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**State Awards Child Care Expansion Grants to
Four Early Care and Education Organizations**

*Child Care Programs Expand to serve Infants and Toddlers with High Needs in
Georgia's Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs)*

ATLANTA, Ga., (July 19, 2016) – The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), in partnership with Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), has awarded a third round of Child Care Expansion Grants to four early childhood care and education organizations located in the state's Early Education Empowerment Zones (E3Zs).

With funding from the federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, DECAL and DCA award economic development incentive packages for child care programs to expand or to open new child care programs to serve infants and toddlers with high needs in Georgia's E3Zs. The E3Zs are regions of the state that work with DECAL and other state agencies to pilot early education system reform initiatives and partnerships that support better outcomes for young children.

In this round of funding, DCA awarded grants totaling \$281,089 in economic development incentives to: Children's Destiny Christian Academy in Lowndes County; Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. in Bibb County; Sandy's Sandbox in Bibb County; and Schoolzin Schoolzout Christian Learning Center in Catoosa County.

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“I am excited about these four Quality Rated child care programs working with DCA to expand their businesses, so they can serve more infants and toddlers,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “The child care industry creates jobs while enabling families to provide a critical workforce for other industries in our state. These grants will enable child care programs to serve more children with high needs, create new jobs, and support more families.”

Children’s Destiny Christian Academy will use grant funds to serve 35 additional children with \$100,000 of developmentally appropriate equipment. Macon-Bibb County Economic Opportunity Council, Inc. will receive \$87,626 to serve 34 additional children in a larger facility. Sandy’s Sandbox will receive \$48,753 to support 12 new children. Schoolzin Schoolzout Christian Learning Center plans use \$44,710 to expand operations within existing program space to serve 16 additional children.

DCA and DECAL will hold a fourth round of funding for Child Care Expansion Grants this fall. Applications can be submitted from the end of July until late September 2016. To access this application, go to: <http://dca.ga.gov/communities/CommunityInitiatives/programs/E3Z.asp>. To be eligible for a Child Care Expansion Grant, applicants must have earned a one, two or three star rating through Quality Rated, Georgia’s system to assess, improve, and communicate the quality of care a child care program provides. The applicant must also be located in, or expand its business to, one of Georgia’s E3Z counties.

Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum of \$100,000 and must create a minimum of two new full time jobs to serve a minimum of 10 additional infants and toddlers.

Families looking for child care can learn more about 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.

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.

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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.