with over the next 3 years to expand accessibility and continuity of care, and assist children enrolled in early childhood programs to receive full-day services. Check and describe all that apply.

- [REQUIRED] Programs operating at the Federal, State and local levels for children in pre-school programs (e.g., state- or locally-funded pre-k, Head Start, school-based programs, public and private preschools, programs serving preschool children receiving special education services, etc.). Describe _____

Georgia's lottery funded Pre-K program, administered by the Lead Agency, coordinates with a variety of child care service providers to expand access to high quality for four year olds in every county in the

state. Independent evaluations have found that Georgia's Pre-K classrooms meet higher quality standards. Funded directly from the state to private child care centers, local school systems, Head Start grantees, colleges and universities, and not-for-profit child care programs, Georgia's Pre-K Program ensures a sufficient supply of a variety of quality early learning providers.

The Lead Agency also funds additional, more intensive services to Georgia's Pre-K children with high needs. Additional Pre-K services, including funds for meals and transportation, are provided to enrolled children identified as lower income by their participation in a means-tested public benefit such as TANF, food stamps, CCDF child care subsidy, or Medicaid. For children with disabilities, Georgia's Pre-K Program has created an inclusion model in collaboration with IDEA Part B to fund specific special education services.

Child care subsidy dollars have also been leveraged to extend care and increase quality for children in Georgia's Pre-K Program and in Early Head Start classrooms. Applications for child care subsidy from families whose children are in Georgia's Pre-K Program are routed to a centralized location, and eligible families receive priority funding for wrap-around care to extend the school day. Georgia has been able to offer two Summer Transition Programs, one for children about to enter Pre-K and one for children about to enter Kindergarten that includes lower child-staff ratios, additional supports for children with high needs, and on-site technical assistance. The program for children entering Pre-K is specifically designed for dual language learners and includes bilingual instruction. Wrap-around care for these two programs along with some of the intensive services is funded through Georgia's subsidized child care program.

The state has already revised and aligned child care subsidy policy for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grantees in Georgia to meet the needs of children who are eligible for both Early Head Start and child care subsidy. With this model, CCDF funds are used to fund the early education services while Early Head Start funds are used to support provider efforts in reaching higher standards and to provide comprehensive child and family services.

- [REQUIRED, IF APPLICABLE] Tribal early childhood programs. Describe, including which Tribe(s) coordinating with _____
- Check N/A if no Indian Tribes and/or Tribal organizations or programs in the State.
- [REQUIRED] Other Federal, State, local early childhood programs serving infants and toddlers with disabilities. Describe _____

Georgia's Part C program is housed within the Department of Public Health. DECAL, the lead CCDF agency, coordinates with the IDEA Coordinator to ensure that children receive coordinated supports and services within their child care setting. DECAL is represented on the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Part C of IDEA. A representative of Part C is also a member of the Georgia Children's Cabinet, along with DECAL, the CCDF Lead Agency. DECAL also coordinates services and supports with the Section 619 Coordinator at the Georgia Department of Education. These collaborative relationships help smooth the transition of children between programs as well as link children with comprehensive services.

[REQUIRED] Early childhood programs serving homeless children (as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act). Describe _____

The state currently coordinates services among many programs serving homeless and low-income populations. First, Local Education Authorities who receive Georgia's Pre-K funding must comply with McKinney-Vento's mandates by providing equal access to Pre-K children who are homeless. Second, Georgia provides both child care subsidy and Georgia's Pre-K funding to high quality early learning programs that serve homeless families and coordinates between the two to ensure that families who are homeless have access to full day, full year care. Third, homeless children are currently a priority group for the Lead Agency's Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant and the state's subsidy funds. Finally, in 2016, the state will develop a contract or grant subsidy model for providers serving homeless children.

[REQUIRED] Early childhood programs serving children in foster care. Describe _____

Children in foster care are a priority group for the state's subsidy program. The full cost of care is paid to providers serving children in foster care, enhancing the quality of care they receive and enhancing the supply of providers able to serve this vulnerable population.

State/Territory agency responsible for child care licensing. Describe

DECAL, the CCDF Lead Agency, is also the agency responsible for licensing. The licensing division works closely with the subsidy program to ensure coordination.

State/Territory agency with Head Start State collaboration grant. Describe

DECAL, the CCDF Lead Agency, also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office. Subsidy leaders and the Head Start State Collaboration Director work closely to ensure coordination.

State Advisory Council authorized by the Head Start Act. Describe

The Commissioner of DECAL, the CCDF Lead Agency, is a member of the Georgia Children's Cabinet, which serves as the State Advisory Council, and provides the cabinet applicable subsidy updates.

State/Territory/local agencies with Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships grants. Describe

DECAL, the CCDF Lead Agency, is one of seven Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grantees in Georgia. As part of DECAL's own grant implementation and in support of all EHS-CCP grantees, DECAL has leveraged subsidy dollars and aligned subsidy policy to ensure CCDF funds are used to support access to the highest quality care.

McKinney-Vento State coordinators for Homeless Education or local educational agency McKinney-Vento liaisons. Describe _____

Summer Transition Program providers coordinate with local education agency McKinney-Vento Liaisons to recruit families for participation in the program.

Child care resource and referral agencies. Describe _____

DECAL contracts with a resource and referral system for a variety of services. Among them is the referral of parents to quality child care and early learning programs. Referral specialists assist families in finding care arrangements to meet the family's needs and serve the child for the entire day. The state's CCR&R system also provides technical assistance to early learning programs pursuing a star rating in the state's QRIS, Quality Rated.

State/Territory agency responsible for public education. Describe _____

The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Education on a variety of initiatives, including participating in the state's longitudinal data system, IDEA Part B Section 619, and the emerging Kindergarten Entry Profile. Through these collaborations, alignment of services critical to CCDF eligible children and families is ensured. Additionally, both agencies serve on the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, Georgia's P-20 Council. The Council is composed of the heads of the state's seven education agencies. Through the Alliance, the heads of Georgia's education agencies work collaboratively to ensure a more seamless educational experience for Georgia's students from birth through K-12 to higher education and the workforce. Regular updates and discussions in the Alliance's monthly meetings have contributed to building an informed and trusting atmosphere that facilitates ready collaboration across agencies.

State/Territory institutions for higher education, including community colleges. Describe _____

The Commissioner of the Lead Agency meets monthly with the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, which includes the Commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia and the Chancellor of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The Lead Agency also collaborates with both entities on several initiatives including professional development for many providers who serve children and families eligible for CCDF.

State/Territory agency responsible for Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Describe _____

The Lead Agency is also responsible for the Child and Adult Care Food Program. CACFP and subsidy leaders and the Head Start State Collaboration Director work closely to ensure coordination.

State/Territory agency responsible for WIC, nutrition (including breast-feeding support), and childhood obesity prevention. Describe _____

The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Public Health, the state agency responsible for WIC, nutrition (including breast-feeding support), and childhood obesity prevention. The Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health sits on the Georgia Children's Cabinet along

with agency heads of all of 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.

- Other Federal, State, local and/or private agencies providing early childhood and school-age/youth serving developmental services. Describe _____
- State/Territory agency responsible for implementing the Maternal and Childhood Home Visitation programs grant. Describe _____

A member of the Lead Agency’s senior leadership team sits on the state’s Great Start Georgia early childhood system of care framework, funded through the federal Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting grant to coordinate services. The Great Start Georgia framework is being expanded to implement this system into early learning and development programs in the state’s Early Education Empowerment Zones with Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge dollars.

- Agency responsible for Medicaid/Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT). Describe _____

The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Public Health, the state agency responsible for Medicaid/Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment. The Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health sits on the Georgia Children’s Cabinet along with agency heads of all of 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.

- State/Territory agency responsible for public health. Describe _____

The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Public Health, the state agency responsible for public health, on several initiatives related to early education. This includes a joint collaborative effort on a Frontiers of Innovation Grant in conjunction with the Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University.

Additionally, the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Health sits on the Georgia Children’s Cabinet along with agency heads of all of 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.

- State/Territory agency responsible for mental health. Describe _____

The Lead Agency collaborates with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), the state agency responsible for mental health. A DBHDD representative serves on the Georgia Pyramid State Leadership Team.

State/Territory agency responsible for child welfare. Describe _____

The Director of the state's Division of Family and Children Services, the state's child welfare agency, as well as the Director of the State Office of the Child Advocate sit on the Georgia Children's Cabinet with the Commissioner of the Lead Agency as described above.

The Lead Agency collaborates with the Division of Family and Children Services to ensure that foster children receive top priority.

State/Territory liaison for military child care programs. Describe _____

Georgia is one of 12 states participating in the Department of Defense Military Child Care Liaison Project. The Lead Agency has met with the Liaison assigned to Georgia to assist in identifying current state efforts, priorities, and quality initiatives that impact the ability of military families to access high quality of installation child care services in their communities. The Lead Agency will collaborate with the Liaison to coordinate efforts in the planning and development of priorities and quality initiatives of mutual interest.

State/Territory agency responsible for employment services/workforce development.
Describe _____

Housed at the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) is tasked with administering Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds across the state and with overseeing the Governor's state workforce development initiatives. The Lead Agency will continue to work with the SWDB to align their resources in funding child care as a training support.

State/Territory agency responsible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
Describe _____

The Director of the state's Division of Family and Children Services, the state's child welfare agency, as well as the Director of the State Office of the Child Advocate sit on the Georgia Children's Cabinet with the Commissioner of the Lead Agency as described above.

State/Territory community agencies serving refugee or immigrant families. Describe _____

Georgia's refugee assistance programs are delivered through the agency that administers TANF. These families are eligible for child care subsidy to support their employment and training activities.

Provider groups or associations. Describe _____

The Commissioner of the Lead Agency and members of the Lead Agency's leadership team meet quarterly with the leaders of the Georgia Child Care Association, the Georgia Association on Young Children, and the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia. The Lead Agency also convenes numerous advisory groups throughout the year to seek input from key partners and providers about

services, programs, and policy. DECAL collaborates with these partners to resolve issues that may hinder accessibility or continuity of care and to improve quality in early learning programs.

Worker organizations. Describe _____

The Lead Agency regularly engages with work organizations including Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) and Georgia Association on Young Children (GAYC).

Parent groups or organizations. Describe _____

The Lead Agency has a Family Engagement Coordinator on staff who works with providers in helping them support children and families in their programs. The coordinator also works with different parent groups and organizations to ensure that families are continually being engaged. Additionally, the Lead Agency continues to engage families through focus groups and through including them on early education advisory boards and committees.

Other. Describe _____

1.5 Optional Use of Combined Funds

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a provision that States and Territories have the option to combine funding for CCDF child care services with funding for any of the required programs listed in 1.4.1. These include programs operating at the Federal, State and local levels for children in preschool programs, tribal early childhood programs, and other early childhood programs, including those serving infants and toddlers with disabilities, homeless children, and children in foster care. (658E(c)(2)(O))(ii) Combining funds could include blending multiple funding streams, pooling funds, or layering funds together from multiple funding streams in an effort to expand and/or enhance services for children and families to allow for delivery of comprehensive high quality care that meets the needs of children and families. For example, State/Territory agencies may use multiple funding sources to offer grants or contracts to programs to deliver services; a State/Territory may allow 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 or State/Territory pre-kindergarten requirements in addition to State/Territory child care licensing requirements. As a reminder, per the OMB Compliance Supplement governing audits (https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a133_compliance_supplement_2014), CCDF funds may be used in collaborative efforts with Head Start (CFDA 93.600) programs to provide comprehensive child care and development services for children who are eligible for both programs. In fact, the coordination and collaboration between Head Start and the CCDF is mandated by sections 640(g)(2)(D) and (E), and 642(c) of the Head Start Act (42 USC 9835(g)(2)(D) and (E); 42 USC 9837(c)) in the provision of full working day, full calendar year comprehensive services (42 USC 9835(a)(5)(v)). In order to implement such collaborative

programs, which share, for example, space, equipment or materials, grantees may blend several funding streams so that seamless services are provided.

1.5.1 Will you combine CCDF funds with the funds for any program with which you coordinate (described in 1.4.1)?

Yes. If yes, describe at a minimum:

- How do you define “combine” _____
- Which funds will you combine _____
- Goal(s) of combining funds (why?) and expected outcomes, 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 _____
- Method of fund allocation (how you will be combining multiple sets of funding, such as at the State/Territory level, local level, program level?) _____
- How are the funds tracked and method of oversight _____

No

1.6 Public-Private Partnerships

The CCDBG Act of 2014 adds a new provision that requires States and Territories to describe in the Plan how the State/Territory encourages partnerships among State/Territory and public agencies, tribal organizations, private entities, faith based organizations and/or community-based organizations to leverage existing service delivery systems for child care and development services and to increase the supply and quality of child care services for children through age 12, such as by implementing voluntary shared services alliance models (i.e., cooperative agreement among providers to pool resources to pay for shared fixed costs and operation). (658E(c)(2)(P)) ACF expects these types of partnerships to leverage public and private resources to further the goals of reauthorization.

1.6.1 Describe the entities with whom and the levels at which the State/Territory is partnering (level – State/Territory, county/local, and/or programs), the goals of the partnerships, method of partnering. Include in your description examples of activities that have resulted from partnerships with other State/Territory and public agencies, tribal organizations, private entities, faith based organizations or community-based organizations, and how the partnerships are expected to leverage existing service delivery systems for child care and development services and to increase the supply and quality of child care services. _____

Partnership at the state, community, and local levels is a critical part of the delivery of service in Georgia’s early childhood education system. Georgia’s voluntary tiered quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated, relies on both support and funding from private and philanthropic sources to

increase the supply and quality of child care services in the state. For example, upon achieving a star rating in Quality Rated, child care providers receive an incentive of classroom supplies and cash bonuses for teachers and administrative staff, all of which are funded from the philanthropic and business communities. This fundraising is the result of a public-private partnership among the Lead Agency; Georgia Family Connection Partnership, a non-profit with representatives in every county in the state; and the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, a statewide non-profit focused on advocacy for early childhood education. These partners are also using private dollars and corporate, in-kind donations to support an awareness campaign targeted towards parents and caregivers on the importance of high quality early learning. Quality Rated also has an advisory board made up of representatives from private child care, faith based child care, family child care homes, Head Start, technical college and university lab schools, the Georgia Child Care Association, and the state legislature.

The Lead Agency also administers Georgia's Pre-K Program, which operates through public/private partnerships at the local and community level. Georgia's Pre-K Program is offered to all four-year-old children regardless of family income through funding from the state lottery. A variety of providers offer Georgia's Pre-K Program, among them private non-profit and for-profit child care learning centers, public and private 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 child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies. Partnerships are expanded through the work of the CCR&Rs with business and education leaders in their communities to provide technical assistance to child care providers of all types to increase the quality of care offered in the community.

Finally, there is a formal link between the state agencies that serve children and families and many of their partners. This is manifested in two groups: the Alliance of Education Agency Heads (AEAH) and the Georgia Children's Cabinet (Cabinet). AEAH unites the heads of all education departments in the state. The Lead Agency is an equal member of the AEAH ensuring that early learning is on par with the K-12 system, the technical college system, and the university system. DECAL is also a member of the Georgia Children's Cabinet. The Cabinet is composed of the heads of all state agencies that serve the needs of Georgia's children from birth to age 18 and of select community, philanthropic, education, and business stakeholders.

1.7 Coordination with Local or Regional Child Care Resource and Referral Systems

States and Territories may use funds to establish or support a system of local or regional child care resource and referral organizations (CCR&R) that is coordinated, to the extent determined by the State/Territory, by a statewide public or private non-profit, community-based or regionally based, lead child care resource and referral organization (also see section 7.4). If they do, the law identifies specific requirements for that entity or system receiving CCDF funds. (658E(c)(3)(B)(iii)) These include:

- Provide families with information on a full range of child care options (including faith-based, community-based child care centers and family child care homes, nontraditional hours and emergency child care centers) in their local area or region

- To the extent practicable, work directly with families who receive child care assistance to offer the families support and assistance in making an informed decision about child care options in an effort to ensure families are enrolling their children in the most appropriate child care setting to suit their needs and that is of high quality as determined by the State/Territory
- Collect data and provide information on the coordination of services and supports, including services provided through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for children with disabilities
- Collect data and provide information on the supply of and demand for child care services in local areas or regions of the State/Territory and submit such information to the State/Territory
- Work to establish partnerships with public agencies and private entities, including faith-based and community-based child care centers and family child care homes providers, to increase the supply and quality of child care services in the State/Territory
- As appropriate, coordinate their activities with the activities of the Lead Agency and/or local agencies that administer CCDF.

Nothing in statute prohibits States from using CCR&R agencies to conduct or provide additional services beyond those required by statute above.

1.7.1 Does the State/Territory fund a system of local or regional CCR&R organizations?

Yes. The State/Territory funds a CCR&R system. See also related follow-up questions in Section 7.1 and 7.4. If yes,

Describe the State/Territory's written agreement or contract with the CCR&R, what services are provided through the CCR&R, and any other activities for which the State partners with the CCR&Rs. _____

Georgia enters into written grant agreements with six regional CCR&R entities to perform technical assistance and quality improvement activities with child care providers across the state. DECAL also contracts with one statewide CCR&R entity to operate a child care referral system for consumers, parents, and stakeholders. The statewide child care referral system, operated as 1-877-ALL-GAKIDS serves as a resource for parents by assisting them with finding quality child care. In addition to supporting an online child care search platform, the statewide referral system also operates a toll free number where parents can speak to a child care search specialist. They also attend and host events to engage families in person.

The six regional CCR&R entities support child care providers through training, technical assistance, and other services. Technical assistance in achieving an initial rating in the state's QRIS, Quality Rated, and in improving rating levels is provided free of charge to child care learning centers, family day care homes, and school-age care programs. This service includes site visits to assess the program's readiness to

participate; assistance to help each program develop an improvement plan; on-site technical assistance; and coaching to help program staff develop skills to achieve and sustain program improvement goals.

- No. The State/Territory does not fund a CCR&R system and has no plans to establish. Use section 7.4 to describe plans, if any, to establish a CCR&R system.

1.8 Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that States and Territories must include a Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan for coordination of activities with the State/Territory human services agency, emergency management agency, child care licensing agency, State/Territory local resource and referral agencies, and the State Advisory Council (SAC) or other state-designated cross-agency body if there is no SAC. (658E(c)(2)(U)) The Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan must include:

- Guidelines for continuing CCDF assistance and child care services after a disaster, which may include provision of temporary child care, and temporary operating standards for child care after a disaster.
- Requirements that child care providers receiving CCDF have in place procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, lock-down, communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.
- Requirements that child care providers receiving CCDF have in place procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills.

1.8.1 Describe the status of State/Territory's Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan.

- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. If applicable, describe additional ways the State/Territory addresses the needs of children receiving CCDF before, during and after a disaster or emergency, not already incorporated into the Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan. If available, please provide a link to the disaster plan _____
- Not implemented. The State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses here will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016

- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)

Partially Implemented

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable.
- **Fully Implemented:** Current child care licensing rules require child care providers to routinely practice emergency drills and have available current written emergency preparedness plans. The Board of the Lead Agency granted permission to amend the rules accordingly, and the Lead Agency has begun the process of amending rules to include all categories as required by the legislation.
- **Not Implemented:** Specific rules will be written to address shelter in place, lockdown, reunification plans, and provisions for children with disabilities and infant and toddlers. The Lead Agency does not have formalized guidelines for continuation of child care services and delivery before, during, and after a disaster or emergency.
- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented

Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.):

1. Certain child care licensing rules will be amended to include all required disaster categories noted in the law.
 2. Additional policies will be created to include any exempt programs that are receiving CCDF funds.
 3. The Lead Agency will work with applicable agencies to develop a plan to ensure continuity of child care following a disaster.
- Projected start date for each activity
11/12/2015-For all activities
 - Projected end date for each activity
9/15/2016-For all activities
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity
Lead Agency
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity
None-All coordination will be done by the Lead Agency.

2 Promote Family Engagement through Outreach and Consumer Education

Parents are their children’s most important teacher and advocate. State and Territory child care systems interact with parents in multiple ways, therefore presenting many opportunities to engage and inform families. Child care providers can serve as convenient and trusted sources of information for parents and family members on child development and community supports and services. State/Territory and local child care assistance systems should be designed to promote seamless linkages to useful information and other child- and family-services, such as during subsidy intake and redetermination processes and when parents utilize child care resource and referral or QRIS agencies. Outreach and consumer education is an ongoing process and is expected to cover the entire age span covered by CCDF from birth through age 12.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 includes key purposes that address the role of parents as child care consumers who need information to make informed choices regarding the services that best suit their needs. A new purpose of CCDBG is to “promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings.” States and Territories have the opportunity to consider how information can be provided to parents through the child care assistance system, partner agencies, and child care sites that will support their role as their children’s teacher and advocate. Key new provisions include:

1. The plan must certify that States and Territories will collect and disseminate consumer and provider education information to CCDF parents, providers, and the general public, including information about:
 - a) the availability of child care assistance,
 - b) the quality of child care providers (if available),
 - c) Other programs (specifically Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Head Start and Early Head Start, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)) for which families may also qualify.
 - d) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs and services,
 - e) Research and best practices in child development, and
 - f) State/Territory policies regarding social-emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health of young children, which may include positive behavioral intervention and support models, and policies on the expulsion of preschool-aged children (children from birth to five for purposes of this requirement) from early childhood programs receiving CCDF.
2. Information related to the health and safety of children in child care settings. The plan must certify that the State/Territory will make public certain information about the results of health and safety monitoring (described in section 5) using a website that is consumer-friendly and in an easily accessible format, including:
 - a) Provider-specific information: 1) results of monitoring and inspection reports, including those due to major substantiated complaints; 2) last date of inspection; and 3) information on corrective actions taken (if applicable).

- b) Information about: 1) the annual number of deaths; 2) the annual number of serious injuries; and 3) annual number of incidences of substantiated child abuse in child care settings.
- c) State/Territory processes for: 1) licensing child care providers; 2) conducting background checks and the offenses that would keep a provider from being allowed to care for children; and 3) conducting monitoring and inspections of child care providers.

2.1 Information about Child Care Financial Assistance Program Availability and Application Process

Lead Agencies must inform parents of eligible children and the general public of the process by which they can apply for and potentially receive child care assistance services. (658E(c)(2)(E)(i)(1))

2.1.1 Describe how the State/Territory informs families of availability of services.

- a) How does the State/Territory identify populations and areas of potentially eligible families (e.g., using available federal, State/Territory and local needs assessments to identify potentially eligible families?) _____

In 2014, a methodology was designed to identify populations that would be highly viable to meet criteria considered to indicate high needs communities. Related factors were: education, poverty, capacity, quality, and family characteristics. In addition to these key factors, primary data points included: percentages of students who did not meet the standard for the state’s 3rd grade reading Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT); percentages of licensed child care capacity filled by children receiving CCDF subsidies; and overall poverty rates and percentages of births to mothers with less than a 12th grade education. Secondary indicators included: free and reduced meal eligibility rates; percentages of children with a home language other than English; and premature birth rates. This methodology was used to pilot Early Education Empowerment Zones, creating communities where business leaders, early education and health care professionals, local government and civic organizations, faith-based programs, and other partners could collaborate and develop programs that provide family supports and intervention practices. The goal of these efforts would be to improve school readiness and reduce the achievement gaps in children, while simultaneously strengthening parental engagement and community outcomes. Data from the established methodology and on-going pilot will continue to inform leadership on the identification of high needs and potentially eligible families.

In addition, the Lead Agency continually uses data from internal programs such as the Georgia lottery-funded Pre-K program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, child care licensing, and the child care subsidy program and initiatives such as family and community focus groups to determine need and access levels for potentially eligible families.

These efforts will continue with the 2016-2018 plan.

- b) What partners help with outreach? For example, child care resource and referral agencies, home visitors, pediatricians, faith-based services, State/Territory or local agencies and

organizations or other familiar and safe access points serving vulnerable or low-income populations. _____

The Lead Agency works with multiple partners to provide outreach to families who may be potentially eligible for subsidies. The Lead Agency works with home visiting, faith-based organizations, local health departments, and other stakeholders to identify families who may need support services and be eligible for subsidy. Child care resource and referral agencies also assist in providing statewide outreach to families in need of child care services.

- c) What outreach strategies does the Lead Agency use (e.g., media campaigns, State/Territory website, or other electronic outreach)? _____

The Lead Agency has a website that includes information on licensed child care learning centers and family child care learning homes. The website includes inspection reports, program capacity, and whether the program accepts subsidies. The website also includes information on other DECAL programs including Quality Rated, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system, the lottery funded Georgia's Pre-K Program, the Child and Adult Food Care Program, and the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) subsidy program. The Lead Agency has launched a provider self-service website that allows child care programs to update basic demographic information, pay license and enforcement fees, and submit and track criminal records check applications. A parent portal is being developed that will provide resources and information for early education consumers (2.3).

2.1.2 How can parents apply for services? Check all that apply.

- Electronically via online application, mobile app or email. Provide link

Families can submit their application, upload eligibility verification, complete case change,s and complete annual renewals online at www.compass.ga.gov.

- In-person interview or orientation. Describe agencies where these may occur _____

Local county Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) offices house staff that work with families to complete in-person applications and interviews.

- Phone

- Mail

Families can receive and submit paper applications via mail through their local county Division of Family and Children Services office.

- At the child care site

- At a child care resource and referral agency

- Through kiosks or online portals at related State/Territory/local agency or organization serving low-income populations. Describe _____

The Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) local offices maintain kiosks in their lobbies that allow families to apply for child care subsidies, SNAP, and Medicaid.

- Through a coordinated application process (e.g., application is linked to other benefits program to allow parents to apply for several programs at one time). Describe _____

The current application portal (www.compass.ga.gov) allows families to apply for Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicaid through the submission of one application process.

- Other strategies. Describe _____

2.2 Consumer and Provider Education Information

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a purpose of the child care program “to promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings.” (658A(b)(3)) The consumer education requirements address multiple topics that parents and family members need in order to make informed choices and act as their most important teacher and advocate. Lead agencies must certify that they will collect and disseminate the following information through resource and referral agencies or other means. (658E(c)(2)(E))

2.2.1 The State/Territory certifies that it collects and disseminates the following information to parents, providers and the general public:

- Information about the availability of the full diversity of child care services that will promote informed child care choices,
- Availability of child care assistance,
- Quality of child care providers (if available),
- Other programs (specifically Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Head Start and Early Head Start, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Medicaid and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)) for which families may also qualify,
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs and services,
- Research and best practices in child development, including all domains of early childhood development, including social and emotional development, cognitive, and physical health and development (particularly healthy eating and physical activity), and meaningful parent and family engagement,
- State/Territory policies regarding the social-emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health of young children, which may include positive behavioral intervention and support models, and policies on expulsion of preschool-aged children (children from birth to five for purposes of this requirement)) in early childhood programs receiving CCDF.

- Yes. The State/Territory certifies as of March 1, 2016 that it collects and disseminates the above information to parents, providers and the general public. Describe using 2.2.2 through 2.2.7 below.
- No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
 - Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) _____
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

2.2.2 Describe how the State/Territory makes information available about the full diversity of child care services that will promote informed child care choices, including consumer-friendly strategies such as materials that are culturally responsive and in multiple languages as needed that reflect the literacy levels of consumers, and are easy to access, including accessible to persons with disabilities.

- a) Describe how the State/Territory makes information about the full diversity of child care services available to 1) parents of eligible children, 2) providers and 3) the general public

Through the Lead Agency’s website and community partnerships, the Lead Agency provides information that is easy to find and is in consumer-friendly formats. Community partnerships include other governmental entities, providers, workforce development councils, and other community based entities. For example, an intentional relationship was built with a Hispanic cohort of family child care home providers who serve Spanish-speaking families, the local resource and referral agency, and the Lead Agency to address resources and opportunities for a dual language learner population. Information

about the diversity of child care services is readily available to parents and the general public on multiple websites, including the Lead Agency website: www.decal.ga.gov, the website for the child care resource and referral call center: www.allgakids.com, and the website for the Georgia Department of Human Services: www.dhs.ga.gov.

- b) Describe what you provide and how (i.e., methods such as written materials, direct communication, etc.) _____

The Lead Agency contracts with a vendor that houses a child care provider website with links to available resources, online videos, monthly child care provider newsletters, brochures and monthly child care provider orientations. The Lead Agency also uses social media (Facebook, etc.) to post consumer resources.

- c) Describe who you partner with to make information about the full diversity of child care choices available _____

The resource and referral agencies have staff fluent in Spanish and can provide translation services in other languages as needed. The Lead Agency specifically partners with the Department of Human Services (Lead Agency for Georgia's TANF program), public school systems, the Latin American Association, United Way and other workforce development programs, Job Corps of America, and Georgia Public Broadcasting. The Lead Agency has also partnered with a communications firm to create pamphlets, brochures, fact sheets, webcasts, and other publications regarding quality child care options and the availability of resources in English and Spanish.

2.2.3 Describe how the State/Territory makes information about the quality (such as through a quality rating and improvement system, if available, nationally-recognized accreditation, or other means) of child care services available to the public, including consumer-friendly strategies such as messages that are designed to engage intended audiences and are easy to understand

- a) Describe how the State/Territory makes information about child care quality available to 1) parents of eligible children, 2) providers and 3) the general public _____

Information about the importance of selecting high quality child care is made available to parents, providers, and the public through Quality Rated, Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system. Quality Rated assigns a quality rating (one star, two stars, or three stars) to early education and school-age care programs that meet a set of defined program standards. Information about Quality Rated, including provider ratings, can be found on the Lead Agency website: decal.ga.gov. The Lead Agency's provider search engine automatically lists Quality Rated providers first.

Describe what you provide and how (i.e., methods such as written materials, direct communication, etc.) _____

The majority of information to consumers, including parents, the general public, and providers is provided through written materials posted electronically on the DECAL website, sent through e-newsletters, posted on social media, and disseminated through the CCR&R system. The Lead Agency's contract with the state child care referral system also specifies a minimum number of in-person outreach events targeting child care consumers and providers annually. DECAL also maintains an active social media presence to engage parents, the general public, and providers. Nearly 5,000 individuals follow the department on facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/brightfromthestart/>). DECAL utilizes these various channels to share the multitude of projects and opportunities available to improve early learning for educators, children, and their families. The Lead Agency will launch a comprehensive public awareness campaign in the spring of 2016 to raise awareness of Quality Rated, the state's QRIS. The avenues for this campaign will include digital and print media, television, radio, special events, and face-to-face outreach opportunities.

Describe who you partner with to make information about child care quality available _____

In addition to the partnership with the CCR&Rs described above, the Lead Agency has partnered with the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) and the Georgia Family Connection Partnership, two statewide non-profits, in communication efforts. This includes a statewide public awareness campaign that will launch in the spring of 2016.

2.2.4 Describe how the State/Territory shares information with eligible parents about other available human service programs. For example, does the State/Territory share information about these other programs through linkages from the online application, universal applications, through intake process/front line workers, providers, child care resource and referral agencies or other trusted advisors such as home visitors, pediatricians, faith-based services, etc.? At a minimum, include in your description how you provide information to eligible parents, what you provide and by what methods, and which partners you work with to provide information about other available service programs.


a) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) _____

The Lead Agency works with the Department of Human Services (Lead Agency for TANF) to provide information and eligibility requirements to families through information contained in an online application and through client interviews. Resource and referral agency websites also include language regarding TANF assistance. A universal application, making it possible to apply for multiple programs simultaneously, is expected to launch in 2016.

b) Head Start and Early Head Start Programs _____

The Lead Agency houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office for Georgia. Information regarding Head Start and Early Head Start programs is located on the DECAL website, including a link to the Head Start of Georgia website. DECAL also works with the Department of Human Services to provide Head


Start eligibility information to families during the child care eligibility process. Resource and referral agency call center staff and website provide language regarding Head Start availability and eligibility guidelines.

c) Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) 


The Lead Agency works with the Department of Human Services (Lead Agency for LIHEAP) to provide information and eligibility requirements to families for LIHEAP during the interview process. Resource and referral agency websites also include language regarding LIHEAP assistance.

d) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP- formerly known as Food Stamps) 

The Lead Agency works with the Department of Human Services (Lead Agency for SNAP) to provide information and eligibility requirements to families through information contained in an online application and through client interviews. Resource and referral agency websites also include language regarding SNAP assistance.

e) Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) 


The Lead Agency staff includes home visitors, family engagement coordinators, infant/toddler specialists, and partnerships with local pediatricians and child care provider forums to provide training, technical assistance, and resources, including WIC for families. Resource and referral agency websites also include language regarding WIC assistance.

f) Child and Adult Care Food Program(CACFP) 


The Lead Agency is responsible for the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Information regarding CACFP is located on the DECAL website, including locations of participating sponsors. Resource and referral agency call center staff and websites provide language regarding CACFP availability and eligibility guidelines.

g) Medicaid 

The Lead Agency works with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Community Health (Lead Agency for Medicaid) to provide information and eligibility requirements to families through information contained in an online application as well as client interviews. Resource and referral agency website also includes language regarding Medicaid assistance.

h) Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) 


Resource and referral agency websites also include language regarding CHIP assistance.

i) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 

The Lead Agency staff includes inclusion specialists to provide training and resources to families and providers regarding services and supports available under IDEA and assistance with referrals to programs. Subsidy payments are reimbursed at higher rates up to the child care provider cost of care for children who meet the state's definition of a child with a disability. Resource and referral agency websites also include language regarding the process for accessing services and supports available under IDEA.


j) Other State/Federally Funded Child Care Programs (e.g., state pre-kindergarten) 

The Lead Agency is responsible for the state-funded Georgia's Pre-K Program. Information regarding Georgia's Pre-K Program is located on the DECAL website, including locations of participating sites and the application process for families. Resource and referral agency call center staff and websites provide language regarding Georgia Pre-K availability and criteria for enrollment.

k) Other early childhood programs (e.g., Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program) 

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to provide information regarding the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program via the resource and referral websites. Great Start Georgia (supported by Georgia's Department of Human Services) maintains a website that focuses on providing services and information on home visiting services to child care providers and families.

2.2.5 Describe how the State/Territory shares information with providers (where applicable) to link families to these other available human service programs. For example, does the State/Territory provide information to providers through CCR&R outreach, as a condition of their contract or voucher agreement, through community-based hub agencies that partner with subsidy providers, county/local collaboration, through quality rating and improvements systems, etc.?

a) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) 

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to include information on websites and through the call center regarding TANF assistance. TANF policy and eligibility information is also included on the TANF Lead Agency website.

b) Head Start and Early Head Start Programs 

The Lead Agency houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office for Georgia. Information regarding Head Start and Early Head Start Programs is located on the DECAL website, including a link to the Head Start of Georgia website. DECAL also contracts with resource and referral agencies for call center staff and websites to provide language regarding Head Start availability and eligibility guidelines.

c) Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) [REDACTED]

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to deliver language regarding LIHEAP assistance via the resource and referral websites.

d) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP- formerly known as Food Stamps) [REDACTED]

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to provide information regarding SNAP assistance via the resource and referral website.

e) Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) [REDACTED]

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to deliver language regarding WIC assistance via the resource and referral websites.

f) Child and Adult Care Food Program(CACFP) [REDACTED]

The Lead Agency is responsible for the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Information regarding CACFP programs is located on the DECAL website, including locations of participating sponsors. Resource and referral agency call center staff and websites provide language regarding CACFP availability and eligibility guidelines.

g) Medicaid [REDACTED]

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to provide information regarding Medicaid assistance via the resource and referral website.

h) Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) [REDACTED]

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to deliver language regarding CHIP assistance via the resource and referral websites.

i) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) [redacted]

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to provide information regarding IDEA guidelines via the resource and referral website. Information about IDEA is also found on the Lead Agency website.

j) Other State/Federally Funded Child Care Programs (e.g., state pre-kindergarten) [redacted]

The Lead Agency is responsible for the state-funded Georgia's Pre-K Program. Information regarding the Georgia Pre-K Program is located on the DECAL website, including locations of participating sites and guidelines for child care programs. Resource and referral agency call center staff and websites provide language regarding Georgia Lottery Pre-K availability and criteria for enrollment.

k) Other early childhood programs (e.g., Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program) [redacted]

The Lead Agency contracts with resource and referral agencies to deliver language regarding the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program via the resource and referral websites. Great Start Georgia (supported by Georgia's Department of Human Services) maintains a website that focuses on providing services and information on home visiting services to child care providers and families.

2.2.6 Describe how the State/Territory makes available information to parents of eligible children, the general public, and where applicable, providers (see also section 6) about research and best practices in child development, including all domains of early childhood development, including social and emotional development, cognitive, and physical health and development (particularly healthy eating and physical activity), and meaningful parent and family engagement.

(658E(c)(2)(E)(VI))

a) Describe how the State/Territory makes information about research and best practices in child development available to 1) parents of eligible children, 2) providers and 3) the general public _____

The Lead Agency provides a variety of opportunities for families, providers, and the general public to access information related to research and best practices in early childhood development. Families, providers, and others can access information related to these topics on the child care resource and referral agency websites, the DECAL website (<http://decals.ga.gov/>), and the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards website (<http://www.gelds.decals.ga.gov/>).

The Lead Agency also uses the state’s tiered quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated, to disseminate information about child development research and best practices. Family engagement strategies are embedded in three of the five standards of Quality Rated, and all are aligned with the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s evidence-based Strengthening Families framework. Child care programs receive points at all tier levels of the QRIS for evidence of implementing the family engagement strategies, including: parent education in child development, outreach to family members, training and transition support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, links with community supports, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development via parent advisory committees.

The subsidy program offers a monthly newsletter for providers that contains information about developmentally appropriate practices and other services available for families.

b) Describe what you provide and how (i.e., methods such as written materials, direct communication, etc.) _____

The Lead Agency offers information on many topics in a variety of formats. Web-based resources on the DECAL website include links and resources such as the *Learn the Signs: Act Early* materials as well as information on resources for developmental screening, making referrals to early intervention and special education, child health and wellness, choosing high quality child care, breastfeeding practices, and supporting positive social and emotional development. Written materials are also available online on each partner agency’s website. The state is designing and funding a parent portal website that will host a variety of information for families in easily accessible formats.

As a part of a statewide campaign: *Today’s Play Shapes the Future*, the state developed many resources to help families, providers, and others understand the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) and gain the knowledge to support young children’s learning and development. These resources are available online and in print and include a dedicated website (<http://gelds.decals.ga.gov/>) that offers many resources for families, providers, and the general public. The resources on this website include videos, webinars, and printed materials. *Play to Learn* TV spots were designed specifically for families and were aired on Georgia Public Broadcasting in 2015. The Lead Agency will purchase additional airtime for these spots in 2016. The spots can also be found on the Lead Agency’s GELDS YouTube page: (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLE0wCIKVNbdzU44eqxD4ab1e6mEd-Yao>).

c) Describe who you partner with to make information about research and best practices in child development available _____

The Lead Agency partners with the Georgia Family Connection Partnership, a state funded group, focused on improving the quality of life for children and families. This group supports Family Connection Collaboratives, located in every county in Georgia, to provide family support services and ensure alignment across many programs for families. Using funds from the Early Learning Challenge grant, the state created a statewide campaign focused on the Strengthening Families protective factor: Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development. This campaign includes training for all Family Connection Collaboratives and their partners as well as creation of a toolkit of resources designed to provide easily

accessible and interesting information to families to support them in engaging in their child's learning. The tools are available in English and Spanish and are available for distribution through collaboration with the Family Connection Collaboratives across the state. Additionally, the state partners with agencies such as Department of Public Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Education and nonprofit and community agencies to communicate research and best practices.

2.2.7 Describe how information on the State/Territory's policies regarding the social-emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health of young children, which may include positive behavioral intervention and support models, and policies on expulsion of preschool-aged children (from birth to five for purposes of this requirement), in early childhood programs receiving CCDF is collected and disseminated to 1) parents, 2) providers and 3) the general public. (658E(c)(2)(E)(i)(VII))

a) Describe how the State/Territory makes information regarding social-emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health of young children, which may include positive behavioral intervention support models, available to parents of eligible children, providers and the general public. At minimum, describe **what** you provide (e.g., early childhood mental health consultation services to child care programs) and **how** (i.e., methods such as written materials, direct communication, etc.) for each group:

i. Parents_____

Families/parents receive a variety of information from multiple sources regarding children's social and behavioral needs. Written materials may be disseminated via a child's care provider, as given to them by an Inclusion Specialist, Infant/Toddler Specialist, Georgia's Pre-K consultant, early intervention provider, or public school staff member. Information about social emotional development is also available on the Lead Agency website (www.decal.ga.gov) and GELDS website (www.gelds.decal.ga.gov). The state also provides information to families/parents directly through participation in programs such as Children 1st, Great Start Georgia, Parents as Teachers, Early Head Start or Section 619 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Through the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) system, materials and resources are available to families in need of information regarding social emotional competencies and strategies to support children demonstrating persistent challenging behaviors. The Lead Agency also partners with family support agencies such as Parent to Parent of Georgia, the state's Parent Training and Information Center. Parent to Parent offers a variety of services and supports to families of children with disabilities birth through age 25. Services offered include web-based resources, written materials, training, and in-person support.

ii. Providers_____

The Lead Agency supports early childhood professionals regarding social emotional skills and challenging behavior through a network of Inclusion Specialists. These staff provide training and technical assistance to all licensed child care learning centers, family child care homes, Georgia's Pre-K programs as well as

license-exempt programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start, military child care, and others. A series of trainings, based on the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children (Pyramid Model) developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, is offered by the Inclusion Specialists in communities across the state. Consultation, on-site technical assistance, materials, and resources are provided to directors/teachers in need of assistance regarding expulsion/suspension practices and policies, social emotional competencies, and pro-social classroom practices. Referrals to early intervention and special education services as well as to supplemental mental health services are provided as necessary.

In January 2015, the Lead Agency brought all of the current social emotional support strategies under one umbrella to ensure that the strategies used are evidence-based and aligned with all other early childhood efforts in the state. The strategies employed in this initiative promote and increase the use of the Pyramid Model strategies and framework in early learning settings. The Lead Agency has formed a state team to lead the work. Through this initiative, training and TA on the use of evidence-based prevention strategies as well as support for responding to persistent challenging behavior are offered to a variety of programs including child care learning centers, family child care homes, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Georgia's Pre-K both in LEA-run sites and in private child care.

Five online modules addressing the three tiers of the Pyramid will be available and will yield credit toward licensure requirements. Additionally, all training currently offered by the Lead Agency is being reviewed and intentionally aligned with this model to ensure consistency across trainings to all providers. In addition to training and technical assistance, a cohort of demonstration programs is being supported in full implementation of the Pyramid Model framework. These programs have received intensive training and are being supported through a master cadre of coaches who assist programs with analysis and use of data as well as adherence to the model. An additional cohort of early childhood programs will be trained and supported in 2016. Additionally, through a private grant, a group of Georgia agencies are working on blending the Pyramid Model with the School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) model used in the K-12 setting.

iii. General public _____

The Lead Agency provides information on social emotional development, strategies for preventing persistent challenging behavior, referrals to mental health providers, and other topics in a variety of ways. The Lead Agency website has numerous links to fact sheets, videos, and other materials. The Lead Agency also maintains numerous social media accounts and participates in a number of panels and other events open to the general public.

b) Describe any partners used to make information regarding social-emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health of young children available _____

The Lead Agency partners with local and statewide agencies and non-profits to ensure information is disseminated with the broadest coverage. State and local government partners include the Head Start

State Collaboration Office, Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Department of Public Health, and Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. Additionally, the state partners with private non-profit and advocacy groups such as Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Kids (GEEARS), Voices for Georgia’s Children, and the Georgia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- c) Does the State have a written policy regarding preventing expulsion of:
- Preschool-aged children (from birth to five) in early childhood programs receiving child care assistance?
 - Yes. If yes, describe how the State/Territory makes information about that policy available to parents, providers and the general public (what you provide, how you provide and any partners used) and provide a link _____
 - No.
 - School-age children from programs receiving child care assistance?
 - Yes. If yes, describe how the State/Territory makes information about that policy available to 1) parents, 2) providers and 3) the general public (what you provide, how you provide and any partners used) and provide a link _____
 - No.

Currently, Georgia does not have policies that are specific to the social emotional or behavioral health of young children or policies on expulsion of preschool children across all early education and care settings, with the exception of policies limiting expulsion or suspension of children participating in Georgia’s Pre-K Program. The state will collaborate with partners to identify research and best practices to use in developing a policy addressing prevention of expulsion and suspension.

2.2.8 Coordination with Other Partners to Increase Access to Developmental Screenings

The State/Territory must develop and describe procedures for providing information on and referring families to existing developmental screening resources and services. (658E(c)(2)E(ii)) At a minimum, the State/Territory must establish procedures to provide information to families and child care providers on: (1) Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program carried out under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and developmental screening services available under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.); and (2) a description of how a family or child care provider receiving CCDF may utilize the resources and services to obtain developmental screenings for children receiving CCDF who may be at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays, which may include social, emotional, physical, or linguistic delays. Describe the status of the State/Territory’s procedures for providing information on and referring families to existing developmental screening services.

- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. List the Lead Agency policy citation(s) _____ and:
- a) Describe procedures, including timelines for when infants, toddlers and preschoolers should be screened _____
- b) Describe how CCDF families or child care providers receiving CCDF may utilize the resources and services to obtain developmental screenings for CCDF children at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays _____
- Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)
Not implemented
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented
Unmet Requirements: 1) While developmental screenings are available to families in multiple agencies across the state, no consistent referral information is currently provided to families by child care providers related to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program (EPSDT) under the Medicaid program carried out under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) or developmental screening services available under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.) The Lead Agency will collaborate with partner agencies to develop and implement a plan for training child care providers in understanding the services available through EPSDT and IDEA section 619 and Part C and for assisting child care providers in developing policies and procedures to notify families of the screening services available in the above programs.
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) **1) Identify and contact partners; 2) Develop training tools and materials; 3) Provide training and collateral materials to**

child care providers: 4) Review and modify existing Provider Agreement form used in the subsidized child care program to reflect requirements for training and referral.

- Projected start date for each activity: **1) March 2016; 2) April 2016; 3) June 2016; 4) March 2016.**
- Projected end date for each activity: **1) March 2016; 2) June 2016; 3) September 30, 2016; 4) March 2016.**
- Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity:
Lead Agency
- Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity
Georgia Department of Public Health, Georgia Department of Community Health, Georgia Department of Human Services: Division of Family and Children’s Services, Georgia Department of Education

2.2.9 Describe how the State/Territory meets the requirement to maintain a record of substantiated parental complaints. (658E(c)(2)(C))

a) How does the State/Territory define substantiated parental complaint

Complaints that are reported by parents are substantiated if the allegations are confirmed based on a preponderance of evidence. Violations of child care rules are cited if the allegations are substantiated.

b) How does the State/Territory maintain a record of substantiated parental complaints about providers (e.g., how long are records maintained and in what format) _____

Electronic records are maintained on both substantiated and unsubstantiated complaint investigations indefinitely since 2004. Additionally, paper records are maintained for three years at the Lead Agency office. In addition, substantiated complaints are available to the public on the consumer website for 18 months. Visit information which includes all violations of child care rules cited at each licensed facility are outlined in the Lead Agency’s state file and on the Lead Agency’s website.

c) How does the State/Territory make substantiated parental complaints available to the public on request _____

On the consumer website, violations of child care rules that resulted from substantiated complaints are available for 18 months. Additionally, through the Open Records Act, individuals may request all

investigations and the supporting documentation for a period up to three years. Open record requests can be made by the public by mail, in person, by phone, or by email.

d) Describe how the State/Territory defines and maintains complaints from others about providers _____

The Lead Agency defines and maintains complaints from everyone in the same manner. Reports received from parents and the general public are handled the same. All information outlined in 2.2.9 (a, b, and c) applies to all complaints received.

2.2.10 How will the Lead Agency or partners provide outreach and services to eligible families for whom English is not their first language?

Check the strategies, if any, that your State/Territory has chosen to implement.

- Application in other languages (application document, brochures, provider notices)
- Informational materials in non-English languages
- Training and technical assistance in non-English languages
- Website in non-English languages
- Lead Agency accepts applications at local community-based locations
- Bilingual caseworkers or translators available
- Bilingual outreach workers
- Partnerships with community-based organizations
- Other

In 2013, DECAL created a new Rising Pre-K Summer Transition Program, with bilingual teachers and a strong family engagement component, specifically targeted to three-year-old English language learners. As part of this program, services and resources are offered to families in both English and Spanish.

None

2.2.11 If the Lead Agency checked any option above related to providing information or services in other non-English languages, please list the primary languages offered (top 3) or specify that the State/Territory has the ability to have translation/interpretation in all primary and secondary languages _____

The state contracts with a translation service that is able to provide translation and interpretation in all primary languages via a live phone line. Documents are maintained in both Spanish and English. Also, several local community offices offer bilingual services in-house; the languages available are Burmese, Spanish, Nepali, and Amharic.

2.2.12 Describe how the Lead Agency or partners provide outreach and services to eligible persons with disabilities _____

Lead Agency policy allows for provision of subsidies when the other parent in a two-parent family is disabled. Also, on a case-by-case basis, care can be provided when the eligible person is a single adult with disabilities. Waivers for single adults with disabilities are submitted for approval to the state office.

2.3 Website for Consumer Education

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that States and Territories have a website describing the State/Territory processes for licensing and monitoring child care providers, processes for conducting criminal background checks as required by law (see section 5.3), and offenses that prevent individuals from being child care providers, and aggregate information on the number of deaths, serious injuries and child abuse in child care settings.

The State/Territory also must make public certain information about the results of such monitoring as required by law for both licensed and unlicensed providers receiving CCDF (see section 5.2) on a website in a way that is consumer-friendly and in an easily accessible format. (658E(c)(2)(D)) In order for a website to be a useful tool for parents, it should be easy to navigate, with a minimum number of clicks, and in plain language. States and Territories must post the results of the monitoring and inspection reports on the website no later than November 19, 2017. All other components of the website must be completed no later than September 30, 2016.

2.3.1 Describe the status of State/Territory's consumer education website.

Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016.

Provide the link to the website _____ and describe how the consumer education website meets the requirements to:

- a) Share provider-specific information about health and safety, licensing or regulatory requirements met by the provider (including the last date of inspection, and any history of violations). Describe _____
- b) Include a description of health and safety requirements and licensing or regulatory requirements for child care providers. Describe _____
- c) Include a description of the processes for licensing, background checks, monitoring, and offenses that prevent individuals from being providers. Describe _____
- d) Provide information about the number of deaths, number of serious injuries as defined by the State/Territory and the number of incidences of substantiated child abuse in child care settings. Describe _____
- e) Describe how the website is consumer-friendly, for example, allowing multiple ways to search for providers, defining terms such as exempt care and corrective action plans, presents the results of monitoring inspections in plain language, providing frequently asked questions, is accessible in multiple languages upon request and to persons with

disabilities through multiple formats, differentiating between violations based on risk to children, and easy to locate and navigate. Describe

- Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date. Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016 for all components of the website except posting the results of the monitoring on the website which is November 19, 2017)
September 30, 2016
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, in progress, partially completed, substantially completed, other)
Partially implemented
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - a) **Fully implemented.** Provider-specific information about health and safety, and licensing requirements for licensed programs only is provided through an online search on the DECAL website (<http://dec.al.ga.gov/ProviderSearch/SiteSearch.aspx?childcare=y&newsearch=y>). The search functionality is easily accessed on the DECAL website from the home page Inspection Reports button. Search results include map location, hours of operation, ages served, services offered, capacity, Quality Rating ratings, and other provider information. Inspection reports and enforcement actions are available.
 - b) **Fully Implemented.** A description of health and safety requirements and licensing rules can be found on the DECAL website at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/ChildCareServices/RulesAndRegulations.aspx> .
 - c) **Partially implemented.**
 - Processes for licensing can be found on the DECAL website at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/StartingACenter.aspx>
 - Background check information can be found on the DECAL website at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/ChildCareServices/CriminalRecordsCheck.aspx>
 - Monitoring information can be found on the DECAL website at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/faq.aspx?cat=ChildReplaceWithSpaceCare>
 - Offences that prevent individuals from being providers is currently not on the DECAL website
 - d) **Not implemented.** Aggregate information about the number of deaths, number of serious injuries, and number of incidences of substantiated child abuse in child care settings is currently not on the DECAL website.

e) **Partially implemented.**

- **Fully implemented.** The website allows multiple ways to search for providers such as name, address, county, and zip code.
- **Partially implemented.** Not all terms are defined on the DECAL website.
- **Fully implemented.** FAQ's can be found on the DECAL website at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/faq.aspx?cat=ChildReplaceWithSpaceCare>
- **Fully implemented.** Differentiating between violations based on risk to children can be found on the DECAL website at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/ChildCareServices/RulesAndRegulations.aspx> and <http://dec.al.ga.gov/ChildCareServices/CoreRulesInformation.aspx>
- Unmet Requirement(s) – Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.)

All partially implemented items listed above will be completed with the launch of a new parent portal that is one of the Early Learning Challenge deliverables. The items that will be included that are currently not implemented are: 1) Information about offences that prevent individuals from being providers; 2) Information about the number of deaths, serious injury, and incidences of substantiated child abuse; 3) Increase in the number of defined terms. The new portal will meet all the requirements listed above.

- Projected start date for each activity
10/2015-for all activities
- Projected end date for each activity
9/2016-for all activities
- Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity
Lead Agency
- Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity
Quality Care for Children.

3 Provide Stable Child Care Financial Assistance to Families

The expanded purposes of CCDBG highlight the opportunities States and Territories have to “deliver high-quality, coordinated early childhood care and education services to maximize parents’ options and support parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance”; and “to improve child care and development of participating children.” (658A(b)) Young children learn in the context of their relationships with adults, including their child care teacher or provider. The unintentional consequence of child care assistance that is linked to adult work and school obligation is that child care arrangements – and the opportunity for children to form trusting relationships with teachers – are often interrupted and unstable. Child care financial assistance policies that make it easier to get and keep assistance support continuity of care and relationships between the child and child care provider and enable

parents to stay employed or complete training/education. Child care support that extends until families are able to pay the full cost of care themselves promotes longer lasting economic stability for families. CCDF funds may support families until they reach 85% of State Median Income (SMI).

The CCDBG Act of 2014 included requirements to establish minimum 12-month eligibility and redetermination periods, requiring that States and Territories have a process to account for irregular fluctuations in earnings, a policy ensuring that families' work schedules are not disrupted by program requirements, policies to provide for job search of not less than three (3) months, and to describe policies for graduated phase-out of assistance. The definition of an eligible child includes that a family's assets may not exceed \$1,000,000 (as certified by a member of such family). Procedures for enrollment of homeless children and children in foster care if served pending completion of documentation are also now required. There is nothing in statute to prohibit States from establishing policies that extend eligibility beyond 12 months or establish other similar policies to align program requirements that allow children enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, state or local pre-kindergarten and other collaborative programs to finish the program year and to promote continuity for families receiving services through multiple benefits programs.

3.1 Eligible Children and Families

At the point in time when eligibility is determined, children must (1) be under the age of 13, (2) reside with a family whose income does not exceed 85 percent of the State's median income for a family of the same size, and whose family assets do not exceed \$1,000,000 (as certified by a member of such family); and who (3)(a) resides with a parent or parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program; or (b) is receiving, or needs to receive, protective services and resides with a parent or parents not described in (3a.). (658P(4))

3.1.1 Eligibility Criteria Based upon Child's Age

- a) The CCDF program serves children from **0** (weeks/months/years) to **13** years (through age 12).

Children are served in the subsidy program (CAPS) from newborn through the year of their 12th birthday. A child who turns 13 years of age may maintain their enrollment through the end of the family's 12-month eligibility period.

- b) Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children age 13 and above but below age 19 years who are physically and/or mentally incapable of self-care?
(658E(c)(3)(B)), 658P(3))

Yes,

The upper age is 18 (may not equal or exceed age 19).

Provide the Lead Agency definition of physical or mental incapacity:

The Lead Agency defines special needs as care, supervision, and protection of a child under the age of 18 who has a documented physical or mental condition that prevents, impairs, interferes with, or impedes life activities by placing limitations on an individual's ability to fully engage in skills, such as self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, breathing, mobility, seeing, and self-direction.

No.

c) Does the Lead Agency allow CCDF-funded child care for children age 13 and above but below age 19 years who are under court supervision? (658P(3), 658E(c)(3)(B))

Yes, and the upper age is **18 (may not equal or exceed age 19)**

No.

3.1.2 How does the Lead Agency define the following eligibility terms?

a) residing with:

The Lead Agency defines *residing with* as the household where the family unit lives together at the point when child care is needed. The parental authority needing child care and the child(ren) for whom care is needed must reside in the same house. The parental authority is defined as having direct day to day responsibility to the child by blood, marriage, adoption, legal guardianship, or standing in loco parentis.

b) in loco parentis:

The Lead Agency defines *in loco parentis* as acting in the role of parent or guardian.

3.1.3 Eligibility Criteria Based on Reason for Care

a) How does the Lead Agency define "working, attending job training and education" for the purposes of eligibility at the point of determination? Provide a brief description below, including allowable activities and if a minimum number of hours is required by State/Territory (not a federal requirement).

- working

Includes regular and predictable work performed by the parent, guardian, and/or responsible person for at least minimum wage for a minimum average of at least 24 hours per week.

- job training:

Includes training undertaken through vocational training programs that offer a technical degree, certificate, or license upon completion. The Lead Agency is exploring options to increase partnerships

with local Workforce Investment Boards who provide child care services/subsidies to families who attend vocational/technical training programs in order to increase their enrollment and thereby allow more families to receive child care support for educational advancement.

- attending education

For parents age 20 or younger, education includes attending middle school, high school, or full time GED programs. Parents age 21 and older may receive CAPS services if they are enrolled in GED classes in combination with another approved activity for a minimum average of 24 hours per week. GED as an activity requirement is limited to 12 months.

- b) Does the Lead Agency allow parents to qualify for CCDF assistance on the basis of education and training participation alone (without additional minimum work requirements)?

Yes.

Training must be full time as defined by the institution or, if part time, when combined with another activity, equals to a minimum average of at least 24 hours per week. Training is limited to 12 months if considered as the primary activity.

No. If no, describe additional requirements _____

- c) Does the Lead Agency provide child care to children in protective services?
 Yes. If yes, how does the Lead Agency define “protective services” for the purposes of eligibility? Provide a brief description below.

1) Definition of protective services

The Lead Agency defines the need to support children in protective services when regular, on-going child care is needed for children in an open protective services case, safety case plan, court order, or Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) custody case.

- 2) Does the Lead Agency waive the co-payment and income eligibility requirements for cases in which children receive, or need to receive, protective services on a case-by-case basis? (658E(c)(5))

Yes.

Co-payments and income requirements are waived for children in DFCS custody. Co-payments, income limits, and minimum activity hour requirements may be waived on a case-by-case basis as requested for protective services families.

No.

Note – If the Lead Agency elects to provide CCDF-funded child care to children in foster care whose foster care parents are not working, or who are not in education/training activities for purposes of CCDF these children are considered to be in protective services and should be included in the protective services definition above.

No

3.1.4 Eligibility Criteria Based on Family Income

a) How does the Lead Agency define “income” for the purposes of eligibility at the point of determination?

- Definition of income

Income is defined as regular, on-going payments from gross wages/salary and other countable income including employment compensation, workers compensation, alimony, child support, veteran’s benefits, military allotments, capital gains, boarder/roomer income, dividends, interest, survivor’s benefits, retirement benefits/pension, trust fund disbursements, and lottery payments.

b) Provide the CCDF income eligibility limits in the table below. **Complete** columns (a) and (b) based upon maximum eligibility initial entry into the CCDF program. Complete columns (c) and (d) **ONLY IF** the Lead Agency is using income eligibility limits lower than 85% of the current SMI. Complete columns (e) and (f) with the maximum “exit” eligibility level if applicable and below the federal limit of 85% of current SMI. Note – If the income eligibility limits are not statewide, check here . Describe how many jurisdictions set their own income eligibility limits _____. Fill in the chart based on the most populous area of the state.

Family Size	(a) 100% of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month)	(b) 85% of State Median Income (SMI) (\$/month) [Multiply (a) by 0.85]	(c) (IF APPLICABLE) \$/month Maximum “Entry” Income Level if lower than 85% Current SMI	(d) (IF APPLICABLE) % of SMI [Divide (c) by (a), multiply by 100] Income Level if lower than 85% Current SMI	(e) (IF APPLICABLE) \$/month Maximum “Exit” Income Level if lower than 85% Current SMI	(f) (IF APPLICABLE) % of SMI [Divide (e) by (a), multiply by 100] Income Level if lower than 85% Current SMI
1	\$2,966	\$2,521	\$1,928	65%	\$2,225	75%
2	\$3,879	\$3,297	\$2,521	65%	\$2,909	75%
3	\$4,791	\$4,073	\$3,114	65%	\$3,594	75%
4	\$5,704	\$4,848	\$3,708	65%	\$4,278	75%
5	\$6,617	\$5,624	\$4,301	65%	\$4,962	75%

Reminder - Income limits must be provided in terms of current State Median Income (SMI) (or Territory Median Income) even if federal poverty level is used in implementing the program. Federal [poverty guidelines](http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.cfm) are available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.cfm>.

- a) SMI Source and year: FFY 2016; <https://federalregister.gov/a/2015-14187>.
- b) These eligibility limits in column (c) became or will become effective on September 30, 2016
- c) Provide the link to the income eligibility limits: **Currently there is no link to Georgia's income eligibility limits. Internal policy revisions are underway to reflect the changes based on CCDF Reauthorization and can be provided upon completion of approval and implementation of the policy.**

3.1.5 Graduated Phase-Out of Assistance

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a provision that requires States and Territories to provide for a graduated phase-out of assistance for families whose income has increased at the time of re-determination, but remains below the federal threshold of 85% of State median income. Providing a graduated phase-out supports long-term family economic stability by allowing for wage growth and a tapered transition out of the child care subsidy program. (658E (c)(2)(N)(iv)) This might be achieved through policies such as establishing a second income eligibility threshold at redetermination (e.g., establishing a different eligibility threshold for families first applying for assistance and those already receiving assistance, sometimes called and “exit threshold”) or by granting a sustained period of continued assistance to the family before termination.

Describe the status of the State/Territory's policy regarding graduated phase-out of assistance.

- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. List the Lead Agency's policy citation(s) and describe the policies and procedures for graduated phase-out _____
- Not implemented. The State must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste tables here. Your responses here will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
 - Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially

implemented, substantially implemented, other) **Substantially implemented**

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable: **Family income limit established**
- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented: **Graduated phase out**
 - Tasks/Activities – What steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) **Policy revisions must be formalized for phase out process of families who exceed the state maximum income limit; training of case managers for policy revisions; implementation/communication plan developed and shared with families and stakeholders.**
 - Projected start date for each activity: **March 1, 2016**
 - Projected end date for each activity: **September 30, 2016**
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **Department of Human Services**

3.1.6 Fluctuation in Earnings

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that the Plan shall demonstrate how the State/Territory's (or designated local entity) processes for initial determination and redetermination take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings. (658E(c)(2)(N)(i)(II))

Note – this change requires that States and Territories have policies to account for the fact that some parents with seasonal or other types of work schedules may have irregular earnings over the course of a year, including changes that temporarily exceed 85% of SMI. States and Territories should have procedures to guide how eligibility and copayments are set in a manner to take such circumstances into account. For example, averaging family income over a period of time to broaden the scope of income verification to be more reflective of annual income rather than tied to a limited time frame that may have seasonal irregularities.

Describe the status of the State/Territory's policy related to the fluctuation in earnings requirement.

- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. List the Lead Agency's policy citation(s) and describe the circumstances that cover irregular fluctuations of earnings pursuant to this requirement _____

Periods that include overtime and/or sick leave that affect the amount of earned income are considered non-representative of the client's normal earnings and may be disregarded. The remaining pay periods that are representative are used to calculate the client's monthly income. If there are discrepancies with the information provided by the client, the case manager may contact the employer for clarification and/or verification. If the employer's statement is unavailable or the client's hours vary too much for the employer to accurately project, the case manager may calculate the average of all the client's pay stubs for the past three months to account for irregular fluctuations in earnings. The three month average would be used for the client's earnings as well as the average number of hours worked.

- Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) _____
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

3.1.7 Describe how the Lead Agency documents, verifies and maintains applicant information. Check the information that the Lead Agency documents and include in the description what information is required and how often. There are no federal requirements for specific documentation or verification procedures.

Applicant identity. Describe _____

The applicant's identity must be verified. The following documents can be used to verify identity and must be maintained in the case record:

- Government-issued driver's license /I.D. card
- Identification card for health benefits, other public assistance, or social services program
- Voter registration card
- Wage stubs
- School or work issued identification card

Applicant's relationship to the child. Describe

The client statement serves as verification for relationship

Child's information for determining eligibility (e.g., identity, age, etc.). Describe

The following documents can be used to verify the child's age and must be maintained in the case record:

- Birth certificate
- Court records
- U. S. passport
- State issued identification
- Hospital certificate of live birth
- Immigration card
- Social Security Administration records
- Immigration court order
- Homeland Security documents

The following documents can be used to verify the child's citizenship or legal status and must be maintained in the case record:

- Birth, citizenship, or naturalization certificate
- U.S. passport
- Consoler's report of birth
- Court records; vital records, school records, or census records
- Religious records of birth
- Adoption finalization papers
- Verification of natural parent's citizenship

The following documents can be used to verify the child's immunization and must be documented or maintained in the case record:

- Certificate of immunization from health department or physician
- Public school or formal child care setting enrollment and attendance
- Written statement from physician prohibiting immunization for medical reasons
- Written and notarized statement from parent objecting to immunization for religious reasons

Work. Describe

The following can be used to verify state-approved activities related to employment and must be maintained in the case record:

- Pay stubs
- Letter/statement from employer(s)

Job training or Educational program. Describe **See above**

The following can be used to verify state-approved activities related to training or education programs and must be maintained in the case record:

- **Letter/statement from training or education program**
- **Current class schedule**

Family income. Describe

The following can be used to verify gross family income and must be maintained in the case record:

- Paystubs or receipts from employment
- W-2 forms and tax returns
- Employer wage records
- Letter/statement from employer
- Documentation from other public assistance eligibility programs
- Award letters
- Social Security records
- Worker's compensation
- Union and unemployment insurance claim records
- Court documents

Household composition. Describe:

Client statement serves as verification for relationship

Applicant residence. Describe:

The following can be used to verify applicant residency and must be maintained in the case record:

- Current Georgia issued driver's license or identification card
- Voter registration card
- Current utility bill (light, gas, water)
- Wage stubs
- Work or school issued identification card

- Identification card issued for health benefits or other public assistance or social service program

Other. Describe:

The following can be used to verify priority group status and must be maintained in the case record:

- Verification/documentation of the open Child Protective Services (CPS) case plan, court order, and social service referral must be filed in the CAPS case record for cases where child care is required for child protection.
- Signed documentation/verification such as SSI benefit; statement from physician, licensed psychiatrist, or certified psychologist
- TANF work plan for TANF applicants and recipients
- Individual family service or individual education program plan from school or referring agency may be required for children with special needs.

Reminder – Lead Agencies are reminded that, for purposes of implementing the citizenship verification requirements mandated by title IV of Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, only the citizenship and immigration status of the child, who is the primary beneficiary of the child care benefit, is relevant for eligibility purposes (ACYF-PI-CC-98-08). States may not deny child care benefits to an eligible child because the parent(s), legal guardians, persons standing in loco parentis, or other household members have not provided information regarding their immigration status. In addition, verification of child citizen status is not required when the child is served in a program meeting Early Head Start/Head Start standards, such as in Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships, or public educational standards which may include pre-k settings (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/pi-2008-01>).

3.1.8 Which strategies, if any, will the Lead Agency use to assure the timeliness of eligibility determinations upon receipt of applications?

Time limit for making eligibility determinations. Describe length of time:

The disposition of all applications (approved or denied) within 30 calendar days of receipt is required.

Track and monitor the eligibility determination process:

Weekly automated reports on the status of applications are provided to the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) staff. Any applications that exceed the 30-day standard are flagged and investigated.

Other. Describe _____

None

3.1.9 Informing parents who receive TANF benefits about the exception to the individual penalties associated with the TANF work requirement

Per CCDF regulations, Lead Agencies are required to inform parents who receive TANF benefits about the exception to the individual penalties associated with the work requirement for any single custodial parent who has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care for a child under 6 years of age (98.16(9) and 98.33(b)). This requirement did not change under the reauthorization, however Lead Agencies may wish to re-examine those definitions in light of new purposes articulated in Reauthorization and to promote alignment across programs. Lead Agencies must coordinate with TANF programs to ensure, pursuant that TANF families with young children will be informed of their right not to be sanctioned if they meet the criteria set forth by the State/Territory TANF agency in accordance with section 407(e)(2) of the Social Security Act.

In fulfilling this requirement, the following criteria or definitions are applied by the TANF agency to determine whether the parent has a demonstrated inability to obtain needed child care.

NOTE: The TANF agency, not the CCDF Lead Agency, is responsible for establishing the following criteria or definitions. These criteria or definitions are offered in this Plan as a matter of public record.

a) Identify the TANF agency that established these criteria or definitions:

State/Territory TANF Agency: **Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)**

b) Provide the following definitions established by the TANF agency.

- "appropriate child care"

A TANF participant has chosen a child care provider who is licensed, exempt, or meets the CAPS criteria to become an informal child care giver.

- "reasonable distance"

The distance that will enable the TANF participant to arrive at their work activity timely without incurring any additional expenses.

- "unsuitability of informal child care"

An informal child care giver who failed to meet the health and safety requirements, background check, or has not properly enrolled with DFCS.

- "affordable child care arrangements"

Securing a child care choice where fees can be managed on the TANF participant's budget and does not cause a financial hardship.

c) How are parents who receive TANF benefits informed about the exception to individual penalties associated with the TANF work requirements?

- In writing

- Verbally
- Other. Describe _____
- List the citation to this TANF policy

Section 1820, can be found at <http://odis.dhs.ga.gov> in the TANF policy manual marked MAN3390, under the Division of Family and Children Services.

3.1.10 The Lead Agency certifies that it will require a family member to certify that the family assets do not exceed \$1,000,000. A check-off on the application is sufficient.

- Yes. The Lead Agency certifies that it will require families to certify that the family assets do not exceed \$1,000,000 no later than September 30, 2016.

The Lead Agency will add the family certification of assets to the child care online and paper application. Incorporation of the certification will be completed before September 30, 2016.

3.2 Increasing Access for Vulnerable Children and Families

At a minimum, CCDF requires Lead Agencies to give priority for child care assistance to children with special needs, or in families with very low incomes. This did not change under reauthorization. Prioritization of CCDF assistance services is not limited to eligibility determination (i.e., establishment of a waiting list or ranking of eligible families in priority order to be served). Lead Agencies may fulfill priority requirements in other ways such as higher payment rates for providers caring for children with special needs or waiving co-payments for families with very low incomes (at or below the federal poverty level). (658E(c)(3)(B))

3.2.1 Describe how the Lead Agency will prioritize or target child care services for the following children and families (658E(c)(3)(B)), including definitions, any time limits, grace periods or priority rules in the description:

- a) Provide definition of “Children with special needs” and describe how services are prioritized:

Children with special needs are defined as having a documented physical or mental condition that prevents, impairs, interferes with, or impedes life activities by placing limitations on an individual’s ability to fully engage in skills such as: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, breathing, mobility, seeing, and self-direction.

Children with special needs are considered a CAPS priority group and can be approved for child care subsidies even when funding is limited. Children with special needs can receive child care subsidies through the end of the certification period after their 18th birthday. Subsidy payments are reimbursed at higher rates, up to the child care provider cost of care for children who are eligible under this category of priority.

- b) Provide definition of “Families with very low incomes” and describe how services are prioritized:

The Lead Agency considers families with low income as not meeting a designated priority group and falling below the state maximum income level. Families who meet priority status include:

Families who have applied for, are currently receiving, or are transitioning from TANF; children in DFCS custody or with Child Protective Service (CPS) involvement; cases with court-ordered supervision; minor parents or adults age 20 and under; grandparents raising grandchildren, children with documented special needs; homeless populations; children enrolled in the Georgia lottery-funded Pre-K program; victims of domestic violence; and victims of federally or state declared natural disasters.

While there is no current prioritization for families with very low incomes, families whose total gross income falls at or below 100% of the federal poverty level are not assigned a family co-pay.

- c) Describe how services for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), those attempting to transition off TANF through work activities, and those at risk of becoming dependent on TANF are prioritized (Section 418(b)(2) of the Social Security Act)

The Lead Agency includes the following families as priorities and provides child care subsidies to these families even when funding is limited:

- TANF applicants who are unemployed or underemployed and need child care to conduct job search activities
- TANF recipients who need child care to participate in a state-approved or TANF-approved activity
- TANF applicants or recipients who became employed or whose income increased due to a combination of employment and other income resources which made them ineligible for TANF and are in need of child care to support their transition to employment. These families may continue to receive CAPS subsidies for 12 months at the employment/income level that made them ineligible for TANF, after which they must meet CAPS eligibility guidelines.
- Child Protective services clients who are TANF applicants or recipients

3.2.2 Improving Access for Homeless Children and Families.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 places greater emphasis on serving homeless children and families. Stable access to high-quality child care provides tremendous benefits to all children, especially our most vulnerable children. Children and families who experience homelessness face many challenges. Improving access to child care can buffer children and families from the challenges and risks associated with homelessness by supporting children’s learning and development in

safe, stable and nurturing environments. Under the new law, States and Territories are required to use CCDF funds to 1) allow homeless children to receive CCDF assistance after an initial eligibility determination but before providing required documentation (including documentation related to immunizations); 2) providing training and technical assistance to child care providers on identifying and serving homeless children and families (addressed in Section 6); and 3) conduct specific outreach to homeless families. (658E(c)(3))

States and Territories also must establish a grace period that allows homeless children and children in foster care (if served by the Lead Agency) to receive CCDF assistance while their families are taking the necessary actions to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements as described in Section 5. This flexibility will make it significantly easier for these vulnerable families to access child care services. This language is consistent with current requirements established through CCDF regulations in 1998, which required a grace period in which children can receive services while families take the necessary actions to comply with the immunization requirements. (658E(c)(2)(I)(i)(I)) ACF recommends States and Territories consult the definition of homeless in the McKinney-Vento Act (section 725 of subtitle VII-B) as you implement the requirements of this section as that definition is consistent with the required CCDF administrative data reporting requirements.

Describe the status of the State/Territory's procedures to enroll and provide outreach to homeless families and establish a grace period for children in foster care, if served, for meeting immunization requirements

- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. Describe the following:
- a. Procedures to increase access to CCDF subsidies for homeless children and families, including the grace period to comply with immunization and health and safety requirements
 - b. Procedures to conduct outreach to homeless families to improve access to child care services
 - c. Procedures to provide a grace period to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements to expedite enrollment for children who are in foster care if served by the Lead Agency to improve access to child care services
- Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
- o Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016

- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)

Substantially implemented

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable
 - a) Partially Implemented:
 - a. **The Lead Agency’s subsidy policy allows 90 days for families to collect and provide verification documents for immunization and health and safety requirements.**
 - b. **The subsidy policy needs to be amended to allow families who meet the definition of homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to receive priority services for child care subsidies.**
 - b) Partially Implemented
 - a. **Outreach activities for homeless families need to be reviewed.**
 - c) Fully Implemented
 - a. **Procedures to allow for a grace period to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements to expedite enrollment for children who are in foster care are in place.**
- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - 1. **Subsidy policy will be amended and released, and training to all child care staff will occur prior to the September 30, 2016 implementation date.**
 - 2. **The Lead Agency will review the viability of partnerships with non-profit entities such as Salvation Army, United Way, Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, Atlanta Children’s Shelter, as well as local mission shelters throughout the state to identify, engage, and provide resources to populations of homeless families.**
 - 3. **The Lead Agency will provide policy and consultation to agencies/coalitions on priority status of homeless populations for referrals.**
 - Projected start date for each activity
March 1, 2016 for each activity
 - Projected end date for each activity
September 1, 2016 for each activity
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity
Lead Agency
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity
Georgia Department of Human Services

3.3 Protection for Working Parents

3.3.1 Twelve-Month Eligibility

The CCDBG Act of 2014 establishes a minimum 12-month eligibility and redetermination period for CCDF families. States and Territories are required to demonstrate in the Plan that no later than September 30, 2016 each child who receives assistance will be considered to meet all eligibility requirements for such assistance and will receive such assistance, for a minimum of 12 months before the State/Territory redetermines the eligibility of the child, regardless of changes in income (as long as income does not exceed the federal threshold of 85% of State median income) or temporary changes in participation in work, training, or education activities. (658E(c)(2)(N)(i) & (ii))

Note that this change means a State/Territory may not terminate CCDF assistance during the 12-month period if a family has an increase in income that exceeds the State's income eligibility threshold, but not the federal threshold of 85% SMI.

In addition, this change means the State/Territory may not terminate assistance prior to the end of the 12-month period if family experiences a temporary job loss or temporary change in participation in a training or education activity. Examples of temporary changes include but are not limited to: absence from employment due to maternity or extended medical leave, changes in seasonal work schedule, or if a parent enrolled in training or educational program is temporarily not attending class between semesters.

Describe the status of the State/Territory's establishment of 12-month eligibility and redetermination periods for CCDF families.

- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. List the Lead Agency's policy citation(s) and describe circumstances considered temporary changes in work, education or training that are not subject to termination
- Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
 - Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) **September 30, 2016**
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) **Substantially implemented**
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date: **The Lead Agency's policy already determines 12 month eligibility; however, revisions must be made to include CCDF requirements on reporting changes and seamless services when temporary breaks in activity requirements occur.**

- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) **Updates to subsidy policy, staff training communication/outreach efforts to families and stakeholders**
 - Projected start date for each activity: **March 1, 2016**
 - Projected end date for each activity: **September 30, 2016**
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **Department of Human Services**

3.3.2 State and Territory option to terminate assistance prior to 12 months

The CCDBG Act of 2014 provides States and Territories the option – but does not require them – to terminate assistance prior to re-determination at 12 months if a parent loses employment or if he or she stops attending a job training or education program (i.e., if the parent experiences a non-temporary change in their status as working, or participating in a training or education program). However, prior to terminating the subsidy, the State/Territory must provide a period of continued child care assistance of at least 3 months to allow parents to engage in job search, resume work, or to attend an education or training program as soon as possible.

(658E(c)(2)(N)(iii)) Nothing in the statute prohibits the State/Territory from starting a new 12-month eligibility and redetermination period if families are eligible at the end of their job search, training or education attendance period.

Note that unless the State allows a minimum 3-month job search period – the State/Territory may not exercise the option to terminate assistance based on a parent’s non-temporary job loss or cessation of attendance at a job training or educational program prior to the end of the minimum 12-month eligibility and re-determination period. The statute does not specify any documentation that States/Territories must require parents to submit regarding activities during periods of job search or finding training or education program requirements for this period.

Does the State/Territory terminate assistance prior to 12 months due to a parent’s non-temporary loss of work or cessation of attendance at a job training or education program?

- Yes, the State/Territory terminates assistance prior to 12 months due to parent’s loss of work or cessation of attendance at a job training or education program ONLY. List the Lead Agency’s policy citation(s) and describe the circumstances considered to be non-temporary job, education or training loss and provide the duration allowed for job search or resuming attendance in training or education programs _____

Recipients who lose their employment or stop attending training or education programs will be approved for subsidy assistance for an additional three months for job search. If the recipient is not participating in a state-approved activity at the end of the three-month period, the child care case may

be suspended for up to an additional three months. During the suspension period, the Lead Agency will not reimburse subsidy payments, but the case will not close. If after three months of suspension, the recipients is not participating in a state-approved activity, the child care case will close. At any time during the suspension period the recipient finds employment or enrolls in a state-approved activity, the suspension will be lifted and child care can resume without re-application.

No, the State/Territory does not allow this option.

3.3.3 Prevent Disruption of Work

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that States and Territories must describe in the Plan the procedures and policies in place to ensure that parents (especially parents in families receiving assistance under TANF) are not required to unduly disrupt their employment, education or job training activities in order to comply with the State/Territory's or designated local entity's requirements for redetermination of eligibility for assistance. (658E(c)(2)(N)(ii)) Examples include implementing re-determination strategies to verify income and employment electronically as opposed to more onerous practices such as asking parents and families to come to the subsidy office for an in-person visit, or aligning eligibility with other early care and education or public benefits programs to collect information centrally. The process by which States and Territories collect eligibility documentation represents a potential barrier to services, particularly when documentation can only be provided in-person during standard work hours. States and Territories can offer a variety of family-friendly mechanisms for submitting documentation for eligibility determinations and/or re-determination.

Describe the status of the State/Territory's redetermination procedures and policies to ensure that parents (especially parents receiving TANF) do not have their employment, education or job training unduly disrupted in order to comply with the State/Territory's or designated local entity's requirements for redetermination of eligibility.

Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016.
List the Lead Agency's policy citation(s) and describe the policies and procedures for not unduly disrupting employment _____

Lead Agency policy allows for redeterminations to be completed either online, phone interview, e-mail, or in person. Documents needed for determination of eligibility can be scanned/uploaded, mailed, faxed or e-mailed. Consumer statements for eligibility can be received via phone, e-mail, fax, or mail.

Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target

completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) _____
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

3.4 Family Contribution to Payment

The statute requires Lead Agencies to establish a sliding fee scale that varies based on income and the size of the family to be used in determining each family's contribution (i.e., co-payment) to the cost of child care that is not a barrier to families receiving CCDF. (658E(c)(5) In addition to income and size of the family, the Lead Agency may use other factors when determining family contributions/co-payments. The sliding fee scale is subject to review by ACF as part of ongoing monitoring efforts to CCDBG compliance.

- 3.4.1 Provide the CCDF copayments in the chart below according to family size for one child in care. Note – If the sliding fee scale is not statewide, check here and describe how many jurisdictions set their own sliding fee scale

Reduced family co-payments are being offered to families in the four early education empowerment zones who select Quality Rated providers. Specifically, families who select three star providers have a weekly copay of \$5.00; two stars have a weekly copay of \$10.00; and one star have a weekly copay of \$15.00 regardless of family size and income. Families in these zones selecting providers without a star rating would follow the statewide fee scale. Race to the Top-ELC funds are currently being used to fund this initiative.

Fill in the chart based on the most populous area of the State.

Family Size	(a) Minimum "Entry" Income Level	(b) What is the monthly copayment for a family of this size upon initial entry into CCDF?	(c) What is the percent of income for (b)?	(d) Maximum "Entry" Income Level	(e) What is the monthly copayment for a family of this size upon initial entry into CCDF?	(f) What is the percent of income for (e)?
1	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$16,640	\$112.67	8%
2	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$22,400	\$147.33	8%
3	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$28,160	\$186.33	8%
4	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$33,920	\$225.33	8%
5	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$39,680	\$264.33	8%
6	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$45,400	\$303.33	8%
7	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$51,200	\$342.33	8%
8	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$56,960	\$381.33	8%
9	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$62,720	\$416.00	8%
10	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$68,480	\$455.00	8%
11	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$74,240	\$494.00	8%
12	\$0	\$0	n/a	\$80,000	\$533.00	8%

*8% is the highest percent of income a family will pay. This is only for families who are at or above 131% of Federal Poverty Level. Families at 130% or lower of FPL pay less than 8%. See chart below

- a) What is the effective date of the sliding fee scale(s)? **7/1/2016**
- b) Provide the link to the sliding fee scale _____

3.4.2 How will the family's contribution be calculated and to whom will it be applied? Check all that apply.

- Fee is a dollar amount and
 - Fee is per child with the same fee for each child
 - Fee is per child and discounted fee for two or more children
 - Fee is per child up to a maximum per family
 - No additional fee charged after certain number of children
 - Fee is per family
- Fee is a percent of income and
 - Fee is per child with the same percentage applied for each child
 - Fee is per child and discounted percentage applied for two or more children
 - Fee is per child up to a maximum per family

- No additional percentage applied charged after certain number of children
- Fee is per family
- Contribution schedule varies because it is set locally/regionally (as indicated in 1.2.1). Describe _____
- Other. Describe

Percent of income charged for copayment rises as family income (as percent of federal poverty guidelines) rises, based on the following table:

Poverty Level	Percent of Income
100% FPL or below	0%
101-110% FPL	5%
111-120% FPL	6%
121-130% FPL	7%
131% FPL or higher	8%

3.4.3 Will the Lead Agency use other factors in addition to income and family size to determine each family's copayment? (658E(c)(3)(B))

- Yes, and describe those additional factors using the checkboxes below.
 - Number of hours the child is in care
 - Lower copayments for higher quality of care as defined by the State/Territory
 - Other. Describe other factors

As part of the state's Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant, reduced family co-payments are being offered to families in the four early education empowerment zones who select Quality Rated providers. This is funded through ELC funds. The state is evaluating this initiative to design policies for offering lower copayments for higher quality of care statewide to be implemented in FFY18.

- No.

3.4.4 The Lead Agency may waive contributions/co-payments from families whose incomes are at or below the poverty level for a family of the same size (98.42(c)). Will the Lead Agency waive family contributions/co-payments for families whose incomes are at or below the poverty level?

- Yes, the Lead Agency waives family contributions/co-payments for families with income at or below the poverty level for families of the same size. The poverty level used by the Lead Agency for a family size of three is \$ 20,090.**
- No, the Lead Agency does not waive family contributions/co-payments.

3.4.5 How will the Lead Agency ensure the family contribution/co-payment, based on a sliding fee scale, is affordable and not a barrier to families receiving CCDF? Check all that apply.

Limits the maximum co-payment per family. Describe _____

Limits combined amount of copayment for all children to a percentage of family income. List the percentage of the copayment limit and describe _____

Maximum copayment is 8% of family income.

Minimizes the abrupt termination of assistance before a family can afford the full cost of care (“the cliff effect”) as part of the graduated phase-out of assistance discussed in 3.1.5. Describe _____

Families are not terminated from the program unless their income exceeds the maximum allowable federal limit (85% State Median Income). Even if a family income increases, the family will remain in the program with no negative increases until recertification/renewal. At recertification, if a family’s gross income exceeds 75% of the 2014 SMI, the family may receive services for up to 12 additional months as part of the graduated phase out as long as the family’s income does not exceed 85% of the SMI.

At re-determination,

Does not allow providers to charge families the difference between the maximum payment rate (addressed in section 4) and their private pay rate in addition to the copayment they are paying. Describe _____

Covers all fees (such as registration, supplies, field trips) to minimize the additional fees charged to the families by the provider. Describe _____

Other. Describe _____

4 Ensure Equal Access to High Quality Child Care for Low-Income Children

The 2014 reauthorization of the CCDBG Act is designed to help States and Territories advance improvements to the quality of child care in order to promote the healthy social-emotional, cognitive and physical development of participating children. Ensuring that low-income and vulnerable children can access high-quality care (and remain enrolled to school entry and beyond) is an equally important purpose of CCDBG. Payment levels and policies have a major impact on access.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 revises the requirement for a market rate survey (MRS) so that: (1) it must be statistically valid and reliable; and (2) it must reflect variations in the cost of child care services by geographic area, type of provider, and age of child. Also, a State/Territory may develop and conduct an alternative methodology for setting payment rates, such as a cost estimation model, to take into account the cost of meeting quality requirements.

To provide stability of funding and encourage more child care providers to participate in the subsidy program, the State/Territory’s payment practices for CCDF child care providers must reflect generally accepted payment practices of non-CCDF child care providers in the State/Territory, such as paying for

supplies, field trips, registration fees. In addition, to the extent practicable, the State/Territory must implement enrollment and eligibility policies that support the fixed costs of providing child care services by delinking provider payments from a child's occasional absence due to holidays or unforeseen circumstances such as illness or closures due to emergency.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a provision that the State/Territory must also develop and implement strategies to increase the supply and improve the quality of child care services for: (1) children in underserved areas; (2) infants and toddlers; (3) children with disabilities (the CCDBG Act of 2014 added a new definition of child with disability (658(P)(3)); and (4) children who receive care during non-traditional hours. With respect to investments to increase access to programs providing high-quality child care and development services, the State/Territory must give priority to children of families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and that do not have such programs. (658 E(c)(2)(M))

4.1 Parental Choice In Relation to Certificates, Grants or Contracts

The parent(s) of each eligible child who receive(s) or is offered financial assistance for child care services has the option of either enrolling such child with a provider that has a grant or contract for the provision of service or receiving a child care certificate. (658E(c)(2)(A)) This did not change under the CCDBG Act of 2014.

4.1.1 Describe how the parent of each eligible child is advised that the Lead Agency offers the option of selecting a provider that has a grant or contract or receiving a child care certificate (658E(c)(2)(A)(i), 658P(2)) _____

Families are able to access information about providers through the Lead Agency's website and during the enrollment process. Providers that are receiving subsidy funds via a grant/contract model are listed on the Department's website and are provided to eligibility case workers. Currently, that is a small number, but it is expected to increase in 2016 and 2017.

Additionally, information on Quality Rated providers, child care providers who accept CAPS subsidies, and programs who have been awarded Quality Rated Subsidy Grants is shared with all resource and referral agencies and the statewide call center for distribution to participating families.

4.1.2 Describe how the parent is informed of the option to choose from a variety of child care categories – such as private, not-for-profit, faith-based providers (if using a certificate), centers, family child care homes, or in-home providers. (658E(c)(2)(A)(i), 658P(2), 658Q)) Check all that apply.

- Certificate form provides information about the choice of providers, including high quality providers
- Certificate is not linked to a specific provider so parents can choose provider of choice

- Consumer education materials on choosing child care
- Referral to child care resource and referral agencies
- Co-located resource and referral in eligibility offices
- Verbal communication at the time of application
- Community outreach, workshops or other in-person activities
- Other. Describe _____

Information regarding the CAPS program and choosing child care providers is included in the online application. The application process also includes an auto-reply email that provides information and references for toll-free resources. A referral helpline is available to assist clients that need help selecting a child care provider.

4.1.3 Child Care Services Available through Grants or Contracts

- a) In addition to offering certificates, does the Lead Agency provide child care services through grants or contracts for child care slots? (658A(b)(1))) **Note:** Do not check “yes” if every provider is simply required to sign an agreement in order to be paid in the certificate program.

Yes. If yes, **describe:**

- the type(s) of child care services available through grants or contracts

Currently, the Lead Agency offers subsidy grants aligned with Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership and Quality Rated. For Early Head Start, the grant agreements provide partner early education programs with a certain number of slots for infants and toddlers who are determined dually-eligible for both funding streams. CCDF provides funding for full-year, full-time educational care, and Early Head Start provides for the comprehensive services. The grant agreements provide consistent funding to partners enabling them to budget and deliver the required comprehensive services, maintain low ratios and small group sizes, employ qualified teachers, and offer broad-scale family engagement activities. Additionally, using Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge funds, the state has begun a program to award grants to high quality child care programs to serve infants and toddlers whose families are eligible for child care subsidy. Early Learning Challenge Quality Rated Subsidy Grants support a minimum of 10 children per ELD program and funded slots are not able to exceed 50% of a classroom. Going forward, the state plans to transition to using CCDF funds to expand the scope of these grants, eventually transitioning 20% of all child care subsidy slots to a grant funded model.

- The entities who receive contracts (e.g., shared services alliances, child care resource and referral agencies, family child care networks, community based agencies, child care providers, etc.)

Currently, child care centers rated two or three stars are eligible for grants and contracts. Grants will be available for Family Child Care Learning Homes in 2016.

- The process for accessing grants or contracts

Grants are currently awarded through a competitive review process.

- The range of providers available through grants or contracts

The EHS-CCP grantees are community action agencies, universities, and local non-profits; the partners are local child care learning centers selected by the EHS-CCP grantees. The grant agreements help ensure that each of the EHS-CCP grantees and its partners will meet the federal EHS-CCP requirements that at least 25% of the EHS-CCP slots are funded with CCDF. Quality Rated subsidy grants are limited to providers rated two or three stars. These are the highest rated programs in Georgia's quality rating and improvement system.

- how rates for contracted slots are set through grants and contracts

Rates are set at the 90th percentile of the 2013 Market Rate Survey. This rate established for the grant agreements is based on the weekly subsidy amount paid for infant care in Zone 1 (the highest state-established subsidy rate).

- how the State/Territory determines which entities to contract with for increasing supply and/or improving quality

Grants are awarded through a competitive grant process. Specific areas are targeted to address shortages in the supply of high quality child care across Georgia and specifically target high need and rural areas such as the state's Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs).

- if contracts are offered statewide and/or locally: **Statewide**

No. If no, skip to 4.1.4.

b) Will the Lead Agency use grants or contracts for child care services to achieve any of the following (check all that apply):

Increase the supply of specific types of care with grants or contracts for:

- Programs to serve children with disabilities
- Programs to serve infants and toddlers
- Programs to serve school-age children
- Programs to serve children needing non-traditional hour care
- Programs to serve homeless children
- Programs to serve children in underserved areas
- Programs that serve children with diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds
- Programs that serve specific geographic areas
 - Urban
 - Rural

Other. Describe _____

Improve the quality of child care programs with grants or contracts for:

Programs providing comprehensive services, such as integrated child care in Head Start, Early Head Start, summer or other programs

Programs meeting higher quality standards, such as higher rated QRIS programs, accreditation or state pre-k programs that meet higher quality standards

Programs that provide financial incentives to teaching staff linked to higher education and qualifications link increased education requirements to higher compensation

Programs to serve children with disabilities or special needs

Programs to serve infants and toddlers

Programs to serve school-age children

Programs to serve children needing non-traditional hour care

Programs to serve homeless children

Programs to serve children in underserved areas

Programs that serve children with diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds

Programs that serve specific geographic areas

Urban

Rural

Other. Describe _____

4.1.4 The Lead Agency certifies policies and procedures are in place that afford parents unlimited access to their children whenever their children are in the care of a provider who receives CCDF funds. (658E(c)(2)(B)) This requirement did not change under the CCDBG Act of 2014. Describe the policies and procedures for unlimited access _____

State child care licensing rules require unlimited access by parents to their children while in child care settings. Rules require that a sign be posted in a public place stating parents have access to all child care areas at any time that their child is in care. Informal and exempt providers, who are not required to be licensed or registered, are also required, through their subsidy business agreement, to allow parents unlimited access to their children.

4.1.5 The Lead Agency must allow for in-home care (i.e., care provided in the child’s own home) but may limit its use. Will the Lead Agency limit the use of in-home care in any way?

Yes. If checked, what limits will the Lead Agency set on the use of in-home care? Check all that apply.

Restricted based on minimum number of children in the care of the provider to meet minimum wage law or Fair Labor Standards Act. Describe _____

For care in the child’s home, the Lead Agency policy states an informal provider can only keep up to six related children. For care outside the child’s home, non-related informal providers can keep a maximum of two children in the provider’s residence.

Restricted based on provider meeting a minimum age requirement. Describe _____

The Lead Agency policy states that an informal child care provider must be at least 21 years of age.

Restricted based on hours of care (certain number of hours, non-traditional work hours). Describe _____

If care is needed during non-traditional hours (i.e., nights, shifts, weekends), informal child care can be provided when licensed care is not available or is not located within a reasonable geographic area.

Restricted to care by relatives. Describe _____

Lead Agency policy states that care in the child’s home must be provided by a relative. Relative is defined as related to the child by blood or marriage in the degree of aunt, uncle, grandparent, or adult sibling. Adult siblings may not reside in the same home as the child and enroll as an informal provider.

Restricted to care for children with special needs or medical condition. Describe _____

Informal care can be provided for children who require individualized care for special needs.

Restricted to in-home providers that meet some basic health and safety requirements. Describe _____

Lead Agency policy states that all informal child care providers must meet the following health and safety requirements:

- Complete Criminal Records Check requirements prior to initial enrollment and every five (5) years thereafter.
- Have a working smoke detector and fire extinguisher in the place where care is provided
- Be monitored by DECAL for health and safety compliance within eight (8) weeks of enrollment and each year thereafter
- Obtain infant/toddler CPR certification prior to enrollment and maintain current certification throughout participation in CAPS
- Complete all required pre-service and annual health and safety training
- Pass a local county DFCS Child Protective Services (CPS) screening with no active investigations

Other. Describe

Informal child care can only be provided when no other licensed care is available within a reasonable geographic area, during non-traditional hours when licensed care is not available, or if the child in care is determined to meet a special needs definition.

No

4.2 Assessing Market Rates and Child Care Costs

The new law revises the provisions for a market rate survey (MRS) so that: (1) it must be statistically valid and reliable; and (2) it must reflect variations in the price to parents of child care services by geographic area, type of provider, and age of child (658E(c)(4)(B)). A State/Territory has the option to develop and use a statistically valid and reliable alternative methodology for setting payment rates, such as a cost estimation model. Any payment rates established using an alternative methodology or market rate survey must be reviewed and approved by ACF as part of the CCDF Plan review process. Because the alternative methodology is a new basis for setting payment rates, we highly recommend any State or Territory considering an alternative methodology to submit a description of its proposed approach to the ACF Regional Office in advance of the Plan submittal in order to avoid delays with Plan approval (see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/ccdf-reauthorization-faq>).

The MRS or alternative methodology must be developed and conducted no earlier than two years before the date of submission of the Plan (instead of two years before the effective date of the Plan, as previously required for the MRS).

The State must consult with the State Advisory Council (SAC) or other state- or state-designated cross-agency body if there is no SAC, local child care program administrators, local child care resource and referral agencies, and other appropriate entities prior to developing and conducting the MRS or alternative methodology.

The State/Territory must prepare a detailed report containing the results of the MRS or alternative methodology. The State must make the report with these results widely available no later than 30 days after completion of the report, including posting the results on the Internet in an easily interpretable and understandable form.

The State/Territory must set CCDF subsidy payment rates in accordance with the results of the current MRS or alternative methodology. When setting payment rates, the law requires States and Territories to take into consideration the cost of providing higher quality child care services than were provided prior to November 2014 (e.g., tiered reimbursement or other methods) and without, **to the extent practicable**, reducing the number of families receiving CCDF relative to the number served as of November 2014. In taking the cost of providing quality into consideration, it is important to consider such key factors as what it takes to support increased stability and reduced provider turnover when setting payment rates.

4.2.1 Developing and Conducting a Market Rate Survey (MRS) and/or an Alternative Methodology. Did the State/Territory conduct a statistically and valid and reliable MRS, alternative methodology or both between July 1, 2013 and March 1, 2016?

- MRS
- Alternative Methodology. Describe _____
- Both. Describe

The last Market Rate Survey was completed in July 2013. The survey was conducted between February and May 2013. The final report was delivered to the Lead Agency by July 2013.

For the Market Rate Survey, surveys were mailed to all licensed child care centers, family child care homes, and group child care homes, as well as license-exempt and informal providers in February 2013. Data collection was completed by April 2013 with the data analysis completed by June.

The alternate methodology used was an economic impact study that the state commissioned in 2014 and completed in 2015. With an ongoing economic impact study, the state elected not to repeat a Market Rate Survey that same year. The economic impact study consisted of a lengthy provider survey, and the state did not want to burden providers with two surveys that asked similar questions. The economic impact survey asked providers to detail not only their rates but also their revenues from other sources and their expenditures. This survey was conducted between October 2014 and March 2015. Like the Market Rate Survey of 2013, the survey for the economic impact study was distributed to all providers.

While the economic impact study was not used to set rates, rates reported in the study were compared to the rates reported in the 2013 Market Rate Survey. The rates were determined to be similar. "The Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry in Georgia" is posted at <http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/ResearchEconomicImpact.aspx>.

- Other. Describe _____

4.2.2 Describe how the State consulted with the State Advisory Council (SAC) or other state- or state-designated cross-agency body if there is no SAC, local child care program administrators, local child care resource and referral agencies, and other appropriate entities which could include worker organizations prior to developing and conducting the MRS or alternative methodology.

In 2013, Georgia's State Advisory Council was merged with the Georgia Children's Cabinet. The purpose of the Children's Cabinet is to ensure that key services for children and families are aligned. All required members of the State Advisory Council are members of the Children's Cabinet. This includes the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). The Cabinet is informed of any major decisions related to child care subsidy.

The Lead Agency provides many opportunities for stakeholder feedback around major programs, including research and evaluation. For the 2013 Market Rate Survey, the Lead Agency worked closely with the researchers in constructing the survey and worked with child care providers and

representatives from other key constituency groups to ensure the questions reflected appropriate payment schedules and terminology.

Specific stakeholder feedback during the 2013 Market Rate Survey focused on determining tiered reimbursement rates for the state's newly launched quality rating and improvement system (Quality Rated). The Lead Agency convened a task force of stakeholders to examine subsidy policies and payment rates. The Lead Agency consulted with Anne Mitchell from the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance to estimate tiered reimbursement rates and presented this information to the task force. In July 2013, tiered subsidy bonuses of 2%, 5%, and 10% were implemented for one, two, and three star Quality Rated programs respectively.

The researchers for the 2015 economic impact study worked with the Lead Agency in conducting provider focus groups on issues involving the questions to be asked, the length of the survey, and appropriate incentives. Additionally, the researchers worked with representatives from the Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students, the Georgia Child Care Association, and Quality Care for Children in designing the survey.

The Lead Agency will conduct a Market Rate Survey in the fall of 2016 and plans to develop a process to annually collect the rates for all early education programs that receive state or federal funds through the Lead Agency programs. DECAL will also work with lead researchers from Georgia State University to review other industries (health care, housing, etc.) and how these industries use statistically valid and reliable methods to set rates. DECAL will have a contract in place for this review by March 1, 2016, so that the review is completed in time to inform the 2016 Market Rate Survey.

- 4.2.3 Describe how the market rate survey or alternative methodology is statistically valid and reliable. To be considered valid and reliable, the MRS or alternative methodology must represent the child care market, provide complete and current data, use rigorous data collection procedures, reflect geographic variation, and analyze data in a manner that captures other relevant differences. For example, market rate surveys can use administrative data such as child care resource and referral data if they are representative of the market. If an alternative methodology such as cost modeling is used, demonstrate that the methodology used reliable models that estimated the cost of delivering services in center- and home-based settings at each level of quality defined by the State/Territory.

Both surveys were distributed to the total population of licensed child care providers and family child care homes. This was done to ensure that providers in all counties of the state had an opportunity to respond. Since many counties have only one or two providers, it is difficult to use a sampling framework in setting county-level rates.

Responses from both surveys were compared to key demographics of the population to ensure that the responses were not biased toward one geographic area or one provider group.

- 4.2.4 Describe how the market rate survey reflects variations in the price of child care services by:

a) Geographic area (e.g., statewide or local markets) _____

Responses are divided into three categories. For the 2013 Market Rate Survey, counties are divided into one of three tiers based on the average reported rates. Generally the three tiers represent metropolitan areas, mid-size cities, and rural areas. For the 2015 Economic Impact Study, responses were analyzed based on the following divisions: metro Atlanta, other urban areas, and rural areas. While not exactly parallel, the geographic breakdown of both studies was comparable, and the results were similar.

b) Type of provider _____

Responses are analyzed by provider type: licensed child care learning center, licensed group child care home, registered family child care home, local school systems, license-exempt providers, and informal care.

c) Age of child _____

Responses are analyzed by the age of the child served.

c) Describe any other key variations examined by the market rate survey, such as quality level _____

The Market Rate Survey analyzed responses by type of care (full-time, part-time, evening, summer, after school, etc.). Future market rate surveys will analyze results by Quality Rated levels.

4.2.5 Describe the process used by the State/Territory to prepare a detailed report containing the results and make the report widely available to the public.

a) Date of completion of the market rate survey or alternative methodology (must be no earlier than July 1, 2013 and no later than March 1, 2016) _____

Data collection for the 2013 Market Rate Survey was completed in April 2013. The report with the analysis of the survey data was issued in July 2013. The 2015 Economic Impact Study was completed in October 2015.

b) Date report containing results was made widely available, no later than 30 days after the completion of the report _____ Date report containing results was made widely available, no later than 30 days after the completion of the report

The 2013 report was available upon request. It was posted on the Lead Agency's website on December 9, 2015.

c) How the report containing results was made widely available and provide the link where the report is posted if available _____ How the report containing results was made widely available and provide the link where the report is posted if available:
<http://dec.al.ga.gov/QualityInitiatives/CAPS.aspx>

4.3 Setting Payment Rates

4.3.1 Provide the base payment rates and percentiles (based on current MRS or alternative methodology) for the following categories. The ages and types of care listed below are meant to provide a snapshot of categories on which rates may be based and are not intended to be comprehensive of all categories that may exist in your State/Territory or reflective of the terms that your State/Territory may use for particular ages. Please use the most populous geographic region (serving highest number of children). Note – If the payment rates are not set by the State/Territory, check here . Describe how many jurisdictions set their own payment rates _____.

- a) Infant (6 months), full-time licensed center care in most populous geographic region
 - Rate **\$165.00** per **Week** unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- b) Infant (6 months), full-time licensed FCC care in most populous geographic region
 - Rate **\$135.00** per Week unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- c) Toddler (18 months), full-time licensed center care in most populous geographic region
 - Rate **\$155.00** per Week unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- d) Toddler (18 months), full-time licensed FCC care in most populous geographic region
 - Rate **\$125.00** per Week unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- e) Preschooler (4 years), full-time licensed center care in most populous geographic region
 - Rate **\$143.00** per Week unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- f) Preschooler (4 years), full-time licensed FCC care in most populous geographic region
 - Rate **\$120.00** per Week unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)

- **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- g) School-age child (6 years), full-time licensed center care in most populous geographic region
- Rate **\$125.00** per Week unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1 - Summer Rate. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- h) School-age child (6 years), full-time licensed FCC care in most populous geographic region
- Rate **\$100.00** per Week unit of time (e.g., hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
 - **Percentile 50th, in Zone 1 - Summer Rate. Zone 1 reflects the most populous metropolitan counties.**
- i) Describe the calculation/definition of full-time care: **Full-time care is defined as care that takes place three or more days in a given week (Monday - Sunday).**
- j) Provide the effective date of the payment rates: **no later than September 30, 2016**
- k) Provide the link to the payment rates: **See 2013 Market Rate Study:**
<http://dec.al.ga.gov/QualityInitiatives/CAPS.aspx>

4.3.2 States and Territories may choose to set base payment rates that differ because they take into consideration such factors as 1) geographic location, 2) age of child, 3) needs of children (special needs, protective services, etc.), 4) non-traditional hours of care, or 5) quality of care. In other words, base rates for infants may be set at a higher level than for school-age care because the cost of providing infant care tends to be higher than school-age care. In addition to these rates that differ tied to market variations in prices, States and Territories can choose to establish tiered rates or add-ons on top of these variable base rates as a way to increase payment rates for targeted needs (i.e., higher rate for special needs children as both an incentive for providers to serve children with special needs and as a way to cover the higher costs to the provider to provide care for special needs children).

Check which types of tiered payment or rate add-on, if any, the Lead Agency has chosen to implement. In the description of any tiered rates or add-ons, indicate the process and basis used for determining the tiered rates, amount or percentage of the tiered rate/add-on, and indicate if the rates were set based on the MRS or another process.

- Tiered rate/rate add-on for non-traditional hours. Describe _____
- Tiered rate/rate add-on for children with special needs as defined by the State/Territory. Describe.

For children in the custody of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (including Foster Care) and for children with disabilities, subsidy is paid at the provider's published weekly rate instead of the base subsidy rate.

- Tiered rate/rate add-on for infants and toddlers (do not check if you have a different base rate for infants/toddlers with no separate bonus or add-on). Describe _____
- Tiered rate/rate add-on for programs meeting higher quality as defined by the State/Territory. Describe:

For providers who participate in Quality Rated (Georgia's QRIS) and receive a rating, there is a tiered reimbursement bonus added to the base subsidy rate: 5% increase for a one star, 10% increase for two stars, and 25% increase for three stars. These rates will be effective no later than September 30, 2016. The tiered reimbursement bonus of 25% for three stars was selected to bring these high quality providers up to the 75th percentile based on the 2013 Market Rate Study.

- Tiered rate/rate add-on for programs serving homeless children. Describe _____
- Other tiered rate/rate add-on beyond the base rate. Describe _____
- None.

4.3.3 Describe how the State/Territory set payment rates for child care services in accordance with the results of the most recent market rate survey or alternative methodology

The proposed state child care subsidy rates were set in accordance with the most recent Market Rate Survey from 2013. Effective no later than September 30, 2016, DECAL will use the 50th percentile of the 2013 Market Rate Survey to set rates.

4.3.4 In setting payment rates, how did the State/Territory take into consideration the cost of providing higher quality child care services than were provided prior to November 2014 (e.g., tiered payment or other methods) and without, to the extent practicable, reducing the number of families receiving CCDF relative to the number of families served as of November 2014. For example, providing tiered payment with a sufficient differential to support higher quality, considering the cost of quality using a cost estimation model or other method, or examining the participation rate of high-quality providers in the subsidy system (e.g., using indicators from a quality rating system, accreditation or other state-defined indicators of quality) and adjusting payment rates if necessary.

The cost of providing higher quality was considered when tiered reimbursement bonuses for Quality Rated providers was enacted. This included stakeholder feedback with providers about the cost of quality and tiered reimbursement rates sufficient to cover increased costs. The cost for higher quality was balanced with long-term affordability of the program given the number of families being served at that time.

4.4 Summary of Facts Used to Determine that Payments Rates Are Sufficient to Ensure Equal Access

The CCDF plan shall provide a summary of data and facts relied on by the State/Territory to certify that payment rates are sufficient to ensure equal access. (658E (c)(4)(A)) Equal access is not limited to a single percentile alone but is inclusive of various metrics or benchmarks that would offer children receiving CCDF access to the same services (type of care, quality of care) as children not receiving CCDF.

4.4.1 What data and facts did the State use to determine equal access (i.e., what is your metric or benchmark of equal access – such as percentile that rates cover or proportion of costs covered)? Check all that apply and describe.

- Payment rates are set at the 75th percentile or higher of the most recent survey. Describe _____
- Using tiered rates/differential rates as described in 4.3.3 to increase access for targeted needs.

Since 2013, the lead agency has implemented tiered reimbursement. The purpose of tiered reimbursement is to incentivize providers serving children receiving subsidy to achieve higher levels of quality, thereby increasing access to quality. Based on analyses of provider financial data and stakeholder feedback, increased rates of 2%, 5%, and 10% for one, two, and three star programs respectively were determined to be sufficient incentives while not significantly decreasing the number of children served.

In 2015, the state began offering grants directly to providers to serve a specified number of children receiving subsidies. The grants pay at the 90th percentile (using Early Learning Challenge funds) and are available only to two and three star programs. The state is currently evaluating the impact of these grants and will use this data to design other grant programs serving targeted populations such as infants and toddlers.

- Rates based on data on the cost to the provider of providing care meeting certain standards. Describe _____

For children in the custody of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (including Foster Care) and for children with disabilities, subsidy is paid at the provider's published weekly rate instead of the base subsidy rate.

The Lead Agency continually engages stakeholders to determine the cost of care. In 2013 DECAL convened a task force to review and suggest changes to current subsidy policy. Based on the recommendations from this task force, the state reviewed and revised policies related to parent education requirements, family co-pays, and increasing the rate paid to providers.

- Data on the size of the difference (in terms of dollars) between payment rates and the 75th percentile in the most recent survey, if rates are below the 75th percentile. Describe _____

By September 30, 2016, the Lead Agency will be using the 50th percentile from the 2013 Market Rate Study. Currently DECAL is below the 25th percentile of the Market Rate. Moving from below the 25th to the 50th percentile is a significant increase in cost. To move to the 75th percentile, the weekly rates would need to increase an average total of \$301 for all age groups in child care. This would significantly reduce the number of children Georgia could serve per year. DECAL is also offering a tiered reimbursement bonus added to the base subsidy rate: a 5% increase for a one star, 10% increase for two stars, and 25% increase for three stars. The tiered reimbursement bonus of 25% for three stars was selected to bring these high quality providers up to the 75th percentile.

- Data on the proportion of children receiving subsidy being served by high-quality providers. Describe _____

Seventeen percent of children receiving subsidy are being served in a Quality Rated program (as of 11/30/15). As part of the validation work related to Quality Rated, DECAL monitors trends related to access to higher quality for children receiving subsidies. Current data suggests that three star providers are less likely to enroll children receiving subsidies than their one and two star counterparts. This is true for both child care centers and family child care homes. Therefore, DECAL is expanding the subsidy grant model and engaging three star providers about increasing the number of children with subsidies they serve. These analyses are ongoing and provide DECAL with continual data to improve access to higher quality.

- Data on where children are being served showing access to the full range of providers. Describe _____

The Lead Agency monitors the percentage of providers at the county level who are serving children with subsidies. In one third of Georgia's counties, approximately 70% of licensed providers are serving children with subsidies. Conversely, in 9% of counties only 25% or less of providers are serving children with subsidies. The state is pursuing several initiatives, for example the Early Education Empowerment Zones (funded by the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge), to increase the percentage of providers serving children with subsidies in areas of the state where access is more limited.

- Data on how rates set below the 75th percentile allow CCDF families access to the same quality of care as families not receiving CCDF. Describe _____

The Lead Agency will be developing a formal definition of access and a data analysis strategy around access in 2016. The Lead Agency will use the methodology to determine if the current rate structure facilitates families receiving CCDF having access to the same quality of care as families not receiving CCDF. The Lead Agency's plan is detailed in Section 4.4.2.

- Feedback from parents, including parent survey or parent complaints. Describe _____

DECAL is expanding parent engagement. This includes a DECAL staff person dedicated to supporting providers with parent engagement. DECAL is also conducting focus groups with families, such as parents of dual language learners, to better understand parent needs, challenges, and concerns related to subsidy.

- Other. Describe _____

4.4.2 Does the State/Territory certify that payment rates are sufficient to ensure equal access either based on the current MRS or alternative methodology?

- Yes. The State/Territory certifies that payment rates are sufficient to ensure equal access by March 1, 2016. Provide the State/Territory definition of how its payment rates are sufficient to ensure equal access _____

No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable
Partially Implemented: The Lead Agency issues a number of subsidy grants that pay at the 90th percentile.
Not Yet Implemented: 1) Currently, the Lead Agency pays rates that are, on average, lower than the 75% percentile. 2) Currently, the Lead Agency does not have a methodology for measuring if rates ensure equal access.
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.): **1) The Lead Agency will pay rates at the 50th percentile for all providers. Providers who receive tiered reimbursement will continue to be paid an increase of 5%, 10%, and 25% for one, two, and three stars respectively; 2) The Lead Agency will develop a formal methodology to define and measure access that will be used to ascertain if payment rates are sufficient enough to ensure equal access.**
 - Projected start date for each activity: **1) September 30, 2016; 2) March 1, 2016**
 - Projected end date for each activity: **1) September 30, 2016; 2) September 30, 2016**
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **DECAL has a current contract with Child Trends for advisement on evaluation strategies. DECAL will use this current contract for support in developing the methodology.**

4.5 Payment Practices and Timeliness of Payments

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a provision that requires States and Territories to describe in the Plan how the State/Territory’s payment practices for CCDF child care providers reflect generally

accepted payment practices of non-CCDF child care providers in the State/Territory —so as to provide stability of funding and encourage more child care providers to participate in the subsidy program. To the extent practicable, the State/Territory must implement enrollment and eligibility policies that support the fixed costs of providing child care services by delinking provider payments from a child’s occasional absences due to holidays or unforeseen circumstances such as illness. (658E(c)(2)(S))

4.5.1 Describe the status of State/Territory’s payment practices for CCDF child care providers that reflect generally accepted payment practices of non-CCDF child care providers in the State/Territory.

Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. Describe using 4.5.2 through 4.5.3 below.

Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) _____
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

4.5.2 Describe how the payment practices to child care providers who serve CCDF-assisted children reflect generally accepted payment practices of other child care providers in the State/Territory

to ensure stability of funding to encourage more child care providers to serve children who receive CCDF assistance. Check all that apply and describe. The Lead Agency ...

- Pays prospectively prior to the delivery of services. Describe _____
- Pays within no more than 21 days of billing for services. Describe: **Lead Agency policy states that providers can bill as soon as the service week ends and up to 60 days after. Child care providers can submit invoices through the MaxStar website or send a paper invoice to Maximus via USPS. 100% of funds are disbursed to providers via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).**
- Supports fixed costs of providing child care services by delinking provider payments from a child's occasional absences by paying based on enrollment instead of attendance. Describe including the State/Territory's definition of occasional absences: **Providers can request payments to hold slots for children for up to two weeks during the certification period for occasional absences when the child does not attend care for the entire week. Lead Agency policy defines occasional absences as child's illness, vacation week and/or parent work mandatory closing.**
- Supports fixed costs of providing child care services by delinking provider payments from a child's occasional absences by providing full payment if a child attends at least a certain percent of authorized time. Specify percent and describe: **Payments are issued for the full negotiated period (typically a service week) if the child attended at least one day during the service period or 20% of the time.**
- Supports fixed costs of providing child care services by delinking provider payments from a child's occasional absences by providing full payment if a child is absent for a certain number of days in a month. Specify the number of absence days allowed and paid for and describe: **Lead Agency policy states that a child can be absent four out of five days in a week or a slot can be put on hold for two weeks in a certification period due to illness or temporary non-participation by the parental authority.**
- Pays on a full-time or part-time basis (rather than smaller increments such as hourly): **Payments are processed weekly for the service week for which the provider has submitted a claim, either full-time (weekly) or part-time (daily).**
- Pays for standard and customary fees that the provider charges private-paying parents (e.g., registration fees, deposits, supplies, field trips, etc.) **The Lead Agency will pay the registration fee and the CAPS rate, but any other fees are the family's responsibility.**
- Provides prompt notice to providers regarding any changes to the family's eligibility status that may impact payment: **Once notified by the parent, CAPS eligibility staff prepare form 62 and submit the form to the parent and the provider as notice that the eligibility has changed.**
- Has a timely appeal and resolution process for payment inaccuracies and disputes. Describe: **The appeal and resolution process for payment inaccuracies and disputes is described in**

the CAPS Policy Manual - Section 1000 for Parental Authority and Section 1130 for Providers.

Other. Describe _____

For those options not checked above, explain why these options are not generally accepted payment practices in your State/Territory _____

4.5.3 Check and describe the strategies the State/Territory will use to ensure the timeliness of payments.

Policy on length of time for making payments. Describe length of time: **Providers can submit invoices as soon as the service week ends. Payments are distributed on a weekly basis.**

Track and monitor the payment process: **Payments are issued through a third party vendor (Maximus). The lead agency monitors the payments to Maximus. DECAL Finance staff fund and monitor all payments to Maximus. Maximus is required to pay all claims each week on Wednesday, except for holidays. Holidays move the payment date to Tuesday for that week only.**

Use of electronic tools (e.g., automated billing, direct deposit, etc.) Describe: **95% of all providers complete online invoicing using the MaxStar System. Invoices are auto-generated for each service week. Providers can submit invoices for services rendered as soon as the service week has ended. If the provider elects to file a paper invoice, invoices containing two service weeks are submitted on one paper form and sent to Maximus via USPS for processing. The invoice documents the child's attendance for the week(s) being processed for payment. All payments, including paper invoices are processed within two business days of receipt.**

Other. Describe _____

4.6 Supply Building Strategies to Meet the Needs of Certain Populations

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a provision that the State/Territory will develop and implement strategies to increase the supply and improve the quality of child care services for children in underserved areas, infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children who receive care during non-traditional hours. (658 E(c)(2)(M))

4.6.1 Has the State/Territory conducted data analysis of existing and growing supply needs?

Yes. Describe data sources _____

Between 2008-2010, DECAL commissioned three studies that helped the state determine existing supply needs related to access and quality. First, DECAL commissioned two studies that measured the quality of early education in four settings (infant/toddler classrooms, preschool classrooms, Georgia's Pre-K classrooms, and family child care homes) with a representative sample. Results from the study indicated that quality was, on average, low in infant/toddler classrooms and family child care homes. Quality was, on average, higher in preschool and Georgia's Pre-K classrooms but could be improved. The results from the study informed the development of Quality Rated and the use in Georgia's Pre-K classrooms of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Second, DECAL commissioned an Economic Impact Study that aggregated a quantitative statewide economic benefit of early education. The study also surveyed all providers, and those results suggested areas of improvement related to workforce.

In 2014 a second Economic Impact Study was commissioned. Similar to the first study, an aggregated economic benefit was computed. However, the second study also measured the impact of the Great Recession on the early education industry. The study found that the number of providers had decreased, while the average number of children served per provider was higher in 2015 than in 2008. Results from this study are helping the state determine additional needs.

DECAL regularly conducts internal analyses that show existing quality and access needs. These analyses include the ongoing Quality Rated validation study that tracks the percentage of children receiving subsidies in Quality Rated programs, the percentage of eligible programs at the county level participating in Quality Rated (and achieving a higher rating), the impact of various new initiatives (such as offering subsidy grants to higher quality providers), and the current capacity of existing providers. By having an internal research and policy analysis unit housed within DECAL, the agency is able to undergo various ongoing analyses that measure supply needs related to access and quality.

No. If no, how does the State/Territory determine most critical supply needs? _____

4.6.2 Describe what method(s) is used to increase supply and improve quality for:

a) Infants and toddlers (check all that apply)

Grants and contracts (as discussed in 4.1.3): **High quality child care programs are eligible for child care subsidy grants to provide services to families with infants and toddlers who receive child care subsidies.**

Family child care networks: **Networks and peer mentor programs are in place specifically targeting family child care programs.**

Start-up funding

Technical assistance support: **A statewide network of Infant Toddler Specialists and R&R TA staff provide technical assistance specific to improving the quality of infant toddler care.**

Recruitment of providers: **Partnerships with Early Head Start programs and the initiation of quality subsidy grants serve to promote recruitment of providers who may not currently receive subsidy funds.**

- Tiered payment rates (as discussed in 4.4.1): **Providers at higher quality levels are eligible for tiered reimbursements for children receiving subsidy in their care.**
 - Other. Describe: **Professional development and resources specific to the Georgia Early and Development Standards are provided to programs providing infant and toddler care.**
- b) Children with disabilities (check all that apply)
- Grants and contracts (as discussed in 4.1.3)
 - Family child care networks
 - Start-up funding
 - Technical assistance support: **Through a network of statewide inclusion specialists, technical assistance on the use of evidence-based prevention strategies and support for responding to persistent challenging behavior are provided to programs.**
 - Recruitment of providers: **Partnerships with Early Head Start programs and the initiation of quality subsidy grants serve to promote recruitment of providers who may not currently receive subsidy funds.**
 - Tiered payment rates (as discussed in 4.4.1): **Providers at higher quality levels are eligible for tiered reimbursements for children receiving subsidy in their care. Providers may receive higher reimbursements up to the full cost of care for children with disabilities.**
 - Other. Describe _____
- c) Children who receive care during non-traditional hours (check all that apply)
- Grants and contracts (as discussed in 4.1.3)
 - Family child care networks: **Networks and peer mentor programs are in place specifically targeting family child care programs.**
 - Start-up funding
 - Technical assistance support
 - Recruitment of providers: **Partnerships with Early Head Start programs and the initiation of quality subsidy grants serve to promote recruitment of providers who may not currently receive subsidy funds.**
 - Tiered payment rates (as discussed in 4.4.1): **Providers at higher quality levels are eligible for tiered reimbursements for children in their care who receive subsidy.**
 - Other. Describe _____
- d) Homeless children (check all that apply)

- Grants and contracts (as discussed in 4.1.3): **Quality subsidy grants are awarded to child care programs that provide services to families who receive child care subsidies. While the Lead Agency is currently in the process of developing systems to identify and serve homeless populations, child care programs may serve a variety of families including children who meet the homeless definition as described in the McKinney-Vento Act.**
- Family child care networks
- Start-up funding
- Technical assistance support
- Recruitment of providers: **Partnerships with Early Head Start programs and the initiation of quality subsidy grants serve to promote recruitment of providers who may not currently receive subsidy funds.**
- Tiered payment rates (as discussed in 4.4.1): **Providers at higher quality levels are eligible for tiered reimbursements for children in their care who receive subsidy.**
- Other. Describe: **The Lead Agency will explore the possibility of partnerships with local homeless shelters to identify and build resources for homeless populations who need quality child care assistance.**

4.6.3 The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires States to describe the procedures and process it uses, in terms of the investments made to increase access to programs providing high quality child care and development services, to give priority for those investments to children in families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and that do not have such high-quality programs. (658E(c)(2)(Q)) Describe the status of State/Territory’s process and procedures to give priority for investments to children and families from areas with high concentrations of poverty and unemployment that do not have high-quality programs.

- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. Describe _____

The Lead Agency has developed a pilot that allows for the identification of areas around the state where high needs children have little or no access to high quality child care environments. The development of the Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Z) has allowed DECAL to work with local stakeholders in four areas of the state where assessments showed that if best practices and interventions in these zones were implemented in a concentrated way, children would be impacted in a positive way, ready for Kindergarten. The focus for the E3Z is on infants and toddlers in these four urban and non-urban areas. Partnerships with entities such as Early Head Start providers, home visiting programs, local businesses, local health departments, civic leaders, public and faith based partners and Family Connection Partnership collaboratives helped to rally support and identify critical need populations and areas where high quality programs were limited. Technical assistance was provided to existing child care programs including: expansion grants, peer-to-peer mentoring programs, and child care resource and referral

supports to increase quality levels. Parent incentives were provided in the form of reduced child care co-payments, parent focus groups, and additional resources through home visiting programs. The work with the E3Zs has been in place since 2014 and is expected to expand to other areas around the state with legislative support.

The Lead Agency has developed a technical assistance compliance unit that provides technical assistance to child care programs that may not be in full compliance with licensing rules. The unit works with each program to bring them up to compliance and continue to encourage programs in the direction of Quality Rated.

The Lead Agency's Georgia lottery funded Pre-K program researches poverty and unemployment rates to determine where classes are needed in high needs areas. The Lead Agency promotes access to high quality learning environments in these concentrated areas by using CCDF funds to lower family co-pays and provide incentives such as tiered reimbursement to child care programs who improve their quality through Quality Rated.

- Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) _____
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

5 Establish Standards and Monitoring Processes to Ensure the Health and Safety of Child Care Settings

The CCDBG Act of 2014 makes child care safer by defining minimum health and safety requirements for child care providers. This includes both the standards that must be established and the pre-service/orientation and ongoing minimum training required. States and Territories must also explain why exemptions to any of the licensing standards do not endanger the health and safety of CCDF children in license-exempt care. States and Territories are required to have standards for CCDF providers regarding group size limits and appropriate child-to-provider ratios based on the age of children in child care.

Pre-licensure and annual unannounced inspections of licensed CCDF providers and annual inspections of license-exempt CCDF providers are now required. The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires States and Territories to establish qualifications and training for licensing inspectors and appropriate inspector-to-provider ratios. It also requires States and Territories to conduct criminal background checks for all child care staff members, including staff members who don't care directly for children but have unsupervised access to children and lists specific disqualifying crimes. States and Territories must certify that all child care providers comply with child abuse reporting requirements of Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), mandatory reporting of known and suspected instances of child abuse and neglect).

5.1 Licensing Requirements and Standards

Each State/Territory is required to certify it has in effect licensing requirements applicable to all child care services provided within the State/Territory (not restricted to providers receiving CCDF), and to provide a detailed description of such requirements and how such requirements are effectively enforced. (658E(c)(2)(F) Nothing in the statute prohibits the State/Territory from exempting child care providers from licensing requirements. But, if the State/Territory exempts any child care providers from State/Territory licensing requirements, the CCDBG Act of 2014 requires States and Territories to describe how such licensing exemptions do not endanger the health, safety, and development of children receiving CCDF who are cared for by the license-exempt providers. (658E(c)(2)(F)(ii))

- 5.1.1 The State/Territory certifies that it has licensing requirements applicable to all child care services provided within the State. (658(c)(2)(F)) This requirement did not change under the CCDBG Act of 2014. List the categories of care that your State/Territory licenses and provide your definition of each licensed category of care _____

Child Care Learning Center – any place operated by an individual or any business entity recognized under Georgia law wherein are received for pay for group care, for fewer than 24 hours per day without transfer of legal custody, seven or more children under 18 years of age and which is required to be licensed. Child Care Learning Center also includes any day care center previously licensed by the Department of Human Resources and transferred pursuant to Code Section 20-1A-1 et seq.
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Family Child Care Learning Home – a private residence operated by any person who receives therein for pay for supervision and care fewer than 24 hours per day, without transfer of legal custody, at least three but not more than six children under 13 years of age who are not related to such persons and whose parent(s) are not residents in the same private residence as the provider and which is required to be licensed; provided, however, that the total number of unrelated children cared for in such home, for pay and not for pay, may not exceed six children under 13 years of age at one time, except that a provider may care for two additional children three years of age or older for two designated one hour periods daily upon approval by the Department.

5.1.2 Does your State/Territory exempt any child care providers that can receive CCDF from its licensing requirements?

- Yes. Describe which types of providers that can receive CCDF are exempt from licensing and how such exemptions do not endanger children who receive CCDF services from license-exempt providers _____

Georgia law allows some types of group care programs to be exempted from licensing requirements. The following groups of providers are exempt from licensing but are eligible for subsidy payments:

Beginning September 1, 2016, Georgia will consider only two programs eligible for CCDF funding.

1. Government-operated programs

These are programs owned and operated by any department or agency of state, county, or municipal government. This includes, but is not limited to, the customary school day, as defined in Georgia law, and before and/or after school programs in public schools operated by the public school system and staffed with school system employees and recreation programs operated by city or county parks and recreation departments and staffed with city or county employees.

Government owned and operated programs are either monitored by the Lead Agency or by an appropriate oversight entity through a Memorandum of Understanding. This ensures that all staff working in this category of programs have met Criminal Record Check requirements, attended a pre-service orientation, met training requirements, and the program is meeting the health and safety standards defined by the Lead Agency.

2. School-age day camp programs

Day camp programs for children five (5) years and older that are operated between school terms, whose primary purpose is to provide organized recreational, religious, or instructional activities. The day camp programs may operate during summer and other school breaks and shall operate for no more than twelve (12) hours per day.

Children in day camp programs are school age only and the program only operates during school breaks. These programs are required to notify parents that they are not licensed. Data from previous monitoring campaigns of day camps programs show that programs in this category are substantially meeting the core rules around health and safety. In some areas of the state, there is a lack of licensed care, meaning that day camps are the only resource for working families for care outside of school hours. Without this exemption category and the opportunity for subsidy children to attend, families and children could be put at risk. Georgia is currently in the process of developing a system via policies and processes around this exemption category and how the health, safety, and development of subsidy children in these programs will be monitored by the required due date as indicated in reauthorization.

To ensure that these exemptions do not endanger children receiving CCDF services, the Lead Agency has the following policies/requirements in place:

Exempt programs are required to:

- Post a notification that their program is exempt from licensing
- Obtain a signed form from parents acknowledging that they know the program is exempt from licensing requirements
- Post DECAL's (Lead Agency) phone number and website address for parents to see

Additionally, exempt programs are required to:

- Ensure DECAL (Lead Agency) has their current contact information
- Submit to DECAL (Lead Agency) copies of policies, advertisements, and parental agreement forms to verify that the program functions as an exempt program
- Notify DECAL of any changes in their accreditation and other changes in the program that may affect the program's exempt status
- Maintain children's attendance records and parents' signed forms that acknowledge that the program is not licensed

DECAL (Lead Agency) also has the authority to rescind an exemption approval if a program fails to meet the requirements. Finally, regional and state authorities such as the health department, state and local fire marshal, and local building and zoning officials continue to have authority to inspect and approve exempt programs.

No

5.1.3 Describe the status of the State/Territory's development and implementation of child care standards for providers receiving CCDF that address appropriate ratios between the number of children and the number of providers and group size, in terms of the age of the children for each type of setting. (658E(c)(2)(H))

Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. Describe using 5.1.4 and 5.1.5 below.

- ☒ Not implemented. If not implemented, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)
Substantially implemented
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable:
Fully Implemented: All licensed child care programs, including center based care and family care, have licensing standards applicable to this requirement.
Not Implemented: There are no required ratio and group size standards for exempt programs.
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.): **1) Establish appropriate ratio and group size requirements for exempt programs; 2) Adapt vendor agreements; 3) Train eligibility staff; 4) Communicate new requirements with current exempt programs; 5) Train licensing staff**
 - Projected start date for each activity: **1) March 2016; 2) September 2016; 3) June 2016; 4) March 2016; 5) June 2016.**
 - Projected end date for each activity: **1) March 2016; 2) September 2016; 3) September 2016; 4) June 2016; 5) September 2015.**
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **None**

5.1.4 Describe how the State/Territory child care standards for providers receiving CCDF address appropriate ratios between the number of children and the number of providers and group size, in terms of the age of the children for each type of setting. (658E(c)(2)(H))

a) Licensed Center-Based Care

1. Infant

- State/Territory age definition **0 to 12 months**

- Ratio **1:6**
 - Group size **12**
2. Toddler
 - State/Territory age definition: **12 to 24 months who are walking and 25 to 35 months of age**
 - Ratio **1:8 for ones and 1:10 for twos**
 - Group size **16/20**
 3. Preschool
 - State/Territory age definition: **3 years and 4 years old**
 - Ratio: **1:15 for threes and 1:18 for fours**
 - Group size **20/36**
 4. School-Age
 - State/Territory age definition **Five years old and six years and older**
 - Ratio **1:20 for fives and 1:25 for six year olds**
 - Group size **40/50**
 5. If any of the responses above are different for exempt child care centers, describe

The state does not have statutory authority to set ratio or group size requirements for exempt programs through licensing rules and regulations; by September 30, 2016, identical standards for ratio and group size requirements will be implemented through subsidy policy for exempt programs. Licensing staff will monitor these requirements during annual monitoring visits.

6. Describe, if applicable, ratios and group sizes for centers with mixed age groups

A center can combine children in mixed-age groups, but the staff: child ratios for a mixed group shall be based on the ages of the youngest children in the group if more than 20 percent of the children in the mixed-age group belong to younger age grouping(s).

Children under three years of age shall be housed in separate physical areas from older children and cannot be mixed with older except during early morning times of arrival and late afternoon times of departure, infants and children younger than three (3) years may be grouped with older children so long as staff: child ratios and group size are met based upon the age of the youngest child in the group.

- b) Licensed Group Child Care Homes:

Group Day Care Homes were merged into the definition of child care learning centers, effective January 1, 2016. The new definition of child care learning center encompasses the previous definition of group day care homes, which was defined by being able to care for seven children but not more than 18 children for pay. The new child care learning definition defines child care learning centers by setting the threshold of the number children in care to begin at seven.

1. Infant

- State/Territory age definition [redacted]
 - Ratio [redacted]
 - Group size [redacted]
2. Toddler
- State/Territory age definition [redacted]
 - Ratio [redacted]
 - Group size [redacted]
3. Preschool
- State/Territory age definition [redacted]
 - Ratio [redacted]
 - Group size [redacted]
4. School-Age
- State/Territory age definition [redacted]
 - Ratio [redacted]
 - Group size [redacted]
5. Describe the maximum number of children that are allowed in the home at any one time, if the State/Territory requires related children to be included in the child-to-provider ratio or group size, or the limits on infants and toddlers or additional school-age children that are allowed for part of the day [redacted]
6. If any of the responses above are different for exempt group child care homes, describe [redacted]
- N/A. State/Territory does not have group child care homes.

c) Licensed Family Child Care:

1. Describe the ratios [redacted], group size [redacted], the threshold for when licensing is required [redacted], maximum number of children that are allowed in the home at any one time [redacted], if the State/Territory requires related children to be included in the Child-to-Provider ratio or group size [redacted], or the limits on infants and toddlers or additional school-age children that are allowed for part of the day [redacted]

Family Child Care Learning Homes is limited to the total number of children not related to the provider in the family day care home, for pay or not for pay, to not exceed six children.

Notwithstanding the limitation to six children prescribed by the definition of a Family Child Care Learning Home, a provider may care for two additional children who are three years of age or older for two designated one-hour periods daily upon approval by DECAL.

Whenever related children or children who reside in the home are present in the home, the total number of children under the age of thirteen years may not exceed twelve.

An assistant who must be at least 16 years of age must be present to assist with supervision whenever 1) More than three children under the age of 12 months are present; or 2) More than six children under the age of three years are present; or 3.) More than eight children under the age of five years are present.

2. If any of the responses above are different for exempt family child care home providers, describe:

Georgia does not grant any exemptions to family child care learning homes.

- d) Any other eligible CCDF provider categories:

Describe the ratios , group size , the threshold for when licensing is required , maximum number of children that are allowed in the home at any one time , if the State/Territory requires related children to be included in the child-to-provider ratio or group size , or the limits on infants and toddlers or additional school-age children that are allowed for part of the day

Not applicable

- 5.1.5 Describe how the State/Territory child care standards address required qualifications for providers appropriate to each type of setting, including the minimum age allowed, minimum education level, any specific content required related to the age of children. (658E(c)(2)(H))

1. Licensed Center-Based Care:

1. Infant lead teacher and assistant teacher qualifications
2. Toddler lead teacher and assistant teacher qualifications
3. Preschool lead teacher and assistant teacher qualifications

Lead teacher qualifications

All lead teachers in a child care center must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. Lead teachers must be hired with a minimum education level of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition or a higher education credential in Early Childhood Education from a college or university where the course of study includes an intensive practicum in child care as part of the curriculum and which is approved by DECAL. Other accepted credentials include a Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, Technical College Diploma (TCD) in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development (AA, AAS, AAT), a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in a field other than Early Childhood Education or Child Development and three (3) months of qualifying child care experience, a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, or a Master's degree from an accredited college or university in Early Childhood Education or Child Development.

If the newly hired lead teacher does not possess one of the educational and qualifying child care experience requirements, the lead teacher must enroll in a program of study within six (6) months from the hire date to obtain one of the educational credentials listed above. The newly hired teacher must complete the credential or degree within eighteen (18) months after enrollment. The child care center is required to maintain a written professional development plan for all newly hire teachers without a

credential. This professional development plan must be maintained in the lead teacher's file, and such plan shall be available for inspection and provided to DECAL staff upon request.

Assistant teacher qualifications

An assistant teacher in a child care center must be at least sixteen (16) years of age to work with children. An assistant teacher in child care center must be at least eighteen (18) years of age to be solely responsible for children without a lead teacher.

4. School-Age lead teacher and assistant teacher qualifications

School-age lead teacher qualifications

At least one school-age lead teacher in a child care center must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. The lead teacher must be hired with a minimum education level of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition or a higher education credential in Early Childhood Education from a college or university where the course of study includes an intensive practicum in child care as part of the curriculum and which is approved by DECAL. Other accepted credentials include a Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, Technical College Diploma (TCD) in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development (AA, AAS, AAT), a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in a field other than Early Childhood Education or Child Development and three (3) months of qualifying child care experience, a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, or a Master's degree from an accredited college or university in Early Childhood Education or Child Development.

If the newly hired lead teacher does not possess one of the educational and qualifying child care experience requirements, the lead teacher must enroll in a program of study within six (6) months from the hire date to obtain one of the educational credentials listed above. The newly hired teacher must complete the credential or degree within eighteen (18) months after enrollment. The child care center is required to maintain a written professional development plan for all newly hire teachers without a credential. This professional development plan must be maintained in the lead teacher's file, and such plan shall be available for inspection and provided to DECAL staff upon request.

School-age assistant teacher qualifications

A school-age assistant teacher in a child care center must be at least sixteen (16) years of age to work with children. An assistant teacher in child care center must be at least eighteen (18) years of age to be solely responsible for children without a lead teacher.

5. Director qualifications

A child care center must have a director who is responsible for the supervision, operation, and maintenance of the center. The director must be on the center's premises. If the director is absent from the center at any time during the hours of the center's operation, there shall be an officially designated

person on the center site to assume responsibility for the operation of the center, and this person shall have full access to all records required to be maintained.

Effective October 1, 2005, prior to the issuance of an initial license, the director of a child care center shall have completed a 40-hour director's training course that has been approved by DECAL. At a minimum, the subject matter taught at a director's training course shall cover the areas of administrator competencies that serve as a framework for professional development, which include, but are not limited to, early learning standards, business management, communication, developmentally appropriate practices, professional and leadership development, and advocacy for the center, parents, children, and staff.

The director of a child care center must be at least twenty-one (21) years of age. Also, the director must be hired with a minimum education level of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition or a higher education credential in Early Childhood Education from a college or university where the course of study includes an intensive practicum in child care as part of the curriculum and which is approved by DECAL and six (6) months of qualifying child care experience. Other accepted credentials include a Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) in Early Childhood Education or Child Development and six (6) months of qualifying child care experience, Technical College Diploma (TCD) in Early Childhood Education or Child Development and six (6) months of qualifying child care experience, 40-hour director training course approved by DECAL and has been employed for a minimum of five (5) years as an on-site Child Care Learning Center Director or as an on-site Group Day Care Home Director, an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development (AA, AAS, AAT) and six (6) months of qualifying child care experience, a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in a field other than Early Childhood Education or Child Development and three (3) months of qualifying child care experience, a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, or a Master's degree from an accredited college or university in Early Childhood Education or Child Development.

2. Licensed Group Child Care Homes:

1. Infant lead teacher [redacted] and assistant qualifications [redacted]
 2. Toddler lead teacher [redacted] and assistant qualifications [redacted]
 3. Preschool lead teacher [redacted] and assistant qualifications [redacted]
 4. School-Age lead teacher [redacted] and assistant qualifications [redacted]
- N/A. State/Territory does not have group child care homes.

Effective January 1, 2016, the license designation for a Group Child Care Home does not exist in Georgia child care licensing. All Group Child Care Home designations prior to January 1, 2016 are required to meet Child Care Learning Center licensing requirements.

3. Licensed Family Child Care home provider qualifications

Pre-service training is required prior to the submission of a Family Child Care Home application. The applicant who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations shall complete the pre-service training listed below that has been approved by DECAL and which will include:

1. Orientation that provides, at a minimum, instruction on the application process and gives an overview of the state's rules and regulations that relate to the operation of the Family Day Care Home;
2. Training course that includes provider competencies that serve as a framework for professional development, which includes, but is not limited to, early learning standards, communication, developmentally appropriate practices, professional and leadership development, business management, and advocacy for the Family Day Care Home, parents, children, and staff;
3. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid training programs offered by certified or licensed health care professionals and approved by DECAL, which include emergency care for infants and children.

The Family Child Care Home provider shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age. Effective July 1, 2009, providers who apply for initial license shall submit valid evidence/documentation of one of the following credentials/degrees issued by either the organizations listed below, an accredited educational institution, or another organization approved/recognized by DECAL:

- a) Child Development Associate (CDA) credential (issued by the Council for Professional Recognition)
- b) Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) in Early Childhood Education
- c) Technical College Diploma (TCD) in Early Childhood Education
- d) Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education (AA, AAS, AAT)
- e) Paraprofessional Certificate (issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission)
- f) Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education
- g) Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education

Other eligible CCDF provider qualifications: All informal providers must be at least 21 years of age, receive a satisfactory Criminal Records Check, receive Infant/Toddler CPR Certification and complete eight hours of health and safety training. The health and safety training must be completed during the first six (6) months of each enrollment year.

By September 30, 2016, identical staff qualifications and credentials standards will be required for exempt programs receiving CCDF subsidy. This will be required through vendor agreements and evaluated in the required annual monitoring.

- 5.1.6 The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a new provision specifying that States and Territories must 1) establish health and safety requirements for providers serving children receiving CCDF assistance relating to matters included in the topics listed below, and 2) have pre-service or orientation training requirements, appropriate to the provider setting, that address these health and safety topics. (658E(c)(2)(I)(i)) This requirement is applicable to all child care providers

receiving CCDF regardless of licensing status (licensed or license-exempt). The only exception to this requirement is for providers who are caring for their own relatives, as States have the option of exempting relatives from some or all CCDF health and safety requirements. When establishing these requirements, States are encouraged to consider the age of children and type of child care setting to ensure that they are appropriate to the health and safety needs of the children from birth through age 12 and the providers who care for them.

a) The State/Territory certifies that it has health and safety requirements for providers receiving CCDF in the following areas:

- Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization)
- Prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices
- Administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent
- Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions
- Building and physical premises safety, including identification of and protection from hazards that can cause bodily injury such as electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic
- Prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma
- Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster, or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a) (1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1))
- Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of bio contaminants
- Precautions in transporting children (if applicable)
- First aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification

Yes. The State/Territory certifies that it has health and safety requirements for CCDF providers in these areas as of March 1, 2016. Provide a citation and a link if available [\[redacted\]](#)

No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)
Partially Implemented

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable: **The rules for Child Care Learning Centers and Family Child Care Learning Homes have health and safety requirements in these topic areas required in orientation provided by the program and as part of annual ongoing training. Permission has been granted by the Board of the Lead Agency to further amend the rules to require training in all topic areas prior to caring for children or within the first three months of employment.**
- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented

Partially Implemented: 1) The rules for Child Care Learning Centers have health and safety requirements as specified in the rules and regulations except for the following topics: a) Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions; b) Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a) (1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1));
2) For Family Child Care Learning Homes, there are incomplete health and safety requirements for these topics: a) Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions; b) Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a) (1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1))

Not Implemented: Informal providers receiving subsidies and caring for no more than two unrelated or six related children have limited health and safety requirements that do not detail these topics. An annual health and safety checklist is conducted at home visits that include a general observation of the premises.

- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.): **The Lead Agency will adopt and/or amend rules to implement these health and safety requirements for all child care programs receiving CCDF.**
- Projected start date for each activity
November 1, 2015
- Projected end date for each activity
September 30, 2016
- Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity
Lead Agency

- Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity

None

b) The State/Territory certifies that it has pre-service (prior to initial service) or orientation (period from when service started) and ongoing training requirements, appropriate to the provider setting that address each of the requirements relating to the topic areas listed above. ACF expects these trainings will be part of a broader systematic approach and progression of professional development (as described in Section 6) within a State/Territory that will result in opportunities for child care providers to accumulate knowledge, competencies and credits toward eventual completion of a professional certification or higher education. The law does not specify a specific number of training or education hours but States and Territories are encouraged to consult with *Caring for our Children Basics* for best practices and recommended time needed to address these training requirements.

Yes. The State/Territory certifies that it has pre-service or orientation and ongoing training requirements appropriate to the provider setting that address each of the requirements relating to the topics listed above as of March 1, 2016. Describe, including at a minimum 1) how the state/territory defines preservice or orientation period, 2) the minimum number of annual preservice or orientation hours required to meet these health, and safety requirements, and 3) ongoing training or education hours required to meet these health and safety requirements _____

No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016

- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other): **Partially implemented**

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) partially or substantially implemented: **Orientation for staff at Child Care Learning Centers and Family Child Care Learning Homes contains elements that require formal training and some elements that do not specify training, only that the staff receive in-house orientation.**

- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____

Partially Implemented:

1) Orientation for staff at Child Care Learning Centers contains elements that require formal training and some elements that do not specify training, only that the staff receive in-house orientation. Orientation and/or training are required for all topics outlined except for the following: a) Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions; b) Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a) (1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1)); c) First aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification (currently required for directors, at least one person on vehicle, and 50% of staff)

2) For Family Child Care Learning Homes, orientation is currently not required for the following topics: a) Building and physical premises safety, including identification of and protection from hazards that can cause bodily injury such as electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic; b) Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a) (1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1)); c) Precautions in transporting children (if applicable)

3) Family Child Care Learning Home providers must currently obtain training in these topics within the first year: a) Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization); b) Prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma (part of Child Abuse and Neglect)

4) There are no training requirements for employees in Family Child Care Learning Homes other than CPR and First Aid certification if the person is the only adult present. The only other requirement is that the persons are informed of the rules and receive orientation in the provider's policies and procedures.

5) Informal providers receiving subsidies and caring for no more than two children must receive certification in CPR and First Aid and training in Injury Prevention, Infectious Disease Control, and Child Abuse Detection.

6) Exempt programs have no training requirements.

- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - 1. The Lead Agency will conduct an audit of the training currently available through private training facilitators, child care resource and referral agencies, and technical colleges to determine if training exists on topics not currently required. Preliminary results indicate that while the trainings do exist in the state, most are offered optionally and for a fee.**
 - 2. The Lead Agency will cultivate partnerships to provide these training topics at no cost to child care providers.**
 - 3. The Lead Agency will write new subsidy policy that will be reflected in the vendor agreement and amend regulatory rules to implement pre-service training for these health and safety requirements at all child care programs receiving CCDF. All of the orientation subject matter will be formalized into training for credit hours. Currently, some of the material is incorporated into training designed for the Child Development Associate credential offered by private trainers, and some of the material is part of the Technical Certificate of Credit and Diploma programs offered by the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG).**
 - 4. The Lead Agency will work with these partners and with Georgia Training Approval for Early Care and Learning to ensure the training hours articulate into a professional certification or higher credential.**
- Projected start date for each activity
November 1, 2015-All activities
- Projected end date for each activity
September 30, 2016-All activities
- Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity
Lead Agency
- Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity
Private training agencies
Child care resource and referral agencies
Technical College System of Georgia
Georgia Training Approval for Early Care and Learning

5.1.7 Does the State/Territory have health and safety requirements for any of the following optional areas?

Nutrition (including age appropriate feeding). Describe

Child Care Learning Center Rules state: Facilities are required to meet the USDA Nutritional Guidelines for Children in Child Care. Meals and snacks with serving sizes dependent on the age of the child shall meet nutritional guidelines as established by the United States Department of Agriculture Child Care Food Program. Meals and snacks shall be varied daily, and additional servings of nutritious food shall be offered to children over and above the required daily minimum if not contraindicated by special diets.

Access to physical activity. Describe

Child Care Learning Center Rules require: Outdoor activities shall be provided daily, weather permitting, in accordance with the following:

1. Centers operating five (5) hours or more per day shall provide each child who is not an infant at least one and one-half (1 1/2) hours of outdoor activity per day.
2. Infants shall spend at least one (1) hour daily out of doors.
3. Centers operating less than five (5) hours per day shall provide a brief outdoor period for the children daily.

Family Child Care Learning Homes require that time is spent outdoors daily, weather permitting.

Screen time. Describe

Child Care Learning Center and Family Child Care Learning Homes rules state: The use of entertainment media, such as television, videotaped programs or movies, and video or computer games shall be limited to no more than two (2) hours daily per child or group. Additionally, the child care program shall provide the use of media only at times when alternative activities are available for children who choose not to participate.

Caring for children with special needs. Describe

Child Care Learning Center rules state that a program's standard program of care or activities should accommodate children with special needs. State licensing requires adaptation of the child care program's standard program of care or activities to accommodate children with special needs. The special adaptation that the child care program agrees to must be in writing and the result of a mutual agreement between the child care program and the parents of the child with special needs. The agreement shall be made in connection with the child's enrollment or at the time that the special need becomes apparent to the child care program or the parents.

Recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect. Describe

Georgia law and child care licensing rules require reporting of suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, and deprivation for all child care programs.

- Other subject areas determined by the State/Territory to be necessary to promote child development or to protect children’s health and safety. Describe

The following are additional rules required for licensed child care programs:

- The child care program shall provide a daily planned program of varied and developmentally appropriate activities that promote the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, language, and literacy development of each child.
- Center staff shall use a variety of teaching methods to accommodate the needs of the children's different learning styles.
- Current lesson plans shall be kept on site and reflect appropriate instruction practices and activities to support children's development.
- The child care program shall have sufficient and varied play and learning equipment and materials to support the above program of activities in all developmental areas.
- Additionally, through technical assistance and training, child care teachers are encouraged to use the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) to plan activities that are age-appropriate for the children in care. The GELDS are a set of appropriate, attainable standards that are flexible enough to support children’s individual rates of development, approaches to learning, and cultural context. The GELDS are a continuum of skills, behaviors, and concepts that children develop throughout this time of life. They are divided into age groups and serve as a framework for learning. The GELDS are aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, the CCGPS for K-12, and the Work Sampling System Assessment.

5.1.8 States and Territories have the option to exempt relatives (as defined in CCDF regulations as grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings if living in a separate residence, aunts, and uncles, (98.41(A)(ii)(A)) from CCDF health and safety training requirements. Does the State/Territory exempt relatives from the requirement to receive pre-service or orientation health and safety training on any or all of the listed topics? Note this exception applies if the individual cares ONLY for relative children.

- Yes, all relatives are exempt from all health and safety training requirements. If the State/Territory exempts all relatives from the CCDF health and safety training requirements, describe how the State ensures the health and safety of children in relative care. _____
- Yes, some relatives are exempt from health and safety training requirements. If the State/Territory exempts some relatives from the CCDF health and safety training requirements, describe which relatives are exempt from which requirements (all or some)

and include how the State/Territory ensures the health and safety of children in relative care. _____

No, relatives are not exempt from CCDF health and safety training requirements.

5.2 Monitoring and Enforcement Policies and Practices

5.2.1 The State/Territory certifies that the State/Territory has in effect policies and practices to ensure that providers for children receiving assistance and their facilities comply with applicable State or local licensing and health and safety requirements. (658E(c)(2)(J))

Yes. The State/Territory certifies that it has policies and practices to ensure compliance with applicable licensing and health and safety requirements for providers receiving CCDF and their facilities as of March 1, 2016. List the policy citation _____

No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)

Substantially implemented

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable
Fully Implemented: 1) All licensed child care programs have rules and regulations for child care and are monitored twice annually.
- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented
Not Implemented: 1) There are no standards defined to monitor exempt programs receiving subsidy.
- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.)
1) Determine applicable standards to monitor and enforce; 2) Require in vendor agreement; 3) Train eligibility and licensing staff; 4) Complete system requirements in licensing database; and 5) Communicate and outreach to impacted programs

- Projected start date for each activity: 1) **March 1, 2016; 2) September 1, 2016; 3) March 1, 2016; 4) March 1, 2016; and 5) March 1, 2016.**
- Projected end date for each activity: 1) **June 2016; 2) September 30, 2016; 3) September 30, 2016; 4) June 30, 2016; 5) August 31, 2016**
- Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
- Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **Not Applicable**

5.2.2 The CCDBG Act of 2014 added the following provisions for enforcement of licensing which must be in effect no later than November 19, 2016 for all providers who serve children receiving CCDF (with the option to exempt relatives). While the law does not specify strategies to meet these requirements, States and Territories could consider implementing a differential monitoring approach as long as the full complement of licensing and CCDF health and safety standards was representative and the frequency was at least annually.

- a) **Licensing Inspectors** - It will have policies and practices that ensure that individuals who are hired as licensing inspectors in the State/Territory are qualified to inspect those child care providers and facilities and have received training in related health and safety requirements, and are trained in all aspects of the State’s licensure requirements. (658E(c)(2)(K)(i)(I))

Yes. The State/Territory certifies that as of March 1, 2016 it has policies and practices that ensure that individuals who are hired as licensing inspectors in the State/Territory are qualified to inspect those child care providers and facilities and have received training in related health and safety requirements, and are trained in all aspects of the State’s licensure requirements. List the policy citation and describe the qualifications, including at a minimum how inspector qualifications address training related to the language and cultural diversity of the providers, and how qualifications address being appropriate to the age of children in care and type of provider setting: **Georgia employs licensing inspectors that meet the minimum qualifications as set forth by the Georgia Department of Administrative Services as it relates to requirements for Early Childhood Education. A child care licensing consultant must meet the following required minimum qualifications prior to being considered for hiring by DECAL:**

OR

Master’s degree in Early Childhood Education and/or related early childhood field, such as Sociology, Psychology, Social Work, and Human Services, etc. from an accredited college/university.

Further, DECAL has implemented a three-month long onboarding process for training each licensing inspector as to the requirements for health and safety set forth by Georgia statute. All newly hired consultants must satisfactorily complete the onboarding process. This process includes classroom training on all areas of our licensing rules and regulations, as well as field visit shadowing and mentoring.

No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than November 19, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than November 19, 2016) _____
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

b) **Inspections for Licensed CCDF Providers** - It will require licensing inspectors to perform inspections, with not less than one prelicensure inspection, for compliance

with health, safety, and fire standards, of each such child care provider and facility in the State/Territory. It will require licensing inspectors to perform not less than annually, one unannounced inspection of licensed CCDF providers for compliance with all child care licensing standards, which shall include an inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards (inspectors may inspect for compliance with all 3 standards at the same time. (658E(c)(2)(K)(i)(II))

- Yes. The State/Territory certifies that as of March 1, 2016 it has policies and practices regarding inspections for licensed CCDF providers. List the policy citation and describe the inspection requirements including the frequency of announced and unannounced visits _____

DECAL's policy is to ensure that child care consultants conduct annual, unannounced, on-site, rule-by-rule licensing inspections (licensing studies) for each licensed child care learning center and family child care learning home twice during the state fiscal year. (Policy citation: CCS-1500 from Child Care Services Policies and Procedures; Legal Authority: O.C.G.A. 20-1A-1 et seq.) Additional follow-up visits and complaint investigations are conducted on an as needed basis.

Initial Licensing Studies (pre-licensure inspections) are conducted at all prospective child care facilities prior to a license being issued. These pre-licensure visits are announced and include a thorough review of health and safety indicators throughout the physical plant and site (including all outdoor areas to be used for licensed space). (Policy citation: CCS-1300 from Child Care Services Policies and Procedures; Legal Authority: O.C.G.A. 20-1A-1 et seq.)

- No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than November 19, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than November 19, 2016)

- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

c) **Inspections for License-Exempt CCDF Providers (except those serving relatives)** – It will have policies and practices that require licensing inspectors (or qualified monitors designated by the Lead Agency) of child care providers and facilities to perform an annual monitoring visit of each license-exempt CCDF provider (unless the provider is described in section (658P(6)(B)). (658E(c)(2)(K)(ii)(IV))

- Yes. The State/Territory certifies that as of March 1, 2016 it has policies and practices regarding inspections for license-exempt CCDF providers. List the policy citation and describe the annual monitoring visit requirements: _____
- No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than November 19, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than November 19, 2016)
November 19, 2016
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)
Partially Implemented
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable: **The Lead Agency has identified that subsidy payment will be made to the following select categories of exempt programs only: a) Government-owned and operated; b) Day Camps for children five years and older**

- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented: **Currently, the Lead Agency does not have policies for monitoring license-exempt programs.**
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.): **Georgia is currently in the process of developing an annual monitoring system via policies and processes which will include unannounced site visits to identified CCDF providers in specific license-exempt categories.**
 - Projected start date for each activity: **November 1, 2015**
 - Projected end date for each activity: **November 30, 2016**
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **None**

d) **Ratio of Licensing Inspectors** – It will have policies and practices that require the ratio of licensing inspectors to such child care providers and facilities in the State/Territory to be maintained at a level sufficient to enable the State to conduct inspections of such child care providers and facilities on a timely basis in accordance with Federal, State, and local law. (658E(c)(2)(K)(i)(III))

Yes. The State/Territory certifies that as of March 1, 2016 it has policies and practices regarding the ratio of licensing inspectors to such child care providers and facilities in the State/Territory. List the policy citation and list the State/Territory ratio of licensing inspectors: **Child care consultants have a caseload of approximately 60 providers. This average is based on total number of consultant level staff within the Child Care Services division. Some of the consultant staff have been identified for specialized work duties (i.e., initial licensure processes and critical complaint investigations); however, the current caseloads allow for timely and thorough inspections to all providers twice per year.**

No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than November 19, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than November 19, 2016) _____
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

e) **Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting** – That child abuse reporting requirements are in place and comply with section of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)(2)(B)(i)) (658E(c)(2)(L))

Yes. Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. List the Lead Agency’s policy citation(s) **Georgia complies with the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting expectation as stated in O.C.G.A. §19-7-5(c)(1) (Mandated Reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect).**

No. If no, the State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than November 19, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than November 19, 2016) _____
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____

- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

5.2.3 States and Territories have the option to exempt relatives (as defined in CCDF regulations as grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings if living in a separate residence, aunts, and uncles, (98.41(A)(ii)(A)) from inspection requirements. Note this exception only applies if the individual cares ONLY for relative children. Does the State/Territory exempt relatives from inspection requirements listed in 5.2.2?

- Yes, all relatives are exempt from all inspection requirements. If the State/Territory exempts all relatives from the inspection requirements, describe how the State ensures the health and safety of children in relative care. _____
- Yes, some relatives are exempt from inspection requirements. If the State/Territory exempts some relatives from the inspection requirements, describe which relatives are exempt from which requirements (all or some) and include how the State/Territory ensures the health and safety of children in relative care. _____
- No, relatives are not exempt from inspection requirements.

5.3 Criminal Background Checks

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added new requirements for States and Territories receiving CCDF funds to conduct criminal background checks on child care staff members and prospective staff members of child care providers. States and Territories must have requirements, policies, and procedures in place to conduct criminal background checks for staff members of child care providers (other than relatives) that are licensed, regulated or registered under State/Territory law or receive CCDF funds. Background check requirements apply to any staff member who is employed by a child care provider for compensation or whose activities involve the care or supervision of children or unsupervised access to children. For family child care homes, this includes the caregiver requesting a check of him/herself, as well as other adults in the household that may have unsupervised access to children. These provisions must be in place no later than September 30, 2017.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 specifies what a comprehensive criminal background check includes and a child care provider must submit a request to the appropriate State/Territory agency for a criminal background check for each child care staff member, including prospective child care staff members at least once every 5 years. A criminal background check must include a search of: State criminal and sex offender registry in the State where the staff member resides and each State where the staff member has resided over the past 5 years; State child abuse and neglect registry in the State where the staff member resides and each State where the staff member has resided over the past 5 years, National Crime Information Center (run by the FBI); FBI fingerprint check using Next Generation Identification ; and National Sex Offender Registry.

Child care staff members cannot be employed by a provider receiving CCDF if they refuse a background check; make materially false statements in connection with the background check; are registered or required to be registered on the State or National Sex Offender Registry; have been convicted of a felony consisting of: murder, child abuse or neglect, crimes against children, spousal abuse, crime involving rape or sexual assault, kidnapping, arson, physical assault or battery, or subject to an individual review, at the State's option, a drug-related offense committed during the preceding 5 years; or have been convicted of a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child.

Timeliness of background checks - The State/Territory must conduct the background checks as quickly as possible and shall not exceed 45 days after the child care provider submitted the request. The State/Territory shall provide the results of the background check in a statement that indicates whether the staff member is eligible or ineligible, without revealing specific disqualifying information. If the staff member is ineligible, the State/Territory will provide information about each disqualifying crime to the staff member.

Fees for background checks – Fees that a State/Territory may charge for the costs of processing applications and administering a criminal background check may not exceed actual costs to the State/Territory for processing and administration.

Transparency – The State/Territory must ensure that policies and procedures for conducting criminal background checks are published on the State/Territory's consumer education website (also see section 2.3) or other publicly available venue.

Appeals process – The State/Territory shall have a process for a child care staff member to appeal the results of their background check to challenge the accuracy and completeness.

Privacy considerations - Lead Agency may not publicly release the results of individual background checks. They may release aggregated data by crime as long as the data does not include personally identifiable information.

5.3.1 Describe the status of the State/Territory's requirements, policies, and procedures for criminal background checks for child care staff members and child care providers.

Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. List the policy citation within the Lead Agency's rules _____ and describe the policies and procedures for criminal background checks using 5.3.2 through 5.3.9 below.

Not implemented. The State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2017). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2017)
September 30, 2017
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)

Partially Implemented

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____

Substantially Implemented: 1) Criminal background check for each child care staff member; 2) Criminal background check for each child care staff member every five years; 3) Child care staff members cannot be employed by a provider receiving CCDF if they refuse a background check; make materially false statements in connection with the background check; have been convicted of a felony consisting of: murder, child abuse or neglect, crimes against children, spousal abuse, crime involving rape or sexual assault, kidnapping, arson, physical assault or battery, or subject to an individual review, at the state's option, a drug-related offense committed during the preceding five years; or have been convicted of a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child.

Partially Implemented: 1) The State/Territory must ensure that policies and procedures for conducting criminal background checks are published on the State/Territory's consumer education website (also see section 2.3) or other publicly available venue; 2) The State must conduct the background checks as quickly as possible and shall not exceed 45 days after the child care provider submitted the request 3) Transparency: Although the Lead Agency publishes current background check requirements on its website, it does not yet publish the requirements under this new law.

Unmet Requirements:

1) Criminal background check for each child care staff member – Lead Agency does not currently: a) Conduct a criminal background check for child

care staff members of exempt facilities; b) Conduct a state criminal background check in the state where the staff member has resided over the past five years if other than Georgia; c) Search sex offender registry of any state; d) Search the National Sex Offender Registry; e) Search the child abuse registry of any state.

2) Criminal background check for each child care staff member every five years – Lead Agency does not currently conduct a criminal background check every five years for child care staff members of exempt facilities.

3) Bars to employment - Child care staff members cannot be employed by a provider receiving CCDF if they refuse a background check; make materially false statements in connection with the background check; have been convicted of a felony consisting of: murder, child abuse or neglect, crimes against children, spousal abuse, crime involving rape or sexual assault, kidnapping, arson, physical assault or battery, or subject to an individual review, at the state’s option, a drug-related offense committed during the preceding five years; or have been convicted of a violent misdemeanor committed as an adult against a child – Lead Agency does not currently a) Conduct a criminal background check for child care staff members of exempt facilities; b) Exercise the option of allowing a drug-related offense committed during the preceding five years unless the individual is sentenced under the Georgia First Offender Act.

4) Timeliness-The state must conduct the background checks as quickly as possible and shall not exceed 45 days after the child care provider submitted the request. Lead Agency does not currently obtain criminal and abuse registry information from other states. Lead Agency cannot determine how long this process will take.

- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity: **See below**
 - Projected end date for each activity: **September 30, 2017**
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **None**
- **Conduct a criminal background check for child care staff members of exempt facilities**
 - **Projected start date: July 1, 2015**
 - **Projected end date: September 30, 2016**
 - **Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: Lead Agency**
 - **Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: None**

- Effective January 1, 2016, Georgia law will permit DECAL to conduct a national fingerprint-based criminal background check on all staff members of any child care program (including those exempted from licensure) that received funds through DECAL for the care of children;
- DECAL is currently updating its database to identify all such exempt programs; and
- DECAL is building technology to process employees of exempt programs electronically.
- **Conduct a state criminal background check in the state where the staff member has resided over the past five years if other than Georgia**
 - **Projected start date: June 1, 2015**
 - **Projected end date: September 30, 2017**
 - **Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: Lead Agency**
 - **Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: Every state and territory responsible for administering criminal records under the law**
 - **Records check applications (paper and electronic) will include a field whereby an applicant can self-identify the state(s) in which they have lived for the past five years. DECAL will write policy requiring the applicant to obtain the relevant state specific criminal background check and submit to DECAL for review;**
 - **New paper application has already been created;**
 - **Legislation was already passed removing the notary requirement for the application to allow for electronic submission of the application;**
 - **Program design has been completed to allow for electronic submission of the application; and**
 - **Each state must determine appropriate contacts in other states to complete this item.**
- **Search sex offender registry of any state**
 - **Projected start date: January 1, 2016**
 - **Projected end date: September 30, 2017**
 - **Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: Lead Agency**
 - **Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: Every state and territory responsible for administering criminal records under the law**
 - **Records check applications (paper and electronic) will include a field whereby an applicant can self-identify the state(s) in**

which they have lived for the past five years. Upon notification of out-of-state residency, DECAL will submit a request to the relevant state department for such information;

- New paper application has already been created;
- Legislation was already passed removing the notary requirement for the application to allow for electronic submission of the application; and
- Program design has been completed to allow for electronic submission of the application.
- **Search the National Sex Offender Registry**
 - Projected start date: January 1, 2017
 - Projected end date: September 30, 2017
 - Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: Lead Agency
 - Partners – N/A
- **Search the child abuse registry of Georgia**
 - Projected start date: January 1, 2017
 - Projected end date: September 30, 2017
 - Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: DECAL
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: Georgia Department of Human Services
 - The Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) is currently creating a state child abuse registry.
 - DECAL will sign a MOU with DHS to provide the necessary information under this law.
- **Search the child abuse registry of any state other than Georgia**
 - Projected start date: January 1, 2017
 - Projected end date: September 30, 2017
 - Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: Lead Agency
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: Every state and territory responsible for administering criminal records under the law
 - Records check applications (paper and electronic) will include a field whereby an applicant can self-identify the state(s) in which they have lived for the past five years. Upon notification of out-of-state residency, DECAL will submit a request to the relevant state department for such information;
 - New paper application has already been created;

- Legislation was already passed removing the notary requirement for the application to allow for electronic submission of the application; and
- Program design has been completed to allow for electronic submission of the application.
- **Bars to Employment**
 - Projected start date: January 1, 2017
 - Projected end date: September 30, 2017
 - Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: Lead Agency
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: None
 - DECAL already applies these standards to licensed child care facilities and plans to apply these standards to *exempt* programs that receive CCDF funds by the projected end date.
- **Transparency**
 - Projected start date: January 1, 2017
 - Projected end date: September 30, 2017
 - Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: DECAL
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: None
 - DECAL publishes current criminal background check information on its website.
 - DECAL will draft and publish the additional information in compliance with this law to its website by the projected end date.
- **Timeliness**
 - Projected start date: January 1, 2017
 - Projected end date: September 30, 2017
 - Agency – Who is responsible for completion of this activity: Lead Agency (DECAL)
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete this activity: None
 - DECAL will contact the Georgia Department of Human Services to obtain relevant Georgia child abuse registry information in a timely manner.
 - DECAL will contact other states to identify the proper entities responsible for disseminating the required information under this law in a timely manner.

5.3.2 Describe the process and procedures for conducting background checks in a timely manner, including which agency/entity is responsible and how the Lead Agency ensures that background checks performed by a 3rd party meet the requirements, protecting the privacy of child care staff members, and providing opportunities for applicants to appeal the results of background checks. _____

The Lead Agency employs a national fingerprint-based background check method to conduct criminal background checks. The process both protects the privacy of child care staff and includes an opportunity for appeals. The process is as follows:

An applicant submits a Records Check Application to DECAL (Lead Agency) and registers with the COGENT system, a 3rd party vendor that uses Next Generation Identification. The applicant submits to the LiveScan fingerprint process which results in electronic submission of criminal history information from both the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation directly to DECAL. These history reports are available only to members of the Criminal Records Unit that have undergone adequate Security Awareness Training. The reports are available electronically for 30 days but are printed and stored in a secured area in locked file cabinets and/or on a non-networked secure computer. To protect the privacy of child care staff members, DECAL sends a letter detailing specific criminal history information directly to the applicant via certified mail. DECAL sends a sanitized letter to the child care facility to inform them of the applicant's fitness status, i.e., satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A child care staff member who has a criminal history can appeal his/her unsatisfactory determination within 10 days of receipt of the determination letter. Under Georgia law, all appeals are heard before the Office of State Administrative Hearings.

Currently, the average turnaround time for a background check to be completed is 3-5 business days from the date of receipt of completed application and criminal history report if the applicant has no criminal history. An applicant with a criminal history or an incomplete file is given 21 days in which to supply the relevant documents. Upon receipt of the relevant documents, DECAL completes the background check determination within 1-2 business days on average. This time frame will increase if the applicant has been a resident of a state other than Georgia within the preceding five years.

Georgia is currently developing an online application process to decrease the processing time.

5.3.3 Describe how the State/Territory is assisting other States process background checks, including any agencies/entities responsible for responding to requests from other states: **Upon request, the Lead Agency will assist any state to obtain relevant Georgia criminal history or child abuse registry information.**

5.3.4 Does the State/Territory have a review process for individuals disqualified due to a felony drug offense to determine if that individual is still eligible for employment?

Yes. Describe: **Georgia law authorizes the Lead Agency to deem an applicant sentenced under the Georgia First Offender Act for a drug-related offense committed during the preceding five years as "Satisfactory" and therefore eligible for employment.**

No

5.3.5 Does the State/Territory disqualify child care staff members based on their conviction for other crimes not specifically listed in 5.3?

Yes. Describe: **Any felony, any sexual offense, simple battery when the victim is a minor, battery when the victim is a minor, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and any offense committed in another jurisdiction which would be one of the listed crimes if committed in Georgia.**

No

5.3.6 States and Territories have the option to exempt relatives (as defined in CCDF regulations as grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings if living in a separate residence, aunts, and uncles, (98.41(A)(ii)(A)) from background check requirements. Note this exception only applies if the individual cares ONLY for relative children. Does your State State/Territory exempt relatives from background checks?

Yes, all relatives are exempt from all background check requirements.

Yes, some relatives are exempt from the background check requirements. If the State/Territory exempts some relatives from background check requirements, describe which relatives are exempt from which requirements (some or all). _____ **When a Family, Friend, and Neighbor provider provides care only for relatives, only the provider is required to undergo a background check.**

No, relatives are not exempt from background checks.

- 5.3.7 Describe how the State/Territory ensures that fees charged for completing the background checks do not exceed the actual cost of processing and administration, regardless of whether conducted by the State/Territory or a 3rd party vendor or contractor. Lead Agencies can report that no fees are charged if applicable.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation ensured the Lead Agency that the fees charged by the 3rd party vendor for completing the background check do not exceed the actual cost of processing and administration. The Lead Agency does not charge additional fees for processing or administration.

- 5.3.8 Describe how background check policies and procedures are published on the State/Territory consumer education website or made publicly available on another venue

The Lead Agency website has a page dedicated to the Criminal Records Check process complete with links to the Records Check Application and instructions on completing the process.

- 5.3.9 Does the Lead Agency release aggregated data by crime?

Yes. List types of crime included in the aggregated data _____

No

6 Recruit and Retain a Qualified and Effective Child Care Workforce

Teacher-child interactions and relationships, intentional strategies to engage children and their parents, and use of curriculum and assessment to inform practices with children are key components of high quality child care. These require a competent, skilled, and stable workforce. Research has shown that specialized training and education, positive and well-organized work environments and adequate compensation promote teacher recruitment, stability, diversity of the early childhood workforce, and effectiveness with young children in child care. In addition, professional development strategies that emphasize on-site mentoring and coaching of teachers have emerged as promising to change practices with children and families. Professional development, whether training, on-site coaching and mentoring, registered apprenticeship, or higher education coursework, should reflect the research and best practices of child development in all domains and cultural competence.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires States and Territories to establish professional development and training requirements in key areas such as health and safety, early learning guidelines, responding to challenging behavior and engaging families. States and Territories are required to offer ongoing annual training and to establish a progression of professional development opportunities to improve knowledge and skills of CCDF providers. (658E(c)(2)(G)) An example of how a State/Territory might address this is to establish a system or framework of professional development that includes professional standards, a “career ladder” that allows an individual to build knowledge and skills in a cumulative manner from

introductory training to advance level education, including obtaining credentials and post-secondary degrees. Professional development should be designed in a manner that aligns to competencies and qualifications that reflect working with children of different ages, English language learners, children with disabilities and the differentiated roles in all settings, such as teachers, teacher assistants, and directors. Training and education supporting professional development is also one of the options States and Territories have for investing their CCDF quality funds. (658G(b)(1)) ACF encourages States and Territories to collaborate and coordinate with other early childhood educator professional development resources, such as Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants, quality funds available through the Preschool Development grants, and funds available through Head Start and Early Head Start, to the extent practicable. Responsive, well-qualified adult caregivers are one of the most important factors in children’s development and learning in child care settings. ACF strongly encourages States and Territories to link CCDF health and safety trainings (see Section 5) and child development trainings and education to this broader professional development framework as the foundation for building a knowledgeable early childhood education workforce. Questions related to requirements for recruiting and retaining a qualified and effective child care workforce have been consolidated into Section 6.

6.1 Training and Professional Development Requirements

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that the State/Territory develop training and professional development requirements designed to enable child care providers to promote the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children and to improve the knowledge and skills of the child care workforce. Such requirements shall be applicable to child care providers caring for children receiving CCDF across the entire age span from birth through age 12. (658E(c)(2)(G)) Training and professional development should be accessible and appropriate across settings and types of providers, including family child care home providers and child care center staff.

The State/Territory also must develop and implement strategies to strengthen the business practices of child care providers to expand the supply and improve the quality of child care services. (658E(c)(2)(V))

For purposes of this section, the term professional development is inclusive of credit bearing coursework, postsecondary degree programs, and technical assistance (targeted assistance such as mentoring, coaching or consultation) activities. Health and safety topics that require renewal of a credential or certification should be considered continuing education unit trainings.

- 6.1.1 Describe the status of the State/Territory’s professional development system or framework, including training and professional development requirements to enable child care providers to promote the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children and to improve the knowledge and skills of the child care workforce.

The Lead Agency assures that the State/Territory’s training and professional development requirements:

- a) Provide ongoing training and professional development that is accessible for the diversity of providers in the State/Territory; provide for a progression of professional development reflecting research and best practice to meet the developmental needs of participating infants, toddlers, preschool, and school-age children and that is aligned to foundational and specialized competencies (including different ages of children, English language learners, and children with disabilities); and improve the quality and stability of the child care workforce (such as supports an individual to build on entry- and mid-level training and education (which may include higher education) to attain a higher level credential or professional certification and retention in the child care program).
 - b) Are developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council (SAC) on Early Childhood Education and Care or other state or state-designated cross-agency body if there is no SAC that addresses training, professional development and education of child care providers and staff.
 - c) Incorporate knowledge and application of the State/Territory's early learning and developmental guidelines (where applicable), the State/Territory's health and safety standards (as described in section 5), and incorporate social-emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health intervention models, which may include positive behavior intervention and support models (as described in Section 2)
 - d) Are accessible to providers supported through Indian tribes or tribal organizations receiving CCDF
 - e) Appropriate, to the extent practicable, for child care providers caring for children receiving child care subsidies, including children of different age groups, English language learners, children with disabilities, and Native Americans, including Indians and Native Hawaiians.
- Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above by March 1, 2016. Describe using 6.1.2 through 6.1.6 below.
- Not implemented. The State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.
- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016)
September 30, 2016
 - Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other)
Substantially Implemented

- Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____

The Lead Agency has made considerable progress for items A, B, C, and E (D is not applicable). The state’s implementation plan builds on the current work to strengthen the current system; however, the state has many strengths related to workforce development in place.

Georgia provides a continuum of professional development opportunities for providers at varying levels of education and experience. These opportunities, developed with input from the Georgia Children’s Cabinet (serving as the State Advisory Council), form a strong professional development system meeting the CCDF requirements. All professional development is required to be aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and must be approved through the Training Approval System. These competencies cover the varying needs of professionals through beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. In addition, the trainings are offered to address the differing age groups of children served as well as specific needs of children in care including dual language learners and children with disabilities. The Lead Agency requires all professional development to be aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards.

A variety of training to support social emotional development is offered to early learning providers in Georgia. The Lead Agency has a network of regional Inclusion Specialists offering technical assistance and professional development statewide. In addition, the Lead Agency has adopted the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, established a Pyramid Model State Leadership Team, and has begun work with regional trainings and demonstration sites. Building on this work, Georgia will develop a more comprehensive plan to scale up additional support for the social emotional development of young children.

- Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____

- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____

1. Leverage the State Leadership Team to develop a comprehensive plan for social emotional competence for young children;
2. Review and strengthen Workforce Knowledge and

Competencies in social emotional development; 3. Review QRIS standards and identify gaps/opportunities for social emotional professional development and resources; 4. Strengthen workforce skills through expansion of the master cadre and implementation of social emotional curricula training; and 5. Engage in system level opportunities for building mental health consultation for child care.

- Projected start date for each activity
March 1, 2016 for all activities.
- Projected end date for each activity
September 30, 2016 for all activities.
- Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity?
Lead Agency
- Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity
**Georgia Department of Public Health
Georgia Department of Education
Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
Georgia Department of Human Services
University System of Georgia
Technical College System of Georgia
Get Georgia Reading (Georgia’s Grade Level Reading Campaign)**

6.1.2 Describe how the State/Territory provides ongoing training and professional development that is accessible for the diversity of providers in the State/Territory, provides for a progression of professional development reflecting research and best practice to meet the developmental needs of participating infants, toddlers, preschool and school-age children and that is aligned to foundational and specialized competencies (including different ages of children, English language learners, and children with disabilities) and improves the quality and stability of the child care workforce. Use the checkboxes below to identify and describe the elements of the progression of professional development. Check all that apply.

State/Territory professional standards and competencies. Describe

Georgia’s Workforce Knowledge and Competency (WKC) Framework, called the Professional Development Competencies, is the framework that defines what Georgia’s early educators are expected to know and be able to do when working with young children. Originally developed in 1994, they were formally revised in 2006. The Lead Agency is in the process of a second revision to reflect new research,

best practices, cross-sector alignment, and the newly revised Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS).

Career ladder or lattice. Describe

Georgia's Professional Development Registry (PDR) tracks the education, training, and experiences of early educators and assigns a career level on the "Career Level Lattice" based on a combination of indicators. The progression begins at the workforce entry level, a high school diploma/GED, and advances to the highest level, a doctoral degree in early childhood education. There are 12 levels in the lattice.

Articulation agreements between two- and four-year postsecondary early childhood education or degree programs. Describe

Georgia has a strong articulation system from community based certification (CDA) to technical certifications to four year degrees. The 120 clock hours of early childhood education coursework from a CDA, earned from the Council of Professional Recognition, may be used for credit towards a certificate, diploma or degree program at a technical college. The technical certificates/degrees articulate to the associate's (two year) degree. Ten of the technical colleges have individual agreements with regional four-year institutions. This allows a two-year degree to articulate to a four-year degree at a college/university. In addition, the Technical College System has system-wide articulation agreements with two private institutions, Mercer University and Concordia University. As part of ELC work, Georgia is working on a state-level articulation agreement between two year colleges (technical colleges) and four year colleges and universities. This process will also look to expand those fields and degrees of articulation to include related fields of study, such as Family and Child Development and Family and Consumer Sciences.

Community-based training approved by a state regulatory body to meet licensing or regulatory requirements. Describe _____

Workforce data, including recruitment, retention, registries or other documentation, and compensation information. Describe

Currently, the Professional Development Registry (PDR) serves as a voluntary repository where early childhood educators can record their educational achievements, training(s) of their choice, and employment in one central, readily-accessible location. From the registry database, Georgia is able to access and aggregate crucial workforce data. As part of Georgia's ELC work, the Lead Agency is developing an integrated Professional Development System. This system will enable the workforce to have a single data application that allows them to easily register for Georgia approved training and maintain their credential and workforce information. The new system will offer incentives such as criminal records check fitness determination letters, streamlined assignment of PDR numbers, and

verification of state training without the need to fax or mail proof of attendance. These incentives will increase the number of teachers registered in the system. This increase in registered teachers, as well as enhancements to the ELC data system that tracks criminal records check information for all employees in an ELD location, will allow detailed analysis of workforce data that Georgia has been unable to perform to date. The first phase of this system, GA Trains, is scheduled to launch in spring 2016.

- Advisory structure that provides recommendations for the development, revision, and implementation of the professional development system or framework. Describe

Georgia is committed to engaging stakeholders in the work of developing, implementing, evaluating, and improving our Early Care and Education Professional Development System. The Georgia Professional Development Advisory Team includes representatives from state education agencies, technical colleges, colleges and universities, Head Start, private ELD programs, private trainers, professional organizations, child care resource and referral agencies, technical assistance consultants, early childhood educators, and administrators. The advisory team reviews and makes recommendations on the state's professional development system including the workforce knowledge and competency framework and career lattice. Currently, the team is reviewing and making recommendations for the revision of the workforce knowledge and competency framework.

- Continuing education unit trainings and credit-bearing professional development. Describe

Continuing education unit trainings must be approved through the Training Approval System in order to receive credit. Georgia has a robust system that includes continuing units, both pre and in service credit professional development.

- State-approved trainings. Describe

Currently, Georgia has more than 500 state approved trainers and more than 5,000 state approved training offerings. All trainings must demonstrate how the content and delivery aligns with the Workforce and Knowledge Competency Framework. The Georgia Training Approval System assesses prospective trainers' credentials and experience, the training offered, and designates trainers as Trainer I, II, or III. This list is maintained in a database that is accessible through the Training Approval website. The training system also assesses instructors for the 120-hour CDA preparation courses. All trainings provided through state departments, including DECAL, are approved by the system.

- Inclusion in state and/or regional workforce and economic development plans. Describe

Georgia has several initiatives focusing on the workforce as part of economic development plans. The State Workforce Development Board (SWDB), appointed by the Governor, is tasked with administering Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds across the state and overseeing the Governor's

state workforce development initiatives. SWDB provides child care for job seekers through the state's WIOA funds and provides educational support for people who work in the child care industry.

In addition, the Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant (SIWDG) is a state funded award for students enrolled in a Commission approved, designated diploma or certificate program of study. The award covers significantly reduced (\$89 per credit hour) to full tuition costs. Early Childhood Care and Education is one of the approved programs of study and is offered at 22 regional based technical colleges statewide.

Other. Describe _____

6.1.3 Describe how the State/Territory developed its training and professional development requirements in consultation with the State Advisory Council (SAC) on Early Childhood Education and Care (if applicable) or other state or state-designated cross-agency body if there is no SAC.

In 2012, recognizing the considerable overlap in membership and areas of focus, the Georgia Children's Cabinet was created. This new cabinet included membership of the State Advisory Council. The Georgia Children's Cabinet is composed of the heads of all state agencies that serve the needs of Georgia's children from birth to age 18 and of select community, philanthropic, education, and business stakeholders. The membership conforms to the requirements for State Advisory Councils as prescribed in the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007. The Cabinet regularly reviews the state's strategic plans and work related to children and families across state government and recommends policy and practice to improve outcomes, including the areas of child welfare, economic assistance, health, juvenile justice, and education. Serving in the role of the State Advisory Council, this group also dedicates a portion of every meeting to reviewing the ongoing systemic work designed to improve early childhood education and care. The Cabinet reviews and makes recommendations on the CCDF state plan.

6.1.4 Describe how the State/Territory incorporates knowledge and application of the State's early learning and developmental guidelines (where applicable), the State/Territory's health and safety standards (as described in section 5), and incorporates social-emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health intervention models, which may include positive behavior intervention and support models (as described in Section 2) into its training and professional development requirements (see Information Memorandum on Children's Social Emotional and Behavioral Health <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/im-2015-01>) _____

The state's early learning and developmental guidelines (GELDS), health and safety standards, and other social emotional/behavioral and early childhood mental health intervention models are incorporated into the professional development of Georgia's workforce. The following describes each and explains how each is incorporated into professional development.

Early learning and developmental guidelines: The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) are the foundation for all early learning practices across all types of early learning providers in

Georgia. The standards are aligned with the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for K-3 and embedded as a critical foundation in Georgia's TQRIS Program Standards, curricula and assessments, the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and in most early learning and development professional development activities. Embedding the use of the GELDS across all training and professional development requirements has been a critical strategy in Georgia's Professional Development Plan through both formal practices such as Pre-K grant agreements, TQRIS portfolio requirements, Training Approval requirements and less formal practices such as encouraging the use of the GELDS in the Child Care Activity Rule, providing free community based training on the GELDS, and distributing GELDS resource guides and teacher toolboxes. This two-prong approach has cemented the GELDS as a foundational element in professional development.

Health and safety standards: The Child Care Services division currently provides an orientation session for prospective child care providers prior to their applying for licensure. The purpose of the orientation session is to assist applicants with the process of how to complete the application for licensing and provides an overview of the basic core rules and regulations that relate to health and safety. Prior to assignment to children or tasks, all employees and provisional employees of a child care program must receive initial orientation on the following subjects: (a) The center's policies and procedures; (b) The portions of the rules dealing with the care, health, and safety of children; (c) The employee's assigned duties and responsibilities; (d) Reporting requirements for suspected cases of child abuse, neglect or deprivation; communicable diseases and serious injuries; (e) Emergency weather plans; (f) Childhood injury control; (g) The administration of medicine; (h) Reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS); (i) Hand washing; (j) Fire safety; (k) Water safety; (l) Prevention of HIV/Aids and blood borne pathogens. The director of the child care program is required to conduct this orientation as part of new hire training at the facility.

Family child care providers must receive 20 hours of training prior to registration. The training course includes the provider competencies that serve as a framework for professional development, which includes, but is not limited to, early learning standards, communication, developmentally appropriate practices, professional and leadership development, business management, and advocacy for the Family Day Care Home, parents, children, and staff.

In addition, family child care providers and center staff members must receive during their first year of employment (a) Four (4) clock hours of training in any of the following topics: disease control, cleanliness, basic hygiene, illness detection, illness disposition, and childhood injury control; (b) Two (2) clock hours of training in identifying, reporting and meeting the needs of children who have been abused, neglected, or deprived. Private training providers, the technical college system as part of the curriculum for formal Technical Certificates of Credit and Diplomas, the child care resource and referral agencies provide the first-year training courses. Staff members receive clock hours for these trainings that count in the annual training requirements as described in the rules and regulations. Beginning September 2016, all staff members must have pre-service orientation in the topics of:

- Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization)
- Prevention of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices
- Administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent

- Prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions
- Building and physical premises safety, including identification of and protection from hazards that can cause bodily injury such as electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic
- Prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma
- Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a) (1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1))
- Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of bio contaminants
- Precautions in transporting children (if applicable)
- First aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification
- The plan and implementation of the pre-service training is outlined in Section 5.1.6, Standards for Health and Safety.

Social emotional behavior intervention models: Georgia is in the process of rolling out a statewide implementation plan regarding social emotional development. See the implementation plan in Section 6.1.1 under partially implemented.

6.1.5 Describe how the State’s training and professional development requirements are accessible to providers supported through Indian tribes or tribal organizations receiving CCDF (as applicable)
Georgia does not have any identified Indian tribes or tribal organizations receiving CCDF.

6.1.6 Describe how the State/Territory’s training and professional development requirements are appropriate, to the extent practicable, for child care providers caring for children receiving child care subsidies, including children of different age groups (such as specialized credentials for providers who care for infants and/or school-age children), English language learners, children with disabilities, and Native Americans, including Indians and Native Hawaiians

Programs and individual child care providers have the autonomy to choose the training topics that best meet the needs of the children and families served. All state-approved trainings must address the state’s workforce competencies. The competency goals include the following topics: child growth and development; safety and health; physical, cognitive and social emotional development; working with families; individualizing and professionalism. The Lead Agency supplements the catalog of available trainings by making available at no cost a wide array of trainings to providers statewide.

The Lead Agency also offers online learning through its Online Learning Library Initiative (OLLI). OLLI offers asynchronous learning opportunities that address the following topics: cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, social emotional development, family engagement, language and literacy, effective teaching practices, and health and safety practices.

Through Georgia's TQRIS Quality Rated, providers can access trainings on the Environment Rating Scales used in the rating system; other topics include ongoing program assessment and improvement, inclusion, and cultural competency.

To increase Georgia's capacity to provide training to support English language learners, the Lead Agency has partnered with WIDA Early Years. WIDA Early Years is part of WIDA, a non-profit organization housed within the Wisconsin Center of Education Research at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison. WIDA Early Years is in the process of delivering two Master Cadre training programs. The content of this seven-month training program includes the WIDA Early English Language Development Standards Framework and how to utilize these standards to support, instruct, and assess young DLLs in early education and care programs.

The state supports a network of inclusion specialists who provide training and onsite technical assistance on topics such as how to establish a productive learning environment, adaptation and differentiation of instruction to meet all learner's needs, prevention and response to challenging behaviors, and others to child care learning centers, family child care homes, Head Start, Georgia's Pre-K, and other early childhood programs.

6.1.7 Describe the strategies the State/Territory uses to recruit and retain providers who will serve eligible children. Check all that apply and describe.

Financial assistance for attaining credentials and post-secondary degrees. Describe

DECAL SCHOLARS is composed of three components: educational counseling, SCHOLARSHIPS, and INCENTIVES. These programs are funded through the federal Child Care and Development Fund. Recipients in each of these programs are teachers, directors, or assistants working in licensed child care centers, group homes, or registered family day care homes who meet certain tenure, wage, and work site requirements. Free educational counseling is also offered through DECAL SCHOLARS.

To participate in any of these programs, the individual must work in a program that is participating in our state's TQRIS Quality Rated, be nationally accredited, participating in the CACFP, or be serving CAPS children at 25% of their enrollment. This helps encourage early care professionals who are interested in receiving these benefits to work in programs that provide quality care and serve the high needs populations.

SCHOLARSHIPS is Georgia's statewide educational assistance program for early care and education professionals pursuing credentials or degrees in early childhood education or child development. It is designed to increase the number of well-qualified and credentialed professionals in early care and education in Georgia. SCHOLARSHIPS for academic credit provides tuition assistance and a support stipend to approved applicants who are pursuing the following credentials or degrees in early childhood education, child development, or child care administration. SCHOLARSHIPS also pays the CDA application fee and provides stipends to approved applicants pursuing a CDA through the Council for Professional Recognition.

Financial incentives linked to education attainment and retention. Describe

INCENTIVES is a salary bonus program that encourages early care and education (ECE) professionals to increase their level of education and that rewards job stability. To support higher credentials and retention, the INCENTIVES program rewards educational attainment and tenure with bonus payments. Eligible recipients receive two payments ranging from \$250 to \$1,250 based on the credential earned. Eligible participants may receive a maximum of two award payments for earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or an Introduction to Child Care Technical Certificate of Credit, and a maximum of four award payments per educational level achieved beyond the CDA. An individual must have been employed with their current employer for at least 12 consecutive months in an eligible position or be a registered family day care provider for 12 consecutive months.

The AWARDS for Early Educators program, funded by the federal Early Learning Challenge (ELC) Grant, rewards ECE professionals for increasing higher ECE credentials and degrees than the credential or degree they currently hold. An individual can receive only one reward per level but may earn a credential or degree at a higher level and receive that reward. The payments range from \$1,200 to \$2,500 based on the credential earned.

As part of Georgia's Early Learning Challenge Grant agenda, in 2014, DECAL established four Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs) in regions of the state with large populations of under-served young children with high needs. To address the needs of young children in these Zones, DECAL has partnered with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to provide targeted economic development incentive packages called E3Z Child Care Expansion Grants. These competitive grants offer potential funding of up to \$100,000 for two- or three-star Quality Rated providers to serve additional infants and toddlers in an E3Z by expanding their current child care program or by opening a new child care program. At a minimum, programs must create at least two new net full time jobs that will serve infants and toddlers.

Eligible uses of funding for the E3Z Child Care Expansion Grants include equipment and materials for new infant and toddler classrooms as well as salary subsidies for new infant and toddler classroom teachers. In terms of the salary subsidies offered, funding is available to subsidize higher rates of pay for salary members for the grant performance period. Facilities must pay the minimum rate required (as determined by DECAL) but are able to pay at rates above that threshold. Facilities who receive funding are expected to retain those employees at rates at or above the minimum pay rate required after the performance period expires. Salary subsidy amounts for these grants increase based upon the higher level of qualification of the employee.

Registered apprenticeship programs. Describe _____

Outreach to high school (including career and technical) students. Describe _____

DECAL partners with the Georgia Department of Education to support the Consumer and Family Sciences Vocational program which includes early childhood education. There are three courses of study that students can complete within the Education and Training Career Cluster, two (2) for Early Childhood and one (1) for Teaching as a Profession. Students that complete a pathway are eligible to take an End of

Pathway Assessment. The CDA is one of several End of Pathway Assessment options for Early Childhood. A statewide articulation exists for the Teaching as a Profession pathway.

Move on When Ready (MOWR) is a new program to support dual enrollment for high school students. Students who attend a high school in Georgia can take college level courses at one of the 22 TCSG colleges and earn credit toward a high school diploma and a college degree at the same time.

Policies for paid sick leave. Describe _____

Georgia's Pre-K Program provides funds to grantees that may be used to pay for benefits for lead and assistant teachers. Benefits may include, but are not limited to, retirement, health care, leave, and workers compensation.

Policies for paid annual leave. Describe _____

Georgia's Pre-K Program provides funds to grantees that may be used to pay for benefits for lead and assistant teachers. Benefits may include, but are not limited to, retirement, health care, leave, and workers compensation.

Policies for health care benefits. Describe _____

Georgia's Pre-K Program provides funds to grantees that may be used to pay for benefits for lead and assistant teachers. Benefits may include, but are not limited to, retirement, health care, leave and workers compensation.

Policies for retirement benefits. Describe _____

Georgia's Pre-K Program provides funds to grantees that may be used to pay for benefits for lead and assistant teachers. Benefits may include, but are not limited to, retirement, health care, leave, and workers compensation.

Support for providers' mental health (such as training in reflective practices and stress reduction techniques, health and mental health consultation services). Describe _____

Other. Describe _____

6.1.8 Describe how the State/Territory will recruit providers for whom English is not their first language, or who will serve and be available for families for whom English is not their first language _____

The Lead Agency provides information to providers in home languages. A language line is also utilized to provide interpretation services. Regional CCR&R offices intentionally advertise and recruit technical assistance staff who are bilingual. The intent behind hiring bilingual staff is to provide additional support for providers for whom English is not their first language.

In December 2014, DECAL was awarded an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant (EHS-CCP). DECAL recruited a cohort of family child care providers who primarily serve Latino families in a dual language environment as partners in the EHS-CCP. This cohort of 16 family child care home providers, whose first language is Spanish, deliver Early Head Start services to 40 infants and toddlers and their families. Offering Early Head Start services in family child care homes ensures that families, especially those who are dual language learners, have choices in selecting high quality care and comprehensive services. The EHS-CC Partnership will be a model for expanding serves to providers who are bilingual or have the capacity to serve multi-lingual families.

DECAL SCHOLARS also provides career advisement, SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES to educators whose first language is not English. As part of the ELC grant funding, there will be a targeted outreach to recruit bilingual educators.

6.1.9 How will the Lead Agency overcome language barriers to serve providers for whom English is not their first language? Check the strategies, if any, that your State/Territory has chosen to implement.

- Informational materials in non-English languages
- Training and technical assistance in non-English languages
- CCDF health and safety requirements in non-English languages
- Provider contracts or agreements in non-English languages
- Website in non-English languages
- Bilingual caseworkers or translators available
- Collect information to evaluate on-going need, recruit, or train a culturally or linguistically diverse workforce
- Other _____
- None

If the Lead Agency checked any option above related to providing information or services in other non-English languages, please list the primary languages offered (top 3) or specify that the State has the ability to have translation/interpretation in all primary and secondary languages.

Georgia has the ability to provide translation and interpretation in all primary and secondary languages.

6.1.10 The State/Territory must use CCDF for activities to improve the quality or availability of child care, including training and technical assistance to providers on identifying and serving homeless children and families. (658E(c)(3)(B)(i) Describe the status of the State/Territory’s training and technical assistance to providers on identifying and serving homeless children and their families (connects to Section 3.2.2).

Yes. The State certifies that no later than March 1, 2016 it will provide training and technical assistance to providers on identifying and serving homeless children and their families. Describe that training and technical assistance for providers _____

No. The State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016): **September 30, 2016**
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other): **Partially implemented**
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable: **The state’s child care resource and referral agency provides training and technical assistance to programs regarding family engagement this training does not include specific strategies for supporting families experiencing homelessness. The state referral call system provides referrals and other information to all Georgia families, including families experiencing homelessness. There are specific standards and activities related to family support and engagement in the TQRIS.**
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) **1. Identify and convene agency and nonprofit partners; 2. Research national best practices, training tools, and models; 3. Investigate feasibility of partnership with non-profit entities to create and deliver training and provide support to child care providers in identifying and serving families experiencing homelessness; 4. Deliver training and collateral materials to child care providers and eligibility caseworkers**
 - Projected start date for each activity: **1. March 2016; 2. March 2016; 3. March 2016; 4. June 2016**
 - Projected end date for each activity: **September 30, 2016**

- Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity: **Lead Agency**
- Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity: **Department of Human Services; Department of Public Health; Department of Education; various non-profit groups such as the Salvation Army, Metro Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless; and the Georgia Alliance to End Homelessness**

6.2 Supporting Training and Professional Development of the Child Care Workforce with CCDF Quality Funds

States and Territories may use the quality set-aside discussed in detail in section 7 to support the training and professional development of the child care workforce.

6.2.1 Does the State/Territory fund the training and professional development of the child care workforce?

Yes. If yes,

- a) Describe the measures relevant to this use of funds that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory.

The Lead Agency has strong evaluation mechanisms in place. This includes an ongoing study of Georgia’s Pre-K Program, previous evaluations of distinct professional development initiatives, and a current Quality Rated validation study that is part of Georgia’s Early Learning Challenge grant. Measurement around professional development will be incorporated into current evaluation strategies, particularly the validation study. Specific measures that will be incorporated as part of the evaluation strategies include measuring increases in star ratings and credentials among programs/teachers participating in professional development activities, independent classroom observations using reliable and valid tools (Environment Rating Scales, CLASS) among a sub-sample of participants, and surveys that include knowledge and teacher belief pre and posttests.

- b) Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

CCDF funds. Describe: **Quality Set-Aside funds are used to fund priority evaluation activities.**

Other funds. Describe: **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge and state Pre-K funds, and state administrative funds are also used to fund evaluation activities.**

- c) Check which content is included in training and professional development activities. Check all that apply.

- ☒ Promoting the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children, including those related to nutrition and physical activity, using scientifically-based, developmentally-appropriate and age-appropriate strategies as required in 6.1.1c. Describe

The Lead Agency developed a set of research-based early learning guidelines called the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards. Providers receive training on GELDS through their child care resource and referral agencies as well as other community-based trainers. Courses offered include topics such as implementing the GELDS in the classroom, lesson planning, and linking the standards with assessment and curriculum. Additionally, competencies related to the GELDS are embedded in all training offered through the state system. Materials and training are also provided to instructors in the Technical College System of Georgia and information about the GELDS is embedded in their coursework as appropriate.

Several high quality tools have been developed for use by teachers, administrators, and others implementing the GELDS in the classroom. All licensed child care learning centers, family child care homes, and Georgia's Pre-K providers received the GELDS resource guide that provides information about implementing the GELDS in their classrooms. The book comes in two versions: a birth to five version and a preschool version. A Teacher Toolbox was also developed. These toolboxes provide teachers with hundreds of developmentally appropriate activities linked to the GELDS for children from birth to five along with tips for transitions, embedding technology, and adapting activities for children with disabilities.

The Lead Agency is responsible for the administration and oversight of two federally funded child nutrition programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Both programs are funded through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). DECAL executes agreements with eligible child care and adult facilities and sponsoring organizations, who are responsible for providing access to free, healthy meals and snacks throughout the day while participants are in care. In addition to providing general training on program requirements, the Lead Agency provides technical assistance training to institutions on incorporating nutrition education and physical fitness activities as part of the meal service. General training topics include, but are not limited to, incorporating diverse foods at meal service; creative menu planning with locally sourced foods; onsite gardening and the use of fresh fruits and vegetables in meal services; and practical indoor/outdoor physical activities for child care centers.

- ☒ Implementing behavior management strategies, including positive behavior interventions and support models that promote positive social-emotional development and early childhood mental health and reduce challenging behaviors, including reducing expulsions of preschool-aged children from birth to five for such behaviors (see also Section 2). Describe

Georgia's network of inclusion specialists provide professional development, coaching, and targeted technical assistance on the *Pyramid Model for Promoting the Social Emotional Competence of Infants*

and Young Children (Pyramid Model) to teachers and administrators in child care and Pre-K programs across the state. The Pyramid Model provides a research based framework of practices that empower teachers with strategies to prevent challenging behavior and focus on building children's social emotional competence. By building these skills, educators have an increased capacity to appropriately manage persistent challenging behavior, thereby reducing the likelihood of preschool suspension and expulsion. Professional development is provided along a continuum of trainings ranging from program level overviews to one-hour in-depth trainings targeting specific positive behavior support practices that can be implemented at the classroom level. In addition, Georgia has identified demonstration sites that agreed to adopt the Pyramid Model program-wide in each of their preschool and pre-k classrooms. Systematic, intensive training was provided to each of these demonstration sites in preparation for program-wide implementation.

- Engaging parents and families in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to expand their knowledge, skills, and capacity to become meaningful partners in supporting their children's positive development. Describe

Georgia has designated the Strengthening Families Framework as the basis for training and technical assistance on family engagement principles and strategies. Training on each of the five Strengthening Families protective factors is available to all early learning and development professionals through a cadre of trainers made up of private trainers as well as staff from the child care resource and referral agencies. Programs participating in Quality Rated have access to the Strengthening Families online training module and self-assessment. Additionally the Lead Agency is working with the Georgia Family Connection Partnership to provide high quality training on family engagement principles to county-level collaboratives for re-delivery to early learning professionals in their community. As part of the Early Learning Challenge grant, the state has formed a Comprehensive Assessment System Taskforce. This taskforce will make recommendations on a variety of issues related to assessment including identification and use of evidence-based professional development to train early childhood educators on the importance of engaging families in meaningful ways. The Lead Agency also employs a full-time Family Engagement Coordinator to support implementation of best practices in family engagement at the state, local, and provider levels.

- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State/Territory Early Learning and Development Standards. Describe

All Georgia's Pre-K programs must implement a curriculum from the approved curricula list. Every three to five years, the Lead Agency conducts a curricula study to review comprehensive curricula for approval to use in Georgia's Pre-K Program classrooms. Submitted curricula are reviewed for developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS).

The GELDS are a foundational component of Georgia’s Quality Rated Program Standards. The GELDS are embedded in Standard 4: Intentional Teaching Practices. Programs must demonstrate that their curricula and lesson plans align with the GELDS to receive full points. The Lead Agency has also created technical assistance and webinars that support programs participating in QRIS in how to select a curriculum and how to plan activities with intentionality.

In addition, Georgia’s licensing activity rule mandates that all licensed ELD programs provide a daily plan of varied and developmentally appropriate activities that promote the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, language, and literacy development of each child. The activity rule requires a written daily lesson plan for all ages served. The rule was written to encourage programs to use the GELDS as the basis for instruction. As part of the initial awareness campaign surrounding the GELDS roll out, DECAL partnered with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) to develop a webinar that explains how the GELDS can be used to satisfy the activity rule.

- On-site or accessible comprehensive services for children and community partnerships that promote families’ access to services that support their children’s learning and development. Describe _____
- Using data to guide program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement. Describe

Professional development is provided to Georgia’s Pre-K providers in utilizing data for continuous improvement. During annual professional development provided by the Lead Agency, Pre-K teachers are trained on how to use formative assessment data to drive instructional planning. All Georgia’s Pre-K programs utilize the Work Sampling System Online which allows teachers to pull data reports. Through technical assistance from regional Pre-K consultants, administrators and teachers are supported in how to use the data report for program improvement.

The quality in Georgia’s Pre-K classrooms is evaluated using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Professional development on how to utilize CLASS data to improve teacher – child interactions is provided through a network of regional Pre-K consultants. There are several models of professional development utilized including Professional Development Communities and coaching. All models focus on the use of the CLASS data.

Child care providers who participate in Quality Rated, Georgia’s tiered quality rating and improvement system, receive ongoing professional development from regional child care resource and referral agencies. Programs/teachers are provided with training on each of the ERS scales as well as strategies for using assessment results to guide improvement.

- Caring for children of families in geographic areas with significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment.

As part of Georgia’s Early Learning Challenge work in four dedicated Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Z), local E3Z Birth to Eight teams convene monthly or bimonthly. Individually, Birth to Eight

teams focus on using local data (including Quality Rated and CAPS data) to set goals and establish successful community-level collaboration so that families' access to quality services is enhanced.

These Birth to Eight teams have each sent representation to geographically central training events which have included topics such as Community-Based Participatory Research, early brain development and toxic stress, and a state-level Campaign for Grade-Level Reading event. Upcoming training events for Birth to Eight team representatives include family engagement best practices and child care expansion grant trainings.

- Caring for and supporting the development of children with disabilities and developmental delays. Describe

Professional development on topics such as foundations of inclusion, meeting the needs of all children through modifications and adaptations, and using early learning standards to differentiated instruction are available to early childhood professionals across the state. Additionally Inclusion Specialists are available to provide intensive targeted on-site technical assistance to assist programs in preparing for and including children with disabilities.

- Supporting positive development of school-age children. Describe

Programs serving only school age children are eligible to participate in Quality Rated, Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system. Training and technical assistance are offered at no cost to providers through the child care resource and referral system, and incentives and bonus packages are awarded to school age providers based on star levels. DECAL has partnered with the Georgia School Age Network in their roll out of the new Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards. Training and technical assistance consultants from the child care resource and referral agencies attended a training for trainers on the new standards and will use them as a complement to the School Age Care Environment Rating Scale.

- Other. Describe _____

- d) Check how the State/Territory connects child care providers with available Federal and State/Territory financial aid, or other resources for pursuing postsecondary education relevant for the early childhood and school-age workforce. Check all that apply.

- Coaches, mentors, consultants, or other specialists available to support access to postsecondary training including financial aid and academic counseling
- State/Territory-wide, coordinated, and easily accessible clearinghouse (i.e. online calendar or listing of opportunities) of relevant postsecondary education opportunities

Financial awards (such as scholarships, grants, loans, reimbursement for expenses) from State/Territory for completion of postsecondary education

Other. Describe _____

No

6.2.2 Does the State/Territory require a specific number of annual training hours for child care providers caring for children receiving CCDF subsidies and in particular content areas? States and Territories are encouraged to consult with *Caring for our Children* for best practices and recommended time needed to address training hour requirements.

Yes. If yes, describe:

a) Licensed Center-Based Care

1) Number of pre-service or orientation hours and any required areas/content

Not more than 16 hours - Licensure Orientation required for new programs, providing instructions on the application process, overview of the state's regulations relating to the operation of early child care learning centers.

40 hours – Director Training consisting of administrator competencies that serve as a framework for professional development, which include, but are not limited to, early learning standards, business management, communication, developmentally appropriate practices, professional and leadership development, and advocacy for the center, parents, children, and staff. Required for new programs and/or in lieu of director education credentials with five years experience as a director.

2) Number of on-going hours and any required areas/content _____

First year – Direct Care Staff: 10 hours with at least six hours divided as 1) Four (4) clock hours of training in any of the following topics: disease control, cleanliness, basic hygiene, illness detection, illness disposition, and childhood injury control.; and 2) Two (2) clock hours of training in identifying, reporting, and meeting the needs of abused, neglected or deprived children.

First year- Director and Primary Kitchen Staff: Four Hours - Food Preparation

Annually - Supervisory and Caregiver Staff: 10 Hours - Task-focused in early childhood education or child development or subjects relating to job assignment

Biennially – Director and 50% of staff: CPR

Triennially – Director and 50% of staff: First Aid

Biennially – Director and Staff Responsible for Transportation: 2 Hours – review of Transportation rules, procedures, forms

Lifeguard training: on staff if pool on site or staff at water facility

b) Licensed Group Child Care Homes: **Group Child Care Homes are no longer designated as a separate category as the rules for these programs were merged into Center-Based rules and regulations by legislation effective January 1, 2016.**

- 1) Number of pre-service or orientation hours and any required areas/content
- 2) Number of on-going hours and any required areas/content

c) Licensed Family Child Care Provider

- 1) Number of pre-service or orientation hours and any required areas/content
Number of Hours not specified:

Specific Number of Hours Not Specified:

Licensure Orientation: required for new programs, providing instructions on the application process, overview of the state's regulations relating to the operation of Family Child Care Learning Homes.

Training course: includes the provider competencies that serve as a framework for professional development, which includes, but is not limited to, early learning standards, communication, developmentally appropriate practices, professional and leadership development, business management, and advocacy for the Family Child Care Learning Home, parents, children, and staff

CPR and First Aid

- 2) Number of on-going hours and any required areas/content

10 Hours chose from the topics of:

Child Development: including discipline, guidance, nutrition, injury control and safety;

Health: including sanitation, disease control, cleanliness, detection and disposition of illness;

Child Abuse and Neglect: including identification and reporting, and meeting the needs of abused and/or neglected children; and

Business Related Topics: including parental communication, recordkeeping, etc.; provided however that such business related training limited to no more than two of the required ten clock hours of training.

d) Any other eligible CCDF provider

- 1) Number of pre-service or orientation hours and any required areas/content

Informal providers: 8 hours health and safety training, CPR and First Aid.

- 2) Number of on-going hours and any required areas/content

Informal providers: 8 annual hours of health and safety training

No

6.2.3 Describe the status of the State/Territory's policies and practices to strengthen provider's business practices.

- Fully implemented as of March 1, 2016. Describe the State strategies including training, education, and technical assistance to strengthen provider's business practices. This may include, but is not limited to, such practices related to fiscal management, budgeting, record-keeping, hiring, developing, and retaining qualified staff, risk management, community relationships, marketing and public relations, and parent-provider communications, including who delivers the training, education and/or technical assistance

Through the six regional CCR&Rs, the Lead Agency offers resources, training, and technical assistance to strengthen business practices of providers statewide. Available trainings provided through the CCR&R system include Employee Performance Management, Overcoming Challenging Situations, Positive Communication, and Time Management. Regionally, Child Care and Early Childhood Education Business Summits are also offered, giving owners and directors of child care programs a chance to focus on the business aspect of operating a quality child care program through in-person training.

The CCR&R system also delivers personalized computer support and training, including computer literacy support and offers computer lab support for programs to apply computer literacy skills.

The Lead Agency offers every program participating in Quality Rated a membership in the Georgia Alliance for Quality Child Care, which is a hub for web based services offered statewide. These services include cost savings on food and supplies; human resource tools such as budgeting templates, staff handbooks, termination guides, job descriptions, and staff appraisals; program administration tools such as parent handbooks, forms, and templates; and training resources for parents and staff.

In addition, business management is a required component of the required 40-hour training for new directors.

- Not implemented. The State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) _____
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory's overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____

- Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implementation of this activity _____

6.3 Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that the State/Territory will develop, maintain, or implement early learning and developmental guidelines that are appropriate for children in a forward progression from birth to kindergarten entry (i.e., birth-to-three, three-to-five, or birth-to-five), describing what such children should know and be able to do, and covering the essential domains of early childhood development for use State/Territory wide by child care providers. (658E(c)(2)(T)) At the option of the State/Territory, early learning and development guidelines for out-of-school time may be developed. States and Territories may use the quality set-aside as discussed in section 7 to improve on the development or implementation of early learning and development guidelines.

6.3.1 Describe the status of the State/Territory’s early learning and development guidelines appropriate for children from birth to kindergarten entry.

The State/Territory assures that the early learning and development guidelines are:

- Research-based, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and aligned with entry to kindergarten
- Implemented in consultation with the State Education Agency and the State Advisory Council (SAC) or other state or state-designated cross-agency body if there is no SAC
- Updated as determined by the State. List the date or frequency: **every 3 to 5 years**

Fully implemented and meeting all Federal requirements outlined above as of March 1, 2016. List the Lead Agency’s policy citation(s) and describe using 6.3.2 through 6.3.4 below

Not implemented. The State/Territory must provide a State/Territory-specific implementation plan for achieving compliance with this requirement, including planned activities, necessary legislative or regulatory steps to complete, and target completion date (no later than September 30, 2016). Please provide brief

text responses and descriptions only. Do not cut and paste charts or tables here. Your responses will be consolidated electronically into an Implementation Plan summary report.

- Overall Target Completion Date (no later than September 30, 2016) _____
- Overall Status – Describe the State/Territory’s overall status toward complete implementation for this requirement(s) (not yet started, partially implemented, substantially implemented, other) _____
 - Implemented requirement(s) – Identify any requirement(s) implemented to date if applicable _____
 - Unmet requirement - Identify the requirement(s) to be implemented _____
 - Tasks/Activities – What specific steps will you take to implement the unmet requirement (e.g., legislative or rule changes, modify agreements with coordinating agencies, etc.) _____
 - Projected start date for each activity _____
 - Projected end date for each activity _____
 - Agency – Who is responsible for complete implementation of this activity _____
 - Partners – Who is the responsible agency partnering with to complete implement this activity _____

6.3.2 Check for which age group(s) the State/Territory has established early learning and development guidelines:

- Birth-to-three. Provide a link _____
- Three-to-Five. Provide a link _____
- Birth-to-Five. Provide a link: **www.gelds.dec.al.gov**
- Five and older (check if State/Territory has standards for five and older that complement academic but cover child development areas not covered by k-12 academic standards). Describe and provide a link _____
- Other. Describe _____

6.3.3 Does the State/Territory use CCDF quality funds to improve on the development or implementation of early learning and development guidelines by providing technical assistance to child care providers to enhance children’s cognitive, physical, social and emotional development and support children’s overall well-being?

- Yes, the State/Territory has a system of technical assistance operating State/Territory-wide
- Yes, the State/Territory has a system of technical assistance operating as a pilot or in a few localities but not State/Territory-wide

No, but the State/Territory is in the development phase

No, the State/Territory has no plans for development

a) If yes, check all that apply to the technical assistance and describe.

Child care providers are supported in developing and implementing curriculum/learning activities based on the State's/Territory's early learning and development guidelines. Describe _____

To promote GELDS, the Lead Agency developed and launched a new GELDS website, www.gelds.decal.ga.gov, with State Advisory Council funding. The site is user-friendly and interactive; it provides visitors to the site an easy way to access the GELDS via a searchable standards database. Users have access to all age-appropriate indicators, a rationale for each indicator, and examples of learning-in-action. The Lead Agency worked closely with partners, including Georgia Public Broadcasting, (GPB) to travel all over the state to film footage at model programs. This footage was edited by indicator into small vignettes to help teachers and families understand each skill better.

In addition to the teacher modeling footage, the Lead Agency also partnered with GPB to produce a series of ten informational webinars on the GELDS using State Advisory Council funding. The ten informational webinars were developed with partners including the Department of Education, Department of Public Health and Georgia Academy of Pediatrics. These webinars are posted on the GELDS website, www.gelds.decal.ga.gov.

Another key initiative to support child care providers is the GELDS Institute series. The Lead Agency partnered with Georgia State University's Best Practices early education division to develop a series of trainings to support early care and education providers in implementing the standards. The training series includes:

- Standards 101: How to Use the GELDS
- Standards 102: Child Development
- Standards 103: Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Standards 104: Planning Lessons Using the GELDS

The goal of these trainings is to provide early education professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to successfully incorporate the GELDS into developmentally appropriate lesson plans. The trainings also help participants understand how the GELDS are structured and how to appropriately code activities on their lesson plans.

Standards 101, 102 and 103 are currently available through the local CCR&Rs. Each of these trainings provides two state-approved training hours. Standards 104 is a brand new training that will be available through the CCR&Rs in January 2016. This intermediate level training is a four-hour session that provides opportunities for teachers to practice intentional lesson planning, connect activities to GELDS indicators, and use the GELDS Toolbox. The target audience for Standards 104 is early educators working in child care centers or family child care homes.

In addition, the Lead Agency partnered with a cross section of partners statewide to develop a GELDS teacher activity toolbox. Every toolbox contains thousands of activities linked to GELDS, as well as tips

for transition, a set of introductory cards, 10 blank teacher activity cards, Bright Idea cards (with adaptations for children with disabilities), an activity index, and a book index. Four different toolboxes target different ages of children from birth to age five.

To further support educators in using the GELDS, the Lead Agency is developing a free, online website called PEACH. This online tool will house all the activities from the GELDS Teacher Toolboxes. The site will be a comprehensive database for teachers of children from birth to five; activities will be searchable by GELDS domain and strand as well as by age group. Users will also be able to filter activities by type.

- The technical assistance is linked to the State's/Territory's quality rating and improvement system. Describe

The GELDS provide a foundation for developmentally appropriate practice in Georgia's quality rating and improvement system. Intentional teaching is a standard in the portfolio that must be completed by each applicant. The technical assistance provided through the CCR&R system focuses on utilizing the GELDS to help providers understand what children can and should be able to do at various stages, allowing them to individualize learning activities for each child rather than using a "one size fits all" approach to planning activities. CCR&R TA staff focus on teaching providers how to plan appropriately challenging activities and adapt those activities for individual children, each of whom has his/her own unique path of development.

- Child care providers working with infants and/or toddlers have access to the technical assistance for implementing early learning and development guidelines. Describe

The Lead Agency employs a statewide network of infant toddler specialists who provide training and technical assistance across the state. Information and support for the GELDS is embedded in all technical assistance work. The specialists offer training on a variety of topics, and information about the GELDS is embedded in all training. Additionally, infant toddler specialists offer specific training on the GELDS. A series of four trainings, geared specifically to infant and toddler teachers and administrators, is available on topics such as understanding standards and linking standards to assessment and curriculum.

- Child care providers working with preschool-age children have access to the technical assistance for implementing early learning and development guidelines. Describe

Regional Pre-K specialists employed by DECAL provide technical assistance to all Georgia's Pre-K programs statewide. The technical assistance provided supports the implementation of the GELDS.

- Child care providers working with school-age children have access to the technical assistance for implementing early learning and development guidelines. Describe

The Lead Agency licenses programs serving only school age children, and they are also included in Quality Rated, Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system. Training and technical assistance on a variety of topics, including understanding and implementing the GELDS, is offered at no cost to providers through the child care resource and referral system, and incentives and bonus packages are awarded to school age providers based on star levels. The Lead Agency has partnered with the Georgia School Age Network in their roll out of the new Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards. Training and technical assistance consultants from the child care resource and referral agencies attended a training for trainers on the new standards and will use them to complement the School Age Care Environment Rating Scale.

- b) Indicate which funds are used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside, Infant-Toddler Set Aside**
- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, State Pre-K Funds**

- 6.3.4 Check here to demonstrate that State/Territory assures that CCDF funds will not be used to develop or implement an assessment for children that: (658E(c)(2)(T)(ii)(I))

- Will be the primary or sole basis to determine a child care provider ineligible to participate in the CCDF program
- Will be used as the primary or sole basis to provide a reward or sanction for an individual provider
- Will be used as the primary or sole method for assessing effectiveness of child care programs
- Will be used to deny children eligibility to participate in the CCDF program

7 Support Continuous Quality Improvement

Lead Agencies are required to reserve and use a portion of their Child Care and Development Block Grant funds for activities designed to improve the quality of child care services and increase parental options for, and access to, high-quality child care. Support for continuous quality improvement is expected to cover the entire age span of children supported by CCDF, from birth through age 12. States/Territories may provide these quality improvement activities directly, or through grants or contracts with local child care resource and referral organizations or other appropriate entities. The activities should be in alignment with a State/Territory-wide assessment of the State's/Territory's needs to carry out such services and care. These quality investments can align with, support and help sustain

additional quality efforts developed under Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants, Early Head Start/Head Start partnerships and other funding efforts.

States and Territories will report on these quality improvement investments through CCDF in three ways: 1) ACF will collect annual data on how much CCDF funding is spent on quality activities using the expenditure report (ACF-696); 2) In the Plan, States and Territories will describe the types of activities supported by quality investments over the three-year period; and 3) For each three-year Plan period, States and Territories will submit a separate annual report that will show the measures used by the State/Territory to evaluate its progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory.

The CCDBG Act of 2014 requires States and Territories to use the quality set-aside to fund at least one of the following 10 activities:

- 1) Supporting the training and professional development of the child care workforce (as described in Section 6)
- 2) Improving on the development or implementation of early learning and development guidelines (as described in Section 6)
- 3) Developing, implementing, or enhancing a tiered quality rating system for child care providers and services
- 4) Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers
- 5) Establishing or expanding a Statewide system of child care resource and referral services (as described Section 1)
- 6) Supporting compliance with State/Territory requirements for licensing, inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety (as described in Section 5)
- 7) Evaluating the quality of child care programs in the State/Territory, including evaluating how programs positively impact children
- 8) Supporting providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation
- 9) Supporting the development or adoption of high-quality program standards related to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development
- 10) Other activities to improve the quality of child care services as long as outcome measures relating to improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or kindergarten-entry are possible.

Throughout this Plan, States and Territories will describe the types of quality improvement activities where CCDF investments are being made, including but not limited to, the quality set-aside funds. We recognize that for some areas, States and Territories may leverage other funds to support the quality improvement goals, which we encourage and support. For example, activities related to early learning and development guidelines may be supported by a combination of CCDF and education funding. States and Territories continue to have such flexibility.

7.1 Activities to Improve the Quality of Child Care Services

7.1.1 What are your overarching goals for quality improvement? Please describe how the State/Territory selected these goals, including any data or the State/Territory-wide assessment of needs that identified the needs for quality improvement services _____

Georgia's main goal for quality improvement is to increase the percentage of eligible early care and learning programs receiving a Quality Rated rating of two or three stars. Currently, these are the highest star levels in Georgia's tiered quality rating and improvement system. As of November 30, 2015, approximately 14.5 percent (n=895) of Georgia's eligible early care and learning programs are rated. Of those that are rated, approximately 63.2 percent are two or three stars (44.8% two stars and 18.4% three stars). The state hopes to increase the total percentage of programs rated at two or three stars by five percentage points by 2020. This will provide an opportunity for most programs to be rated a second time.

Embedded in the goal of increasing the percentage of eligible early care and learning programs receiving a two or three star rating are several other quality improvement goals: 1) increase the quality of the state's infant and toddler classrooms; 2) improve the quality of teaching instruction in the state's early care and education classrooms; and 3) increase the level of support provided to programs serving children with disabilities and dual language learners. The first two of these goals are directly related to a program's rating. However, the state is providing additional resources to programs to help in raising quality in infant and toddler rooms (targeted infant/toddler consultants) and with the state's workforce (instilling professional learning communities based on a model proven effective in Georgia's Pre-K Program). The third goal listed here is not specifically related to a program's rating (though beginning in 2016 programs will have an opportunity to add an inclusion designation to their rating) but reflects current efforts to improve services for these populations.

All of the above are related to previous data analysis and evaluation. Georgia's quality rating and improvement system (Quality Rated) is based on a statewide study of quality. The study, utilizing a representative sample of programs, found that quality was lacking in many of the state's early care and education classrooms. Specifically, 67% of the state's infant and toddler classrooms and 75% of family child care homes did not meet minimum standards of quality (a score of a 3 or higher on the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised or the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised). While the percentage of preschool and Georgia's Pre-K classrooms meeting minimum standards (a score of 3 or higher on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised) was higher, there was still room for quality improvement. This research, coupled with Pre-K evaluation data indicating the need for additional supports for dual language learners, administrative data demonstrating a low percentage of children with disabilities diagnosed in early education, and low credentials in many of the state's non Georgia's Pre-K classrooms, helped state leaders determine these quality improvement goals.

7.1.2 Check and describe which of the following specified quality improvement activities the State/Territory is investing in:

- Developing, implementing or enhancing a tiered quality rating system. If checked, respond to 7.2.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside, Infant-Toddler Set-Aside**

- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, Private, philanthropic funds**

- Improving the supply and quality of child care services for infants and toddlers. If checked, respond to 7.3.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside,, including whether designated infant- and toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside, Infant-Toddler Set-Aside**

- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge**

- Establishing or expanding a statewide system of CCR&R services as discussed in 1.7. If checked, respond to 7.4.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside**

- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge.**

- Facilitating compliance with State/Territory requirements for inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety standards (as described in Section 5). If checked, respond to 7.5.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside, Infant-Toddler Set-Aside**

- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, State Funds.**

- Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care services within the State/Territory. If checked, respond to 7.6.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside, Infant-Toddler Set-Aside**
- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, State Funds,**

- Supporting accreditation. If checked, respond to 7.7.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside**
- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge**

- Supporting State/Territory or local efforts to develop high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development. If checked, respond to 7.8.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside, Infant-Toddler Set-Aside**
- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge**

- Other activities determined by the State/Territory to improve the quality of child care services, and for which measurement of outcomes related to improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or entry into kindergarten is possible. If checked, respond to 7.9.

Indicate which funds will be used for this activity (check all that apply)

- CCDF funds. Describe CCDF funds (e.g., quality set-aside, infant-toddler set aside, etc.) **Quality Set-Aside, Infant-Toddler Set-Aside**
- Other funds. Describe other funding sources (e.g., Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, state or local funds, etc.) **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge**

7.2 Quality Rating and Improvement System

7.2.1 Does your State/Territory have a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)?

- Yes, the State/Territory has a QRIS operating State/Territory-wide. Describe how the QRIS is administered (e.g., state or locally administered such as through CCR&Rs) and provide a link, if available

The Lead Agency administers the state's QRIS. Program manual and operating guidelines can be found at qualityrated.decal.ga.gov.

- Yes, the State/Territory has a QRIS operating as a pilot, in a few localities, or only a few levels but not fully operating State/Territory-wide. Provide a link, if available _____
- No, but the State/Territory is in the development phase
- No, the State/Territory has no plans for development

a) If yes, check all that apply to your QRIS.

- Participation is voluntary
- Participation is mandatory for providers serving children receiving subsidy. If checked, describe the relationship between QRIS participation and subsidy (minimum rating required, participation at any level, etc.) _____
- Participation is required for all providers
- Includes nationally-recognized accreditation as a way to meet/achieve QRIS rating levels
- Supports and assesses the quality of child care providers in the State/Territory
- Builds on State/Territory licensing standards and other State/Territory regulatory standards for such providers
- Embeds licensing into the QRIS. Describe: **Programs have to demonstrate compliance with Georgia's health and safety standards to achieve a rating.**
- Designed to improve the quality of different types of child care providers and services
- Describes the safety of child care facilities
- Addresses the business practices of programs
- Builds the capacity of State/Territory early childhood programs and communities to promote parents' and families' understanding of the State/Territory's early childhood system and the ratings of the programs in which the child is enrolled
- Provides, to the maximum extent practicable, financial incentives and other supports designed to expand the full diversity of child care options and help child care providers improve the quality of services. If checked, please describe how these financial options link to responses in Section 4.3 related to higher payment rates tied to quality

The Lead Agency offers tiered reimbursement. Currently, the Lead Agency offers increases of 2%, 5%, or 10% for programs with a one, two, or three star respectively. As stated in 4.3.2, tiered reimbursement will be substantially increased to 5%, 10%, and 25%. The Lead Agency also offers other financial

incentives for programs such as bonus packages and salary enhancements for staff when the program achieves a rating. Bonus packages and salary enhancements are paid for through private fund raising.

Can be used to track trends in whether children receiving subsidy are utilizing rated care settings and level of rating

b) If yes, which types of settings or distinctive approaches to early childhood education and care participate in the State's/Territory's QRIS? Check all that apply.

Licensed child care centers

Licensed family child care homes

License-exempt providers

Early Head Start programs

Head Start programs

State pre-kindergarten or preschool program

Local district supported pre-kindergarten programs

Programs serving infants and toddlers

Programs serving school-age children

Faith-based settings

Other. Describe. _____

7.2.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory's progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory. _____

As part of Georgia's Early Learning Challenge Grant, the state has a separate validation project. This project, utilizing the methodology established by Fiene and Zellman (2012), is designed to provide on-going support through data, statistical analyses, and other appropriate research methodologies to Quality Rated. This includes an internal data analysis team and a separate contract with Child Trends, Inc.

An internal Lead Agency team is conducting on-going analyses to examine if the system is working as intended. This includes comparing overall ratings with each of the five standards, examining the relationship with ratings and National Accreditation, and trending rating distributions. The contract with Child Trends, Inc. includes comparing ratings with an external instrument of quality and looking at the relationship between ratings and child outcomes.

All of the above illustrate the way that Georgia has incorporated internal research resources along with a robust evaluation agenda to provide on-going Quality Rating validation support.

7.3 Improving the Supply and Quality of Child Care Programs and Services for Infants and Toddlers

The CCDBG Act of 2014 included changes targeted at improving the supply and quality of infant-toddler care. Lead Agencies are encouraged to systematically assess and improve the overall quality of care infants and toddlers receive, the systems in place or needed to support and

enhance the quality of infant and toddler providers and the capacity of the infant and toddler workforce to meet the unique needs of very young children, and the methods in place to increase the proportion of infants and toddlers in higher quality care.

7.3.1 What activities are being implemented by the State/Territory to improve the supply (see also section 4) and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers? Check all that apply and describe.

- Establishing or expanding high-quality community or neighborhood-based family and child development centers, which may serve as resources to child care providers in order to improve the quality of early childhood services provided to infants and toddlers from low-income families and to help eligible child care providers improve their capacity to offer high-quality, age-appropriate care to infants and toddlers from low-income families. Describe

To improve the supply of high quality infant toddler early education care, the Lead Agency will establish regional centers that will be responsible for 1) coordinating professional development for infant toddler teachers and program directors using evidence based models (e.g., PBIS); and 2) supporting programs by providing resources to improve their capacity to offer high quality care.

Key components of the centers include:

- Providing workforce initiatives supporting infant and toddler teachers
- Working with teachers to understand and implement child development best practices (i.e., developmental monitoring, use of standards, formative assessment)
- Establishing higher quality components that specifically meet regional needs (e.g., bilingual staff) for programs receiving contracted slots that serve infant/toddlers through subsidy grants

The Lead Agency will include the centers in the third year of the external validation study (2017-2018).

- Establishing or expanding the operation of community or neighborhood-based family child care networks. Describe _____

The Lead Agency is a recipient of an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant. As part of the grant, the Lead Agency has established a cohort of Spanish-speaking family child care providers. This cohort is being supported through a regional resource hub. The Lead Agency is evaluating this approach for possible expansion.

- Providing training and professional development to promote and expand child care providers' ability to provide developmentally appropriate services for infants and toddlers. Describe _____

The Georgia Program for Infant and Toddler Care (GAPITC) is based on the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and West-Ed Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC) models. Training at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels on various topics related to high quality infant and toddler care is available across the state from Infant and Toddler Specialists, staff in the CCR&RS and other approved trainers across the state. Additionally, Infant Toddler Specialists and CCR&R staff provide targeted, intensive on-site technical assistance to staff in infant and toddler programs across the state.

- Providing financial incentives (including the use of grants and contracts as discussed in section 4) to increase the supply and quality of infant-toddler care. Describe _____

Beginning in March 2016, the state will begin offering subsidy grants focused on serving infants and toddlers that will reimburse high quality providers at a higher subsidy rate. Programs receiving contracted slots will have to agree to meet higher quality standards established by the regional infant toddler center (see above). The grants will be awarded to programs/communities to serve children with high needs (i.e., dual language learners, children with disabilities, children in foster care, rural areas) from birth to kindergarten in high quality care settings. These grants will build upon the subsidy grant model currently funded through the state's Early Learning Challenge grant.

- Providing coaching and/or technical assistance on this age group's unique needs from statewide networks of qualified infant-toddler specialists. Describe _____

The Lead Agency supports a network of qualified infant toddler specialists through the Georgia Program for Infant Toddler Care (GAPITC). This program is funded using CCDF dollars and is the structure the state uses to deliver all training and technical assistance related to high quality infant and toddler care. Components of the program include professional development, coaching, mentoring, technical assistance, mini-grants, and an interactive website to support early childhood educators working with infants and toddlers to improve the quality of care for children ages birth to three. Services from GAPITC are available to all staff in all licensed child care learning centers, family child care homes, Early Head Start, and other early learning programs.

Technical assistance plans are developed based on the results of assessment with the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scales as well as topics based on the six essential policies of the Program for Infant and Toddler Care. Technical assistance is designed to help providers understand and practice a model of relationship-based care that is respectful and responsive to each child's individual needs.

In addition, the CCR&Rs provide technical assistance to improve infant toddler care.

- Providing coaching and/or technical assistance on this age group's unique needs from statewide networks of qualified infant-toddler specialists. Describe _____

The Lead Agency supports a network of qualified infant toddler specialists through the Georgia Program for Infant Toddler Care (GAPITC). This program is funded using CCDF dollars and is the structure the

state uses to deliver all training and technical assistance related to high quality infant and toddler care. Components of the program include professional development, coaching, mentoring, technical assistance, mini-grants, and an interactive website to support early childhood educators working with infants and toddlers to improve the quality of care for children ages birth to three. Services from GAPITC are available to all staff in all licensed child care learning centers, family child care homes, Early Head Start, and other early learning programs.

Technical assistance plans are developed based on the results of assessment with the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scales as well as topics based on the six essential policies of the Program for Infant and Toddler Care. Technical assistance is designed to help providers understand and practice a model of relationship-based care that is respectful and responsive to each child's individual needs.

- Coordinating with early intervention specialists who provide services for infants and toddlers with disabilities under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.) Describe _____

The Lead Agency is working with early intervention specialists to ensure that programs serving infants /toddlers have sufficient resources to support infants/toddlers with disabilities.

- Developing infant and toddler components within the State's/Territory's QRIS. Describe _____

The state's tiered quality rating and improvement system uses the Environment Rating Scales in assigning a star rating. Infant/Toddler classrooms are sampled separately in determining classrooms for observations; therefore the classrooms are always part of the rating. Currently, infant toddler specialists are working with rated programs that scored low on the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R).

The validation study of Georgia's TQRIS will specifically include toddler outcomes. This study will inform the Lead Agency on the development of any additional infant and toddler components to include in any system revisions.

- Developing infant and toddler components within the State/Territory's child care licensing regulations. Describe _____

The state's licensing requirements specifically address components of infant toddler care including safe sleep guidelines.

- Developing infant and toddler components within the early learning and development guidelines. Describe _____

The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards span the birth to kindergarten age range. Professional development and resources specific to infant and toddlers have been developed by the Lead Agency.

- Improving the ability of parents to access transparent and easy to understand consumer information about high-quality infant and toddler care. Describe _____

Current parent awareness campaigns include language specifically geared toward families of infants and toddlers. Many of the materials related to the distribution of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards are also geared to families of infants and toddlers.

- Carrying out other activities determined by the State/Territory to improve the quality of infant and toddler care provided in the State/Territory, and for which there is evidence that the activities will lead to improved infant and toddler health and safety, infant and toddler cognitive and physical development, or infant and toddler well-being. Describe _____

The Lead Agency has invested considerable resources around the development and dissemination of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). Materials and activities created specifically for GELDS dissemination are related to appropriate expectations are infant/toddler cognitive and physical development. Use of these materials should increase the quality of infant/toddler instruction in child care centers and family child care homes.

- Other. Describe _____

7.3.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State's progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory _____

In fall 2015, the Lead Agency expanded validation efforts around the state's tiered quality rating and improvement system (Quality Rated). This expansion includes a study that will compare current star ratings to external measures of quality and examine associations with child outcomes. Part of these validation efforts are specifically targeted to infant toddler care. Therefore, the state will be able to use these validation efforts to measure infant toddler quality. Additionally, the state will continue to monitor scores using the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scales collected as programs become rated.

7.4 Child Care Resource & Referral

7.4.1 Describe the status of the child care resource and referral system (as discussed in Section 1.7)

- State/Territory has a CCR&R system operating State/Territory-wide. Describe how the CCR&R system is operated, including how many agencies and if there is a statewide network and how the system is coordinated and if it is voluntary _____

The Lead Agency contracts with one CCR&R agency to serve as a statewide resource for parents by assisting them with finding quality child care through a call center. The Lead Agency also awards grant agreements to six regional CCR&Rs to assist child care providers through training and technical assistance. Housed in six regions strategically positioned around the state, CCR&Rs provide professional learning opportunities, for free or at minimal costs, to help early childhood educators meet state annual ongoing training requirements and to participate in the state's QRIS, Quality Rated.

- State/Territory has a CCR&R system operating in a few localities but not fully operating State/Territory-wide. Describe _____
- State/Territory is in the development phase

7.4.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory _____

Georgia has focused the work of its six regional CCR&Rs on supporting child care programs in moving through its QRIS, Quality Rated. Georgia has a comprehensive online data system to manage all of the QRIS process from a child care program’s application to the QRIS; to data collection and analysis including program information; training and technical assistance from registration to tracking; portfolio submission including a continuous quality improvement (CQI) plan; incentives management; and reports and data. The system captures all information on a child care program and allows the program and partner staff to track their progress through the process from application to rating. The system is used by Quality Rated staff, technical assistance and training staff, CCR&Rs, programs enrolled in Quality Rated, incentive partners, and the Lead Agency research team.

As part of the renewal of grant agreements with the six CCR&Rs, three quarterly performance measures were established to evaluate both the CCR&R’s performance and the state’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs as measured by Quality Rated. The first measure specifically addresses recruitment into the state’s QRIS. Each CCR&R is given quarterly targets for family and center provider participation in the QRIS for the federal fiscal year. The measures were developed based on the proportion of programs in the region already participating and the percentage of programs that each CCR&R has in their region. The second measure addresses the number of child care programs in each region that have submitted their Quality Rated portfolio, which measures structural quality in the QRIS. Finally, the third measure in the CCR&R grant agreements is the percentage of recently rated child care programs in each region that rate at the two or three star level, the highest in the QRIS. The data for all three measures comes from the state’s internal online data management system.

7.5 Facilitating Compliance with State Standards

7.5.1 What strategies does your State/Territory fund with CCDF quality funds to facilitate child care providers’ compliance with State/Territory requirements for inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety, and with State/Territory licensing standards? Describe _____

The Lead Agency uses CCDF funds to support the licensing division. In 2015, the licensing division, through a contract with a research university, developed Director Institutes for owners and directors. These institutes have a core focus on health and safety along with modules for operation and management of a child care program. Within the licensing division, a Technical Assistance Unit was created and implemented in July 2015. This unit targets child care programs deemed non-compliant” to offer training and technical assistance around “core” health and safety rules.

7.5.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State will use to evaluate the State/Territory's progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory _____

Georgia's licensing division measures compliance with "core health and safety rules" and issues a status of compliance each year on July 1. This status currently indicates a program's ability to comply with licensing standards overall based on the status of "compliance" or "noncompliance." However, Georgia has developed a new and improved structured enforcement and compliance system that will become operational on July 1, 2016. In this new system, programs will receive a label of a "good standing zone," "support zone," or deficient zone" at each visit. The new system will measure compliance for each visit and include the previous 12 months history. Program points will be collected based on repeat rule violations, severity of those violations, and whether the rule is a core or non-core rule. Programs will be monitored at each visit to determine the need for technical assistance or support or enforcement actions. Program violations can be tracked and trended so that training and technical assistance supports can be provided to providers struggling with compliance.

7.6 Evaluating and Assessing the Quality and Effectiveness of Child Care Programs and Services

7.6.1 One of the purposes of the CCDBG Act of 2014 is to increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings. Describe how the State/Territory measures the quality and effectiveness of child care programs and services offered in the State/Territory, including any tools used to measure child, family, teacher, classroom, or provider improvements, and how the State/Territory evaluates that such programs positively impact children _____

Georgia's primary mechanism for measuring quality is the state's tiered quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated. Programs are assigned a one, two, or three star rating based on five standards submitted via an electronic portfolio and an independent observation using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). There are a small number of programs that do not achieve a rating generally due to low ERS scores.

The current distribution of stars suggests that the state is effectively discriminating various levels of quality (child care centers: 15%, 47%, 34%, and 5% are three, two, one, and zero stars respectively; family child care homes: 28%, 42%, 23%, and 8% are three, two, one, and zero stars respectively). The state is also undergoing a rigorous validation project to ensure that Quality Rated was effectively designed to evaluate and discriminate quality and to measure the components of the system that are associated with increased child outcomes. The validation project will be completed at the conclusion of Georgia's Early Learning Challenge grant.

Georgia's Pre-K programs also use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Each year, CLASS observations are conducted in a representative sample of Georgia's Pre-K programs, and the instrument is also being used to design technical assistance. The state also uses commissions and conducts

evaluations, including quality measures and child outcomes for the Rising Pre-K and Rising Kindergarten Summer Transition Programs.

7.6.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory's progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory _____

Specific measures used include the four Environment Rating Scales: Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R), Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R), Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCRS-R), and School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS). The scores from these scales are consistently aggregated, allowing the state to see both improvement and challenges. In addition to the ERS instruments, the Lead Agency also utilizes the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for evaluation purposes in Georgia's Pre-K and Summer Transition Programs.

The ERS instruments are also embedded in the state's tiered quality rating and improvement system, Quality Rated. The Lead Agency continually monitors the distribution of ratings. Ratings not only include the ERS instruments but also portfolios that measure other quality components. Therefore, the distribution of ratings in Quality Rated is another mechanism the state will use to evaluate progress in improving quality.

Improving quality is also a component of the state's external evaluations. The Quality Rated validation study will measure quality using a variety of instruments (to be determined) that are currently not in use in Quality Rated. This will provide the Lead Agency with additional quality data. In addition to the Quality Rated validation study, the Lead Agency has commissioned a longitudinal study that measures child outcomes and quality in Georgia's Pre-K.

7.7 Accreditation Support

7.7.1 Does the State/Territory support child care providers in the voluntary pursuit of accreditation by a national accrediting body with demonstrated, valid, and reliable program standards of high quality?

Yes, the State/Territory has supports operating State/Territory-wide. Describe the supports for all types of accreditation the State/Territory provides to child care centers and family child care homes to achieve accreditation _____

The state's financial resources are directed to supporting providers participating in Quality Rated, whether receiving an initial rating or improving their current rating. However, the state does support programs voluntarily pursuing accreditation. Programs accredited with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), or a similar accreditation receive bonus points in their final Quality Rated score. Programs receive bonus points for the Quality Rated score if they are accredited by the following:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- American Montessori Institute (AMI)
- AMS – American Montessori Society
- COA – Council on Accreditation
- NECPA – National Early Childhood Program Accreditation
- SACS – Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- NAC – The National Association Commission
- NLSA – National Lutheran School Accreditation
- ACSI – Association of Christian Schools International

- Yes, the State/Territory has supports operating as a pilot or in a few localities but not State/Territory-wide. Describe _____
- No, but the State/Territory is in the development phase
- No, the State/Territory has no plans for development

7.7.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory _____

The state is continually evaluating policies related to supporting quality improvement. This includes measuring the impact of QR policies related to national accreditation. However, since the state does not financially support national accreditation, these analyses are limited to policy analysis.

7.8 Program Standards

7.8.1 What other State/Territory or local efforts, if any, is the State/Territory supporting to develop or adopt high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development? Please describe _____

The Lead Agency administers the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program and this facilitates links between nutrition and other ELD programs. Health promotion practices are a distinct standard in the state’s QRIS, Quality Rated. The standard, Child Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity, requires program staff to reflect on their program’s current health, safety, and nutrition practices and to identify areas that can be improved. Programs must complete a Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment and a written improvement plan, submit documentation of actions taken to complete the plan, and evidence that high percentages of staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. Results from the self-assessment are used to create a continuous quality improvement plan.

In addition, DECAL has partnered with the Georgia Department of Public Health, the state’s Lead Agency for childhood obesity reduction efforts, to develop the Georgia SHAPE award to recognize child care facilities throughout the state that have achieved an overall Quality Rated three-star level and exceeded requirements for nutrition and physical activity.

As part of the new state plan, the QRIS standards will be reviewed to support additional training and resources relating to social emotional development.

7.8.2 Describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory's progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State/Territory _____

As part of the Lead Agency's ongoing internal and external validation of the state's QRIS, Quality Rated, the accuracy and intentionality of the Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity standard is continuously monitored. Validation has been integrated as part of the day-to-day management of Quality Rated since its development. The research team at the Lead Agency conducts statistical analyses related to star-level distribution, participation rates, and the scores of individual portfolio standards, such as this one. These analyses are revised and rerun as new data become available, and program improvements and revisions are made to support the data and findings.

7.9 Other Quality Improvement Activities

7.9.1 List and describe any other activities the State/Territory provides to improve the quality of child care services and describe the measures relevant to this activity that the State/Territory will use to evaluate the State/Territory's progress in improving provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or entry into kindergarten. _____

DECAL will consider using CCDF quality funds for the following activities to support improved quality of child care services, provider preparedness, child well-being, and entry into Kindergarten:

- Expanding model sites and available technical assistance for best practices in child social emotional and behavioral health
- Expanding Georgia's Summer Transition Program serving rising Kindergarten students who did not attend a Georgia's Pre-K program or who need additional services before Kindergarten
- Expanding Georgia's Summer Transition Program for rising Pre-K students, geared toward English language learners before they enter Pre-K
- Exploring sustainability for Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant projects, which may include supports for:
 - Compensation for educators
 - Effective instruction for dual language learners
 - Addressing gaps in developmental screenings and assessment
 - Successful implementation of the state's Kindergarten Entry Assessment

DECAL will consider what measures would be relevant to these activities, including Kindergarten Entry Assessment scores, data from within the state's QRIS such as points earned within specific standards, ongoing Georgia's Pre-K Program quality studies, data on star ratings, and workforce data from economic impact studies.

8 Ensure Grantee Program Integrity and Accountability

Under CCDF, program integrity and accountability activities are grounded in the State/Territory's policies for implementing the CCDF program. For error rate activities, reviews are based on the State/Territory's own CCDF policies. The CCDBG Act of 2014 made sweeping changes to the program requirements. With these changes, the State/Territory has an opportunity to change their own policies to reduce the burden for participants and staff as they build in safeguards to maintain program integrity. For example, the new law focuses on eligibility requirements at the time of eligibility determination and allows for a minimum 12-month period of eligibility before redetermination, which lessens the need for participants to continually provide documentation. This, in turn, relieves the State/Territory from the burden of constantly "checking" on participants which can open the door for miscalculations, lost paperwork, and other errors.

Lead Agencies are required to have accountability measures in place to ensure integrity and to identify fraud or other program violations. These accountability measures should address administrative error, including unintentional agency error, as well as program violations, both unintentional and intentional. Violations may or may not result in further action by the Lead Agency, including those cases suspected of and/or prosecuted for fraud.

8.1 Program Integrity

8.1.1 Describe how the State/Territory ensures that their definitions for violations have been modified, and program integrity procedures revised to reflect new requirements. _____

The Lead Agency is currently drafting a significant revision to the subsidy program policy manual based on the new requirements under the CCDF reauthorization. A major focus of this revision is the section where program violations and program integrity procedures are covered.

8.1.2 Describe how the State/Territory ensures that all staff are informed and trained regarding changes made to its policies and procedures to reflect new CCDF requirements. Check all that apply.

- Issue policy change notices
- Issue new policy manual
- Staff training
 - Orientations
 - Onsite training
 - Online training
- Regular check-ins to monitor implementation of the new policies. Describe

Through supervision, management oversight, and periodic meetings, the Lead Agency will ensure that all staff are informed and trained regarding changes made to policies and procedures reflecting new CCDF requirements.

Other. Describe _____

8.1.3 Describe the processes the Lead Agency will use to monitor all sub-recipients, including those described in Section 1, such as licensing agencies, child care resource and referral agencies, and others with a role in administering CCDF. The Lead Agency is responsible for ensuring effective internal controls over the administration of CCDF funds. Lead Agencies that use other governmental or non-governmental sub-recipients to administer the program must have written agreements in place outlining roles and responsibilities for meeting CCDF requirements. _____

The Lead Agency executes and maintains a written agreement with all CCDF sub-recipients. The written agreement includes standard boilerplate language that indicates the term of the agreement, the scope of services to be provided, the funding amount, requirements for payment, independence statement, prohibition for lobbying, confidentiality clause, record retention requirements, audit requirements, financial reporting requirements as well as a termination and debarment clause to be utilized when any requirements of the agreement (including, but not limited to, those above) are not met or violated. The agreement also includes a detailed statement of work that includes a schedule for completing the tasks where appropriate, a budget that itemizes allowable categories of expenditures, and performance measures used to assess the sub-recipient.

In addition to the written agreement, the Lead Agency monitors CCDF sub-recipients in the following ways:

- CCDF sub-recipients are required to submit a request for reimbursement on a monthly basis. This request details the expenditures for which the sub-recipient is requesting reimbursement and is reviewed prior to disbursement of funds.
- CCDF sub-recipients who receive federal funds in excess of \$750,000 are required to submit an independent, entity wide financial audit annually as required by federal regulations. This audit is reviewed by the Lead Agency Audits and Compliance Division who employs professional staff skilled in reviewing independent audit reports and knowledgeable about the requirements for sub-recipient monitoring. This review may include following up on findings specific to CCDF and may require corrective action where appropriate.
- The Lead Agency Audits and Compliance Division also performs audits of CCDF sub-recipients twice annually (one desk review; one on-site audit) where expenditures of CCDF funds are reviewed to ensure they are supported and allowable.
- The Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts (DOAA) performs financial audits and the federal single audit annually that include reviews of the Lead Agency's expenditure of CCDF funds. In addition DOAA has recently completed a program audit and a follow up review related to DECAL expenditure of CCDF funds.

Measures used to assess the performance of CCR&Rs (CCDF sub-recipients) include:

- Setting target amounts for the number of applications and portfolios submitted for Quality Rating by child care providers in each CCR&R region

- Setting target percentages for child care providers who receive a two or three star rating in Quality Rated in each CCR&R region
- Measuring the number and types of trainings provided to child care providers in each CCR&R region, which may include a number of trainees required
- Requiring participation in weekly requirements and testing meetings for the state’s Unified Data System
- Requiring monthly reporting of number of resource packets to families seeking child care
- Requiring reporting of child care referrals and consumer education provided to families impacted by emergency closures due to health and safety violations
- Requiring monthly reporting of referrals to Quality Rated and licensed child care providers

Definition: “Sub-recipient means a non-Federal entity that receives a sub-award from a pass-through entity to carry out part of a Federal program; but does not include an individual that is a beneficiary of such program. A sub-recipient may also be a recipient of other Federal awards directly from a Federal awarding agency (2 CFR 200.93). Two CFR Part 200, Subpart A provides additional information on contractors (which may be referred to as “vendors”). The description of monitoring must include, but is not limited to, a description of the written agreements used, a schedule for completing the tasks, a budget which itemizes categorical expenditures consistent with CCDF requirements and indicators or measures to assess performance. Additional items for discussion may include: fiscal management, review of policies and procedures to ensure compliance with CCDF regulations, and monitoring/auditing contractors or grantees to ensure that eligible children are served and eligibility documentation is verified.”

8.1.4 Describe the activities the Lead Agency has in place to identify program violations and administrative error to ensure program integrity using the series of questions below. Program violations may include intentional and unintentional client and/or provider violations as defined by the Lead Agency. Administrative error refers to areas identified through the Error Rate Review process. Lead Agencies are required to have processes in place to identify fraud or other program violations.

- a) Check which activities the Lead Agency has chosen to conduct to identify unintentional or intentional program violations.
- Share/match data from other programs (e.g., TANF, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Medicaid) or other databases (e.g., State Directory of New Hires, Social Security Administration, Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS))
 - Run system reports that flag errors (include types). Describe _____

The Lead Agency Audits and Compliance Division has developed a risk assessment tool that is used to identify providers and clients who have indicators that lead the state agency to believe an intentional

or unintentional violation or administrative error may have occurred. This risk assessment utilizes data from system reports that we have created to flag potential violations/errors. In addition to the risk assessment, DECAL has additional system reports that are utilized to flag potential violations/errors. Examples of both types of reports/data elements are noted in the bulleted list below:

- System report identifying active cases with no certificates
- System report identifying cases active over five years
- System report identifying cases over the new income limits
- System report identifying cases with a missing disposition
- System report identifying cases with no children
- System report identifying cases missing a family fee
- System report identifying cases who have supervisor as the case manager
- System report identifying cases with an invalid address according to USPS
- System report identifying the percentage of certificates of any and all child care care providers approved by the same case manager
- Comparison of the capacity of a child care provider to the number of children they bill for
- Comparison of client's employer to the child care center their child is attending
- System report that identifies Georgia Pre-K students who are also receiving full time care

- Review of enrollment documents, attendance or billing records
- Conduct supervisory staff reviews or quality assurance reviews
- Audit provider records
- Train staff on policy and/or audits
- Other. Describe _____

In addition to the activities noted above, the Lead Agency Audits and Compliance Division maintains a hotline and an email inbox for all stakeholders, including the general public, to submit complaints related to the CAPS program. The phone number and email address are published in the policy manual and are also publicized in most literature created for the subsidy program. Upon receiving a complaint, the Lead Agency Audits and Compliance Division will conduct an investigation to determine if a program violation or administrative error has occurred and, if so, are any funds due back to DECAL as a result.

- None. Describe what measures the Lead Agency plans to put in place to address program integrity along with action steps and completion timelines _____

b) Check which activities the Lead Agency has chosen to conduct to identify administrative error.

- Share/match data from other programs (e.g. TANF, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Medicaid) or other databases (e.g., State Directory of New Hires, Social Security Administration, Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS))

Run system reports that flag errors (include types). Describe- The Lead Agency Audits and Compliance Division has developed a risk assessment tool that is used to identify providers and clients who have indicators that lead the state agency to believe an intentional or unintentional violation or administrative error may have occurred. 8.1.4 provides a detailed description of the risk assessment.

Review of enrollment documents, attendance or billing records

Conduct supervisory staff reviews or quality assurance reviews

Audit provider records

Train staff on policy and/or audits

Other. Describe _____

In addition to the activities noted above, the Lead Agency Audits and Compliance Division maintains a hotline and an email inbox for all stakeholders, including the general public, to submit complaints related to the subsidy program. The phone number and email address are published in the policy manual and are also publicized in most literature created for the subsidy program. Upon receiving a complaint, an investigation will be conducted to determine if a program violation or administrative error has occurred and if so, are any funds due back to DECAL as a result.

None. Describe what measures the Lead Agency plans to put in place to address program integrity along with action steps and completion timelines _____

8.1.5 Which activities (or describe under "Other") the Lead Agency will use to investigate and collect improper payments due to program violations or administrative error as defined in your State/Territory? The Lead Agency has the flexibility to recover misspent funds as a result of errors. The Lead Agency is required to recover misspent funds as a result of fraud.

a) Check which activities (or describe under "Other") the Lead Agency will use for unintentional program violations?

Require recovery after a minimum dollar amount in improper payment. Identify the minimum dollar amount: **\$600.00**

Coordinate with and refer to other State/Territory agency (e.g., State/Territory collection agency, law enforcement)

Recover through repayment plans

Reduce payments in subsequent months

Recover through State/Territory tax intercepts

Recover through other means

Establish a unit to investigate and collect improper payments. Describe _____

The Lead Agency created the Audits and Compliance Division in 2013. This division is composed of six Compliance Examiners and one Compliance Manager who conduct investigations of child care providers who receive CCDF funding from the Lead Agency. This unit is also responsible for the CCDF error rate reporting to ACF every three years. In addition, the Lead Agency contracts with the Georgia Department of Human Services, whose Office of Inspector General conducts investigations of clients who receive CCDF subsidies from the Lead Agency. If improper payments are identified through an investigation or review by either unit, those funds are recouped by one of the methods noted above.

- Other. Describe _____
- None. Describe what measures the Lead Agency plans to put in place to address the investigation and recovery of misspent funds due to unintentional program violations, including action steps and completion timelines _____

b) Check which activities the Lead Agency will use for intentional program violations or fraud?

- Require recovery after a minimum dollar amount in improper payment. Identify the minimum dollar amount **\$600.00**
- Coordinate with and refer to other State/Territory agency (e.g. State/Territory collection agency, law enforcement)
- Recover through repayment plans
- Reduce payments in subsequent months
- Recover through State/Territory tax intercepts
- Recover through other means
- Establish a unit to investigate and collect improper payments. Describe composition of unit below:

The Lead Agency created the Audits and Compliance Division in 2013. This division is composed of six Compliance Examiners and one Compliance Manager who conduct investigations of child care providers who receive CCDF funding from the Lead Agency. This unit is also responsible for the CCDF error rate reporting to ACF every three years. In addition, the Lead Agency contracts with the Georgia Department of Human Services, whose Office of Inspector General conducts investigations of clients who receive CCDF subsidies from the Lead Agency. If improper payments are identified through an investigation or review by either unit, those funds are recouped by one of the methods noted above.

- Other. Describe _____
- None. Describe what measures the Lead Agency plans to put in place to address the investigation and recovery of misspent funds due to fraud, including action steps and completion timelines _____

c) Check which activities the Lead Agency will use for administrative error?

- Require recovery after a minimum dollar amount in improper payment. Identify the minimum dollar amount **\$600.00**
- Coordinate with and refer to other State/Territory agency (e.g. State/Territory collection agency, law enforcement)
- Recover through repayment plans
- Reduce payments in subsequent months
- Recover through State/Territory tax intercepts
- Recover through other means
- Establish a unit to investigate and collect improper payments. Describe composition of unit below

The Lead Agency created the Audits and Compliance Division in 2013. This division is composed of six Compliance Examiners and one Compliance Manager who conduct investigations of child care providers who receive CCDF funding from the Lead Agency. This unit is also responsible for the CCDF error rate reporting to ACF every three years. In addition, the Lead Agency contracts with the Georgia Department of Human Services, whose Office of Inspector General conducts investigations of clients who receive CCDF subsidies from the Lead Agency. If improper payments are identified through an investigation or review by either unit, those funds are recouped by one of the methods noted above.

- Other. Describe _____
- None. Describe what measures the Lead Agency plans to put in place to address the investigation and recovery of misspent funds due to administrative error, including action steps and completion timelines _____

8.1.6 What type of sanction will the Lead Agency place on clients and providers to help reduce improper payments due to program violations? The Lead Agency is required to impose sanctions on clients and providers in response to fraud.

- Disqualify client. If checked, please describe, including a description of the appeal process for clients who are disqualified. _____ Disqualify client. If checked, please describe, including a description of the appeal process for clients who are disqualified.

Clients have 10 days from the date they receive notice of termination or dismissal from the state's subsidy program to appeal the decision. Clients are advised of this right, in writing, on the form (Form 62) that dismisses them from the subsidy program. Form 62 advises clients that they have the right to a hearing; how to request a hearing; and that they may be represented by legal counsel at the hearing. All client hearing requests are forwarded to the DHS Legal Services Office who forwards all hearing requests to the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH) within three business days. OSAH then sets the date for the administrative hearing and notifies all parties of the date and time. Within 90 days of the

initial request for a hearing, OSAH issues an initial judgment affirming or denying the action of the state agency. The decision contains the reason for the judgment, the supporting evidence and policy used to reach the judgment, findings of fact, and conclusions of law. The agency and the client are notified of the judgment and either party can appeal the decision but must do so within 30 days of the decision. If the initial judgment is appealed, the Lead Agency's Legal Services Unit reviews the appeal and issues a final judgment.

- Disqualify provider. If checked, please describe, including a description of the appeal process for providers who are disqualified. _____

Providers who participate in the state's subsidy program and are issued a notice of revocation of their license or a notice of emergency closure are afforded appeal procedures by DECAL's Licensing Division. Staff from the subsidy program follow the lead of licensing since they are the experts on health and safety in Georgia, and providers must have a license or exemption to participate in the subsidy program. DECAL's Licensing Division allows providers 10 days to appeal the revocation or two days to appeal the emergency closure. Providers are advised of this right on the revocation or emergency closure paperwork. All revocation or emergency closure appeal requests are forwarded to DECAL's Legal Services Unit who forwards all hearing requests to the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH) immediately. OSAH then sets the date for the administrative hearing and notifies all parties of that date and time. After the hearing, OSAH issues an initial judgment affirming or denying the action of the state agency. The agency and the provider are notified of the judgment and either party can appeal the decision but must do so within 30 days of the decision. If the initial judgment is appealed, DECAL's Legal Services Unit reviews the appeal and issues a final judgment.

Providers who participate in the subsidy program and are disqualified due to administrative reasons (such as not submitting required paperwork or not cooperating with an investigation) are not afforded appeal rights.

- Prosecute criminally
- Other. Describe _____

In addition to disqualifying a provider or client, other methods used by the Lead Agency to sanction a provider may include requiring the provider or client to repay funds received as a result of improper payments (see 8.1.5) or requiring a provider to attend mandatory training to continue participation in the subsidy program.