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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Children across Georgia Have Access to Free Meals This Summer**

*The Summer Food Service Program is available to children 18 and under throughout the state*

**Atlanta, Ga., (May 12, 2017)** - Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) announces that free meals are available for children 18 and under (and some eligible adults) throughout the state through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The SFSP, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is administered in Georgia by DECAL.

Over 60 percent of Georgia's school-aged children are eligible for free or reduced lunch when school is in session. The SFSP provides access to free meals in low-income areas during the summer months when students are out of school and may not have access to well-balanced meals throughout the day.

Parents and children can find area sites where meals will be served by visiting DECAL's website at <http://decals.ga.gov/Nutrition/Search.aspx>. Additionally, sites can be located by calling 1-855-550-SFSP (7377) or by texting "FOODGA" to 877-877 (standard messaging and data rates apply).

Nutrition Services Director, Falita Flowers, explained the importance of the Summer Food Service Program. "The SFSP is a critical summer resource for children when school is out of session. During the summer, children who receive free and reduced-price meals no longer have that resource available to them. This program helps fill the gap and ensures children have access to free, healthy meals so they can continue to play, learn, and grow."

For more information about the SFSP and to locate a site where children can access nutritious, free meals, visit the DECAL website at <http://www.decals.ga.gov/Nutrition/Search.aspx>. Use the search function (zip code or county) to find a list of all local facilities open to the public and sponsors, addresses, maps, contact names, and phone numbers.

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

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

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

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