



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
Launches New Support for the Early Childhood Education Workforce**

Atlanta, GA., (July 2, 2014) - Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) today announced the launch of additional support for Georgia's early childhood educators to enhance their credentials through three new programs, 1st Level, 2nd Level, and 3rd Level. For the next three years, early childhood education program administrators and teaching personnel can receive financial awards for furthering their education and earning higher credentials in the field. This program will award a single bonus at each level to eligible applicants who earn the following early childhood education credentials or degrees from eligible institutions from January 1, 2014 through July 1, 2017:

1st Level: Single Payment of \$1,200 for completion of a CDA Credential or a Technical Certificate of Credit

2nd Level: Single payment of \$1,500 for completion of a Technical College Diploma or Associate of Applied Arts or Science Degree

3rd Level: Single payment of \$2,500 for completion of Bachelor's or Master's Degree

Funding for this effort will come from the federal Early Learning Challenge grant (ELC) that DECAL was awarded in December 2013. In addition, DECAL will continue to provide tuition assistance through its scholarship program, to eligible early educators in licensed child care settings, who enroll and attend any of Georgia's SACS-accredited, HOPE-eligible institutions to earn an early childhood education credential.

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“We are excited about the additional support the state can offer early childhood educators thanks to the Early Learning Challenge Grant,” said DECAL Interim Commissioner Amy Jacobs. “Achieving a higher credential will be more affordable than ever for early childhood professionals because of Georgia’s HOPE Grant and HOPE Scholarship, DECAL’s supplementary Scholarship program, and additional funding through the ELC. And ultimately, the children of Georgia will benefit.”

Eligibility information and applications for 1st Level, 2nd Level, and 3rd Level are available through Care Solutions, Inc. at 800-227-3410 or on the programs’ website: www.DECALscholars.com.

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.decal.ga.gov.