



# Georgia's Multi-Part Strategy for Supporting Infants and Toddlers

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The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) plays a unique role as the state's stand-alone early learning agency for children birth-age five, as well as the lead agency for the state's federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Georgia's overall goal is to increase the quality and availability of responsive care for infants and toddlers throughout Georgia. Georgia's work involves key infrastructure elements (policy, programming, funding and regulations) to leverage child care assistance and quality in a more integrated manner, as well as to strengthen quality supports for infants and toddlers in general. This document describes two aspects of the work: The Quality Rated Subsidy Grant Initiative and the Georgia Early Language and Literacy Grants.

## Part 1: Georgia's Quality Rated Subsidy Grants

Georgia's child care subsidy system has historically been a voucher/certificate-based program. Georgia developed the Quality Rated Subsidy Grants (QRSG) as a new child care subsidy delivery model to increase the quality and supply of, and access to child care slots for young children birth-Pre-k entry.

### Goals of the QRSG are:

- Improve access to high-quality early care and education programs for low-income families.
- Reimburse providers at a rate that supports the cost of high-quality care.
- Create a predictable and stable subsidy funding model for child care providers.
- Create an opportunity for closer relationships between child care providers and families.

### Guiding Principles

- All children, no matter where they live or what resources they have, should have access to high-quality child care.
- If space in high-quality child care is not reserved through nonportable slots, space may not be available for the families who need it the most.
- Child care subsidy should be used to increase quality.
- Onsite eligibility is the most family friendly, efficient way to deliver services.
- Grant-funded slots give states the flexibility to subsidize child care in targeted communities.

### History

- Pilot program from 2015-2017
  - Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Grant funding.
- Implementation 1/1/2018
  - CCDBG funding.

### **Current Numbers (beginning on 7/1/2018)**

- Awarded over 2,700 Quality Rated Subsidy Grant (QRSG) slots.
- 129 QRSG child care providers.

### **Long-term Goal**

- Twenty percent of the population receiving subsidy in grant funded slots, the equivalent of roughly 10,000 slots.

### **Payment Model**

- Year-long grant agreement to serve a defined number of eligible children awarded to child care programs who are located in targeted counties and score well on a competitive application.
- Reimbursement rate: 35 percent over the subsidy base rate for nonportable slots.
- Attendance: Child must be present 10 days each month for full reimbursement.

### **The Families**

- Benefits.
  - Fulltime child care at no cost to them.
  - Onsite eligibility.
- Requirements.
  - Income.
- Fifty percent of state median income.
  - Activity.
- Employment.
- School/Training.

### **The Providers**

- Requirements
  - Two- or three-star Quality Rated program (Quality Rated is a three star system).
  - Georgia's Pre-K provider.
  - Serve infants and toddlers who receive subsidy.
  - Lower teacher/child ratios.
  - Participate in training and technical assistance opportunities.
  - Determine family eligibility on-site.
  - Submit monthly rosters.

### **Evaluation**

- Key Findings from Voices from the Field: Providers' Experiences with Implementing DECAL's Quality Rated Subsidy Grant Pilot Program, May 2017 Qualitative Evaluation by Child Trends of RTT-ELC Quality Rated Subsidy Grants:
  - Parent engagement was a cornerstone of the QRSG Pilot Program.
  - The QRSG Pilot Program achieved its goals.
  - Providers' main reason for applying for the grant was to help families.
  - Providers reported challenges with onsite eligibility determination.
  - Providers reported using grant resources to support the quality of their programs.
  - Providers reported multiple improvements in the quality of their programs.

## Part II: Georgia's Early Language and Literacy Grants

Georgia is supporting 48 infant and toddler classrooms across the state in implementing strong language and literacy instruction for children in the earliest –and most critical– years of life to advance the Governor's goal of every child in Georgia reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

The grants provide support to programs to foster positive and responsive relationships between teachers and children and develop critical early language and literacy skills in teachers and children. Teachers and directors will gain increased knowledge and skills in developing and maintaining a social, emotional, and intellectual climate that supports child-initiated and child-pursued learning and the building and sustaining of positive relationships among adults and children. A unique strategy in this grant is funding for a Peer Coach. The Peer Coach positions are filled by experienced infant or toddler classroom teachers, who, with intensive training and support from Infant Toddler Specialists, provide coaching and mentoring to support the infant and toddler teachers in their program.

### Components

- Full-time, site-based Peer Coach.
- Classroom literacy materials, equipment, and supplies.
- Professional Development for director, peer coach and teachers through quarterly institutes, monthly forums and professional learning communities.
- Data driven coaching using LENA and Infant and Toddler CLASS assessments.

Peer Coach retention rate: 100 percent. Teacher retention rate of more than 70 percent.

A second round of grants is being offered to 80-100 new classrooms. Additionally, the programs that have completed the first year will participate in a second grant year focused on professional development to increase strategies to promote strong social emotional development along with increased literacy skills. Peer Coaches will be offered the opportunity to become certified Professional Learning Community facilitators.

### For more information

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