

Questions about Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Funding Restrictions

Beginning **August 1, 2016**, Georgia instituted a statewide funding restriction for the CAPS program. Now only new applicants who meet eligibility requirements AND who are a member of a priority group as defined in CAPS policy will be approved to receive child care assistance. CAPS policy defines priority groups as people who demonstrate the greatest need for child care assistance.

A list of priority groups and the eligibility requirements can be viewed at www.CAPS.decal.ga.gov.

What is CAPS?

Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program helps families access and afford quality child care by providing subsidies through the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). The program, administered in Georgia by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), currently provides assistance to thousands of children each week with payments issued directly to the child care provider.

Why are funding restrictions needed?

Georgia is instituting the funding restriction to ensure that the state is following federal guidelines mandated by the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). To maintain the state's prescribed CAPS funding without terminating child care assistance to families currently participating in the program, it is necessary to prioritize new families enrolling in CAPS based on specific needs.

What is "funding based on priority groups?"

Previously, funding for the CAPS program was based solely on prescribed eligibility requirements. Because there is only a certain amount of money allocated for subsidized child care, the state must sometimes require additional criteria on which to base funding. "Funding based on priority groups" refers to the additional criteria the state currently uses to determine CAPS funding.

The goal is to provide child care assistance to families who have the greatest need. Consequently, the state has identified the groups that have the greatest need and has **prioritized** funding based on those groups. A detailed list of priority groups and the eligibility requirements can be viewed online at www.CAPS.decal.ga.gov. As of August 1, 2016, new families applying for CAPS funding must meet the appropriate eligibility requirements and be a member of a priority group.

Priority groups include: *TANF applicants and recipients, children in DFCS custody or in Child Protective Services, minor parents in school, grandparents raising grandchildren, children with special needs, children in Georgia's Pre-K Program requiring extended care, or victims of a natural disaster.*

As of October 1, 2016, three new priority groups will be added: *persons who are considered homeless, persons experiencing domestic violence, and families with very low income.*

Who will be impacted by the funding restrictions?

The funding restrictions apply to NEW applicants on or after August 1, 2016. New applicants submitting an online application for CAPS after July 31, 2016 are alerted at the time of submission indicating that funding restrictions are in place. New applicants who inquire about or attempt to apply for CAPS in person at their county Division of Family and Children Services office will be notified by DFCS staff about the funding restrictions.

Families currently participating in CAPS will continue to be served as long as eligibility requirements are met.

If I think I am a member of a priority group, how should I submit an application for child care assistance?

Currently, applications for child care assistance are completed online at www.COMPASS.ga.gov. After viewing the priority groups and the eligibility requirements at www.CAPS.dec.state.ga.us, if you think you are eligible for CAPS, complete an online application.

How would applicants know about the CAPS funding restrictions?

Applicants are alerted about the CAPS funding restrictions when they apply through Georgia COMPASS at <https://compass.ga.gov/selfservice/> or in person at their local county DFCS office.

Who can I contact for more information?

Anyone with questions/concerns about the funding restrictions should visit www.CAPS.dec.state.ga.us or call 404-657-3434.