

Georgia

Greater Atlanta

Georgia is one of six state grantees (including the District of Columbia) awarded EHS-CCP funds. The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for Georgia's partnership. DECAL is a logical agency to harness a strong partnership. It administers Georgia's pre-K program, licenses child care centers and FCC programs, administers the child care subsidy and federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs. The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office and works with organizations across Georgia to promote early care and learning. For the EHS-CCP grant, DECAL partners with five child care centers and 14 FCC homes in the Atlanta area. Combined, the programs serve more than 200 children annually.

FAST FACTS

208

Children Directly Benefiting

508

Children Indirectly Benefiting

19

Child Care Partners

5

Local Communities Affected

\$3.5M

Total Grant Amount

THE MODEL STANDOUTS

Hubs and Shared Services: DECAL's model takes a shared-services approach. There are two resource hubs—one to support child care center partner programs and one to support FCC partner programs. Each partner delivers early education services, while the hubs deliver comprehensive services to the children and families at the sites and provide tailored operational support to each partner. DECAL funds the partnership through grant agreements, facilitates quality improvement, and engages families and the community in decision making about the programs.

Supporting Dual-Language Learners: The FCC sites serve children who are dual-language learners. All FCC partners speak Spanish and provide services to the children in their home language, which research suggests has social and cognitive benefits, and is optimal for English-language acquisition in the long term.⁸ The FCC hub provides professional development and resources to teachers in Spanish and ensures that hub specialists who work with them are bilingual.

Professional Development: Staff at the partner sites each have individualized professional learning plans, and DECAL and the hubs provide training based on staff needs. For example, three sites and hub

specialists have received training from DECAL on the Pyramid Model, an intervention and professional development approach to support children's social and emotional development. DECAL also expands providers' access to higher education by leveraging other resources, such as DECAL Scholars, which provides scholarships, incentives, and awards to early childhood educators in the state who are seeking credentials and degrees.

Improving the Subsidy Process: As the state's lead agency for the CCDF, DECAL is responsible for managing the child care subsidy system. As such, they play a significant role in ensuring that eligible children across the state, including those served by other EHS-CCP programs, can access subsidies. DECAL establishes annual grant agreements with the other EHS-CCP grantees, revises state-level subsidy policies, and implements new procedures to ensure the success of other EHS-CCP programs in the state. This approach maximizes resources to build an integrated service-delivery model. In 2016 and 2017, the partnerships across the state served 1,350 of Georgia's infants, toddlers, and their families.



Only 4 percent of the estimated 106,178 infants and toddlers in poverty in Georgia have access to Early Head Start services.



THE RESULTS

- **All of the DECAL EHS-CCP sites earned a designation in the state's tiered quality rating and improvement system.** Two partner sites earned their first quality rating, and five additional sites increased their rating with the support of the partnership program. These quality-rated programs serve 338 children, in addition to the 200 infants and toddlers enrolled in Early Head Start.
- **All DECAL partnership sites engaged in continuous quality improvement** to ensure high-quality care for all children enrolled in the programs, not only those funded by Early Head Start.
- **Nine teachers completed a CDA, three completed an associate's degree, and one completed a bachelor's degree.** At least 15 teachers are enrolled in accredited coursework to earn a diploma or degree. The EHS-CCP funding supports substitute teachers so that lead teachers pursuing degrees or credentials have time to attend college.
- **Families with children enrolled in the FCC sites reported that they trusted the providers to give their children a supportive and positive learning environment.** Families said their children enjoyed going to school and expressed satisfaction in knowing that their children were receiving healthy meals consistent with their culture.

THE TRUE COST OF HIGH-QUALITY INFANT/TODDLER CARE

Georgia calculates that the cost per child is about \$19,000 per year, on average.

THE TAKEAWAYS

Georgia's families need affordable, accessible, high-quality infant/toddler care. The EHS-CCP is a lifeline: adding high-quality infant/toddler slots with comprehensive services and making broader systemic quality improvements, particularly in rural and other high-need areas.

There is still significant need across the state that more partnership funding could address. DECAL estimates that 106,178 children under age 3 are in poverty in the state. But Georgia only has 4,272 Early Head Start slots, which means that only approximately 4 percent of eligible children are served.

Georgia's child care subsidy program serves about 17,000 infants and toddlers a month, 11,000 of whom may also be eligible for Early Head Start services. Though child care subsidies are a source of support for many families, the comprehensive services the EHS-CCP program offers would be a valuable resource for thousands of Georgia's families.

The cost of high-quality infant/toddler care is greater than DECAL originally estimated. Though the cost varies regionally, Georgia partners agree that \$12,000 per child, per year, is not sufficient to provide high-quality infant/toddler care and learning. The state estimates that the



"I came to Our House in March of 2017. I had no job, no home, no support, two children, and nowhere to go. I knew I wanted to provide a better life for my children, but I was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Having peace of mind from knowing that my newborn child was in the safe and enriching environment of the child care center allowed me to go out and search for a job. Now six months later, and with a lot of overtime between two different jobs, I have gotten a car, an apartment, and most importantly, independence. If it were not for the support of Our House and its teachers, none of this progress would have been possible."

—Partnership Parent



The Ripple Effect

- The EHS-CCP directly serves 208 children, and more than twice that many are indirectly affected.
- Ten newly credentialed infant/toddler teachers are providing services to 80 children. Assuming they stay in the workforce, this benefit will continue to pay off for Georgia's children long after the current cohort ages out.
- All children have access to new research-based curricula, developmental screenings, and enhanced outdoor learning environments.
- More than 200 additional families have access to family engagement opportunities.

true cost of high-quality care for its youngest children ranges between \$16,000 and \$20,000 a year per child.

One of the benefits of the EHS-CCP is that it promotes mixed-income early care and learning settings, which research indicates are beneficial

for children. By investing in existing child care programs in communities, children can attend a program in their neighborhood. By enhancing the quality of care across all partner sites in the community, the EHS-CCP gives families a real choice about where to send their children.

