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Looking for a Summer Camp? State says be a Wise Consumer

DECAL collaborating with Quality Care for Children on Public Awareness Campaign

ATLANTA, Ga., (April 10, 2019) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is collaborating with Quality Care for Children (QCC) to help parents find summer camps and child care programs in Georgia for the summer. Parents can speak with a summer camp referral specialist by calling 1-877-ALL-GA-KIDS (877-255-4254) Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

“Our first recommendation to parents looking for summer camp is to start as early as possible,” said QCC Chief Executive Officer Pam Tatum. “Many camps and child care programs offer scholarships, sliding scale fees, and discounts for registering multiple children. By beginning early, families can find child care that fits their budget, alleviate fears regarding child safety, read reviews of the program, and find a program most convenient to where they live.”

“Summer camp does more than just provide child care for a family when children are not in school,” said DECAL Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs. “Attending camp in the summer can help children learn how to work with others, build meaningful relationships, accept guidance, express creativity, and become more independent and confident.”

“Sometimes, however, families don’t know what to look for or what questions to ask when looking for a summer camp for their children. DECAL and QCC have partnered to create these resources so families can do their homework and make informed decisions about the right camp for their children,” Jacobs said.

DECAL and QCC have produced a thirty-second public service announcement to promote the campaign through print, broadcast, and social media. The campaign is currently underway. You can view the PSA at: <https://youtu.be/QWGs1EaNpus>

Officials encourage parents to consider the following questions when selecting a summer camp or child care program:

- Is the program licensed or accredited? If not, has DECAL granted the program an exemption?
- Has the owner/operator screened all staff, with what methods, and how thoroughly?
- What are the hours of operation, fees, and payment procedures?
- Are parents/guardians welcome to visit at all times?
- Is there a daily lesson plan?
- What are the program’s health, safety, and nutrition policies and procedures?
- Does the staff/child ratio and group size fit into the Georgia maximum staff-to-child ratio?
- Is the staff well-trained? Do they have experience with early childhood/school-age care or children with special needs? What about CPR and First Aid training, or appropriate licensing for transporting children?

“Parents should be aware that there are no assurances that state health and safety requirements are met or enforced in exempt programs; therefore, they should always check a provider’s background and experience before choosing a camp or child care program,” Jacobs said. “Also, exempt programs are required to notify and inform all parents or guardians that they are not licensed by the state.”

DECAL can rescind an exemption if the program submits false information, loses accreditation, or fails to comply with requirements of local, regional and state health departments, fire marshal, fire prevention, and building and zoning guidelines. The exemption process is outlined on the DECAL website at: <http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/ChildCareServices/Exemptions.aspx>

The public is encouraged to call DECAL with concerns at 404-657-5562 or e-mail ccscomplaints@dec.al.ga.gov.

About Quality Care for Children

Quality Care for Children (QCC) is Georgia's leader in equipping parents and child care providers with the resources they need to receive and provide high quality, affordable child. The organization provides on-site consulting, training, business resources, and nutrition programs to child care programs and supports parents with a free referral service and tuition assistance for low-income families. Please visit www.QualityCareforChildren.org or call (404) 479-4181 for more information.

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.al.ga.gov.