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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DECAL Alerts Child Care Programs & Parents
About Leaving Children in Vehicles**

Two-Year-Old Clarkston Child Died Monday after Being Trapped in Car

ATLANTA, Ga., (May 13, 2014) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is alerting child care providers and parents about the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles after a two-year-old DeKalb County girl died Monday after apparently being trapped inside a car for at least an hour, according to police.

In a letter to nearly 6,000 child care programs and over 30,000 parents, Commissioner Bobby Cagle wrote, “It was an accident...an oversight...a car door left open...a distracted caregiver...resulting in a tragedy that will forever change a family in our state, and the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) grieves for the child’s family and friends.”

Cagle said the recent incident underscores the critical importance of DECAL’s “Look Again” campaign which calls for parents and caregivers of children to have heightened awareness this summer of the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles. The basic message of the campaign: When exiting a vehicle, look again in and under every seat in the vehicle to ensure that you don’t overlook a child and, once you know that everyone is out of the vehicle, look again to ensure you close and lock the vehicle’s doors.

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According to media reports, the toddler had returned home Monday afternoon with her mother and twin sibling. The twins' mother took one of the children inside to change a diaper and asked a family member to watch the other child. About an hour after realizing the toddler was missing, the adults found the girl inside the car. Police believe the car door had been left open and the toddler was able to climb inside and shut the door.

According to DECAL records, in FY2012, 21 children were left in vehicles by child care providers; 17 in FY2013; and already 18 in FY2014.

Cagle is asking parents to serve as Georgia's "eyes" in their communities and to contact local law enforcement if they ever see a child left unattended in a vehicle. "By carefully following the state's transportation rules and by remaining vigilant when transporting children, we can help prevent senseless tragedies and keep Georgia's children safe and health and their families intact."

DECAL has posted more information about the safe transportation of children and the dangers of heatstroke on its website at www.dec.al.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 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.