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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Child Care Centers in 11 North Georgia Counties
Eligible for Special Grants**

***Grants Will Help Influence Dietary Habits of Young Children and Foster Healthy Lifestyles
through Good Nutrition and Experiential Learning***

ATLANTA, Ga., (June 23, 2014) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is offering *Farm to Georgia Preschool* grants to child care learning centers located in Barrow, Clarke, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, Jackson, Newton, Rockdale, and Walton counties that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and have not previously participated in *Caregivers Promoting Healthy Habits*. The program, made possible from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, will include activities and training on local food procurement, field trips to area farms and farmer’s markets, edible gardens, cooking with kids, taste tests, and nutrition education. Grants include up to \$2,000 to support *Farm to Georgia Preschool* activities, in addition to technical assistance, training, and other resources.

“We are honored and excited to receive this funding to continue our efforts to promote better nutrition in child care programs across Georgia,” said DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs. “Children spend a significant amount of time in child care settings and teaching them to try to enjoy fresh, healthy foods can set them up for a lifetime of healthy behaviors.”

Jennifer Popadiuk, Nutrition Project Manager, said the grants allow DECAL to expand its innovative campaign to introduce fresh, local fruits and vegetables to children during their most formative years.

“We would like to see more fresh and local produce served in in early child care settings because this enables us to teach children to enjoy fruits and vegetables while their dietary preferences are still forming,” said Popadiuk.

Grant applications will be available beginning July 1, 2014, at:

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/Nutrition/NutritionServicesMain.aspx>

Interested child care centers may attend one of two *Farm to Preschool* Workshops on Wednesday, July 2, 2014, at Georgia Piedmont Technical College in Clarkston, or Tuesday, July 8, 2014, at the City of Winder Community Center. Registration is required. For more information call 404-463-4093 or e-mail jennifer.popadiuk@dec.al.ga.gov.

This project is made possible through a Team Nutrition Training Grant from the USDA/Food and Nutrition Service. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or if all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)

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Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

About Bright from the Start

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