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Georgia Applying for Federal Pre-K Expansion Grant

Georgia's Pre-K Plus Would Offer Targeted Services to Eligible Children in High-Need Communities While Adding Slots and Reducing Class Sizes

ATLANTA, Ga., (October 21, 2014) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) announced today that Georgia has applied for a multi-million dollar federal grant to expand the state's nationally recognized Pre-K program in areas of high-need around the state. The four-year grant administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, will enable Georgia to develop "Georgia's Pre-K Plus," offering targeted services to eligible children in high-need communities while ensuring that the Pre-K program remains universal, i.e., that any four year old can attend regardless of family income.

Georgia's Pre-K Plus would increase the number of slots in Georgia's Pre-K and Summer Transition Programs in the following five regions: Central (Bibb County), Metro (DeKalb County), North (Hall County, Gainesville City Schools), Southeast (Liberty, Long, McIntosh counties), and Southwest (Crisp, Sumpter, Macon counties). It would also reduce the class size to 20 and instructional staff child ratios to 1:10.

“For more than 20 years, Georgia has been committed to a universal program built on a private-public model that serves four-year-olds in every county, regardless of family income,” said Amy M. Jacobs, DECAL Interim Commissioner. “We decided to apply for this grant once we felt confident it would have no impact on this successful model.”

“Georgia has research to demonstrate the positive impacts of our Pre-K program, experience providing comprehensive services through our Summer Transition Program, and a strong early education department...one of only three in the nation... that can utilize many ‘in-house’ resources to ensure successful implementation of this grant,” Commissioner Jacobs added.

The Preschool Development Grants Program provides funding for development grants and expansion grants. States with small or no state-funded preschool programs are eligible for development grants. States, like Georgia, that have robust state-funded preschool programs or that have been awarded a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant are eligible for expansion grants.

In December 2013, Georgia was one of six states awarded funding through the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), Georgia received \$51.7 million dollars to be used over a four-year period, the highest amount awarded among the six grants. Since it began in 1992, Georgia's nationally recognized Pre-K Program has served over 1.3 million children. This year, nearly 84,000 children are enrolled in Georgia's Pre-K Program.

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.