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**Quality Rated Announces First Child Care Program to
Receive Inclusion Endorsement**

*D. Scott Hudgens, Jr. Early Education Center at Gwinnett Technical College receives
First Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement*

ATLANTA, Ga., (December 14, 2015) – A Lawrenceville child care center has received the first Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement in Georgia. By achieving this special endorsement, the D. Scott Hudgens, Jr. Early Education Center, located at 5150 Sugarloaf Parkway, has proven its commitment and ability to provide high quality inclusive environments to all children in their community, especially children with special needs.

Quality Rated is Georgia’s tiered quality rating and improvement system, and is similar to rating systems for other service industries like restaurants and hotels. Quality Rated is a way to assess, improve, and communicate to families and communities the level of quality provided by early education programs. After completing the Quality Rated process, early care and education programs receive a rating of one, two, or three stars. Only two and three star programs are eligible to seek the Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement. The D. Scott Hudgens, Jr. Early Education Center earned a two star quality rating, after which it began pursuing the new Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement.

A child care program seeking the Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement first receives a baseline assessment using the Inclusive Classroom Profile, an observation scale from one to seven that assesses the quality of provisions and daily practices that support the developmental needs of children with disabilities in early childhood settings.

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After a baseline is established, the child care program receives free targeted technical assistance from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). If the child care program scores above a five on the baseline or reassessment, the child care program receives the Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement.

“The Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement is a significant step in ensuring that child care programs and teachers are equipped to serve children from all backgrounds and needs in their classrooms,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “I am extremely proud of the D. Scott Hudgens, Jr. Early Education Center for being the first child care program in Georgia to receive the Quality Rated Inclusion Endorsement and for receiving above a five on their baseline, leading them to automatically receive the endorsement.”

“We are so honored to be the first program to have earned the Quality Rated Inclusion endorsement,” said Rebecca Olson, Director of the D. Scott Hudgens Jr. Early Education Center. “It is a wonderful testament to the work our teachers and staff do each day to meet the needs of ALL children. It is also a powerful example for our students here at Gwinnett Tech about the importance of providing inclusive care and learning environments for children from birth to five.”

Families looking for child care can learn more the importance of selecting a Quality Rated child care program at www.qualityrated.org and can search for Quality Rated child care programs on the DECAL website at www.decals.ga.gov.

Quality Rated was formally launched by Governor Nathan Deal and DECAL in July 2013. Currently, 849 child care programs in Georgia (17% of eligible child care programs) are Quality Rated, with an additional 1,591 child care programs in the process of becoming Quality Rated.

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 *Quality Rated*, Georgia’s community powered child care rating system.

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.state.ga.us.