



BRIGHT FROM THE START

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
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Nathan Deal
GOVERNOR

Amy M. Jacobs
COMMISSIONER

September 8, 2016

Dear CAPS Recipient or Early Care and Education Provider,

As Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), I am writing with **important news** about the changes to the CAPS program we communicated in August. We have heard from many of you expressing concerns about the changes.

We at DECAL have heard your concerns; we understand your concerns; and we have considered your concerns as we've explored options to help minimize the impact of new federal regulations on the CAPS program.

DECAL is **delaying certain planned changes scheduled to begin October 1, 2016**. The following helps explain how we will proceed with the CAPS program at this time.

FOR CURRENT CAPS FAMILIES:

- Family fees will remain the same.
- Families currently in the CAPS program will remain in the program as long as they meet the eligibility requirements at time of redetermination.
- Current CAPS recipients will NOT have to be a member of a priority group to be eligible to receive CAPS funding as long as the family meets the other eligibility requirements.

FOR NEW FAMILIES APPLYING FOR CAPS:

- The funding restrictions instituted on August 1, 2016 are still in place.
- New families applying for CAPS after August 1, 2016 must meet the CAPS eligibility requirements AND be a member of one of the prescribed priority groups.

FOR PROVIDERS:

- The new tiered reimbursement rates based on a provider's star rating in Quality Rated (5%, 10%, 25%) will go into effect October 1, 2016.
- The base provider rate will remain unchanged from current rates.

LOOKING AHEAD:

- Georgia's plan for CAPS was largely written to comply with new federal mandates. Georgia receives federal money to help fund the CAPS program. For Georgia to continue to receive this federal funding, the state must comply with federal guidelines.
- Last year, Georgia's plan for CAPS, which included the planned changes, was distributed and was subject to public comment at meetings around the state. At the time all comments about the plan were considered.
- But, DECAL will soon begin re-engaging CAPS recipients, providers, early care and education stakeholders, professional organizations, and advocacy groups.

- The goal of these meetings will be to work more closely to draft a plan that is in the best interest of children, families, and providers while minimizing adverse impacts and also satisfying the requirements to ensure Georgia continues to receive these important funds.
- DECAL predicts this process will take 6-8 months with an anticipated implementation date of July 1, 2017.

Thank you for honestly and forthrightly sharing your concerns with DECAL. As an organization, we work hard to be transparent, and we want, we need to hear from the people who are directly impacted by the policies and guidelines we create and implement.

As stakeholder engagement opportunities are scheduled, we will post them on www.CAPS.dec.state.ga.us. Please plan to attend one of these meetings to help inform Georgia's plan to maximize access to quality child care; comply with the necessary federal guidelines; and ensure minimal disruption of services to children, families, and providers...not an easy task, but one we will attempt to accomplish together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy M. Jacobs", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amy M. Jacobs
Commissioner