

# CHILDCARE AND PARENT SERVICES (CAPS): HELPING WORKING GEORGIANS AFFORD CHILD CARE

*The CAPS program provides scholarships that help some low-income working families in Georgia afford child care.*

**BY INCREASING STATE INVESTMENT IN CAPS,** Georgia would go a long way in addressing the **AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY** of high-quality child care for low-income families, thereby strengthening the **STATE'S ECONOMY** and setting up Georgia's most vulnerable young children for **SUCCESS.**



## HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SUPPORTS GEORGIA'S FAMILIES BY:



Increasing school readiness



Supporting social-emotional development



Improving health and well-being



Helping parents and caregivers maintain stable employment



## QUICK FACTS ABOUT CAPS

Georgia's CAPS Program aims to **SERVE 50,000 CHILDREN ANNUALLY** up to the age of 13 through early learning, afterschool, and summer programming. Families make their own decisions about what type of care is best for their child based on their needs and program availability. All components of Georgia's CAPS Program, including eligibility, are administered by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).

### ELIGIBILITY

Family eligibility is set **at or below 50% of the state median income** based on family size (e.g., \$36,601 for a family of four).

In addition to meeting income eligibility, participating parents and caregivers must participate in **24 hours/week of approved activities** (e.g., work, two-year degrees, and training programs).

Due to limited funding, **DECAL identified priority groups**, such as children from very low-income families, children with disabilities, and children in DFCS custody, to help ensure that children most in need are prioritized for scholarships.



**AN ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT OF \$10 MILLION** would allow for more than **1,500 NEW INFANTS AND TODDLERS** to be served by the CAPS Program giving them access to the critical care and supports they and their families need to thrive.



## WHY SHOULD GEORGIA INVEST IN CAPS?

**ACCESS IS CRITICAL.** Such care is particularly important during the earliest years of a child's life, when the brain is developing most rapidly.

With the **COST OF CHILD CARE** equaling near **40% OF THE EARNINGS** of a low-income family, many families struggle to find and afford reliable child care.<sup>i</sup>

**ONLY AN ESTIMATED 14.8%** of income-eligible children in Georgia **RECEIVE A CAPS SCHOLARSHIP.**<sup>ii</sup>

### HIGH-QUALITY CARE

To help ensure that participating low-income families have access to high-quality child care, **all eligible CAPS providers must be Quality Rated** through Georgia's quality rating and improvement system for child care programs by December 2020.

### FUNDING

CAPS is primarily funded through the **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)**, a federal program. The state meets the required match and has made modest, **targeted investments** in recent years, adding \$5.5 million in 2017 and \$500,000 in 2019 to the state budget.



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## » FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### **What is the difference between CAPS and other child care initiatives, such as Head Start and Georgia's Pre-K?**

Georgia's Pre-K Program is the voluntary, free program available to all of Georgia's four-year-olds regardless of parental income. Funded by the Georgia Lottery, it serves approximately 60% of the state's four-year-olds.

Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded programs that provide comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent engagement services to low-income children. Head Start serves 3- and 4-year-olds and Early Head Start serves infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. However, Head Start and Early Head Start programs only serve a small portion of eligible children.<sup>iii</sup> Although these programs play a critical role in supporting Georgia's young learners, additional support is needed to provide high-quality early care and education during the earliest years of a child's life, particularly for low-income families.



### **Does every eligible family receive CAPS?**

No. Only an estimated 14.8% of income-eligible children in Georgia are served by CAPS, and DECAL prioritizes children to receive CAPS by identifying priority groups in order to serve those most in need. CAPS is not an entitlement program meaning that it does not serve everyone who applies and is eligible due to limited funding.



### **Although CAPS does not fund every eligible family, do other programs (e.g. TANF, Medicaid, WIC) make up the gaps in access to child care?**

No. Programs such as TANF, Medicaid, and WIC provide critical supports, such as health care and nutrition, to eligible children and their families – many of whom are also eligible for CAPS. However, these programs do NOT provide child care to Georgia's youngest children.



### **How much of the cost of child care does the CAPS Program cover?**

The CAPS Program covers a set reimbursement rate based on the type of care, location, and age of child minus the amount the family is responsible for, known as the family fee, which is capped at 7% of a family's annual income. However, Georgia's set reimbursement rates are often significantly lower than the current cost of care due to limited funding. Providers often pass on the additional cost to families. Low reimbursement rates can make it difficult for providers to provide high-quality care and may discourage providers from accepting CAPS.



### **Why is it important to keep child care costs low for low-income families?**

Low-income families spend on average approximately four times the share of their income on child care relative to their higher income peers,<sup>iv</sup> making it difficult for low-income families to afford other essentials, such as food and housing, while maintaining stable employment.

<sup>i</sup> Johnson, M. (2016, July). Help Needed to Meet Georgia's Laudable Child Care Goals. Retrieved April 15, 2019, from <https://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Funding-Georgia-Child-Care-Plan.pdf> <sup>ii</sup>Ullrich, R., Schmit, S., & Cosse, R. (2019, April). Inequitable Access to Child Care Subsidies. Retrieved May 8, 2019, from [https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019/04/2019\\_inequitableaccess.pdf](https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019/04/2019_inequitableaccess.pdf) <sup>iii</sup> Georgia's Cross Agency Child Data System (2019). 2017-18 Total Unduplicated Number by Early Childhood Service [Search engine]. Retrieved from <http://www.gacacds.com/Reports/Default> <sup>iv</sup> Laughlin, L. (2013). Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 2011. Household Economic Studies, P70-135, 70-135. Retrieved April 11, 2019.