

Excerpt from Expanding High-Quality Child Care for Infants & Toddlers

Lessons from Implementation of Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships in States



Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships

Awards and State Profiles

Total Annual Partnership Awards to All Grantees

| State | Federal FY 2015-2019 Round 1 Grants ^A | Federal FY 2017-2021 Round 2 Grants ^B | Federal FY 2019- 2023 Round 3 Grants ^C |
|----------------------|---|---|--|
| ALABAMA | \$ 8.3 million | \$ 2.2 million | \$10.5 million |
| DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA | \$ 0.9 million | \$ 3.0 million | \$ 7.6 million |
| GEORGIA | \$16.2 million | \$ 2.1 million | \$20.1 million |
| LOUISIANA | \$ 8.4 million | \$ 5.2 million | \$15.5 million |
| MARYLAND | \$ 3.4 million | \$ 0 | \$ 4.5 million |
| OKLAHOMA* | \$11.8 million | \$ 7.8 million | \$24.3 million |
| WASHINGTON | \$ 8.4 million | \$ 4.1 million | \$13.3 million |

Note:

Round 1 Grants – In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, Congress allocated \$500 million for the first round of EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants. ACF awarded the grants for this first round to state and local agencies in winter 2014. Grantees must reapply for these awards every five years.

Round 2 Grants – Congress allocated an additional \$135 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants in FY 2016. ACF awarded the grants for this second round of funding in winter 2017.

Round 3 Grants – Congress allocated a combined \$165 million for new EHS expansion and EHS-CC Partnership grants between FY 2018 and FY 2019. ACF awarded the grants in spring 2019. Spring 2019 awards also included grant renewals for state and local agencies that had received Round 1 awards in winter 2014.

Endnote:

A Calculated by the author based on information on the federal fiscal year 2014 awards, found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecl/early-learning/ehs-cc-partnerships/grant-awardees>.

B Calculated based on data from the Tracking Accountability in Government Grants System, available at <https://taggs.hhs.gov>.

C Data provided by the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, via email on August 16, 2019.

* Oklahoma funding amounts include grants to two tribal EHS-CC Partnerships grantees.

To see the full report, please visit: www.theOunce.org/Partnerships



GA

Georgia received a state Partnership grant to serve 168 children by establishing “hubs” of support in community-based agencies to work with child care centers and family child care homes.

Georgia Profile



Georgia's Story

Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. DECAL administers the child care subsidy program (known in Georgia as CAPS), licenses child care learning centers and family child care learning homes and manages many child care quality supports, including specific programs geared towards and infants and toddlers, and Georgia's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System (Quality Rated). DECAL also houses the Head Start State Collaboration office and administers the universal Georgia Pre-K Program.

In 2014, DECAL leadership applied for an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership Grant because they saw it as a "ground-breaking" new approach that would allow state grantees to layer multiple funding sources to support higher quality services in under-resourced communities. Allocating Early Head Start (EHS) funds to child care programs serving children receiving child care subsidies would expand access to comprehensive services established in Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) to children who could benefit. By the state's calculations, an estimated 126,656 children under age 3 were in poverty, but there were only 2,316 federal Early Head Start slots in the state. At the same time, DECAL thought that about half of all children under age 3 in the state subsidy system (13,000) could also be eligible for Early Head Start.

Georgia applied for and received a state Partnership

grant to serve 168 children by establishing "hubs" of support in community-based agencies to work with child care centers and family child care homes. In addition, several other Partnership grants were awarded directly to local agencies in Georgia by the Administration for Children and Families. DECAL chose an existing EHS grantee to work with centers, and a child care resource and referral agency to support family child care homes to enhance quality. The hubs are also responsible for providing child care partners with technical assistance and professional development to meet federal HSPPS, and to ensure that the children and families receive the required comprehensive health, nutrition and family services.

Once DECAL received the grant, state leaders knew that child care partners had 18 months to meet federal HSPPS. They were eager to align state child care assistance and quality systems with HSPPS, and to troubleshoot where there were differences with federal rules. Georgia already had a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that child care programs could participate in to receive technical assistance and incentives to work toward higher program standards. The state intentionally selected child care partners that would commit to achieve the highest ratings in QRIS to support meeting HSPPS. DECAL integrated training on the HSPPS into the state licensing system to make sure monitors were familiar with them. DECAL also wanted to make intake easier for families, despite the fact that they



Georgia Federal Award

\$16.2 million

Federal FY 2015-2019
Round 1 Grants

\$2.1 million

Federal FY 2017-2021
Round 2 Grants

\$20.1 million

Federal FY 2019- 2023
Round 3 Grants

“Partnerships make sense and provide the flexibility to expand and improve services in communities with high needs without building or renovating schools; instead they partner with existing businesses.”

**CAROL HARTMANN, Former Director of Policy & System Reform, Bright from the Start:
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (has since retired from DECAL)**

would need to qualify for both the EHS program and the state child care subsidy program. The state allowed child care partners to determine eligibility for state subsidies on-site, as part of their grant agreement with them. DECAL trained hub and child care staff responsible for intake, and provided ongoing technical assistance and monitoring to ensure adherence to the state rules.

Differences in eligibility policies between EHS and the child care subsidy program emerged, since subsidy is tied to parent work and education participation, and EHS is not. DECAL made changes to child care assistance policies to make it easier for families to maintain eligibility. One strategy was to allow parents to use their volunteer hours in the early childhood program as approved activities along with work and training or education. Since many parents of eligible children had variable work hours, this provision provided continuity when their hours of approved work activity fell a little short of the 24 hours per week the state required. The rationale was that that family services staff in the hubs and partner sites were tracking the hours and overseeing the volunteering.

DECAL realized that there was a gap between state and federal standards, and that subsidy payment levels were insufficient to cover the cost of high-quality services. For example, Georgia state child care licensing requirements for center teacher-child ratios and group sizes for infants and toddlers (one adult to every six children with a group size of 12 for infants) exceeded the HSPPS limits (one adult to every four with a group size of eight), which meant that child care partners needed to employ more teachers to care for the same number of children. There were wide differences in family child care learning homes' ratio and group size standards as well. The research-based HSPPS kept these numbers smaller to facilitate individual support of infant and toddler development and less hectic group settings for very young children. DECAL made a decision to use 12-month grants to pay for subsidy slots for eligible children

in care that met high-quality ratings; this was something they had done previously for highly ranked programs in the state QRIS with their Federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant. Not only did the grants provide stable payments based on the number of children in care, but they also tied higher rates to quality standards and paid at the highest subsidy rate available.

Georgia DECAL leaders believe the steps they have taken toward integrating HS and child care have provided valuable lessons that are influencing the early childhood field and the state's early learning system. "Implementing the Partnerships requires a paradigm shift for the Head Start grantees, child care programs, and the state child care subsidy staff," said Carol Hartmann, at DECAL, but she recommends making the effort. "Partnerships make sense and provide the flexibility to expand and improve services in communities with high needs without building or renovating schools; instead they partner with existing businesses."

What Were Georgia's Strategies?

Leveraged multiple funding sources and state systems to support program success and quality.

- Used direct 12-month grants to pay for slots for infants and toddlers that met eligibility requirements for both EHS and state child care subsidy in child care partner sites, with payments tied to quality standards.
- Aligned supports in the state QRIS available to child care partners, including free Quality Rated technical assistance, professional development and bonus packages as they raised quality.
- Worked with the child care resource and referral agency to make sure working families earning low incomes seeking referrals would receive accurate information about the opportunity to enroll with Partnerships partners.

- Made state-funded early childhood regionally-based inclusion specialists available to all Partnerships grantees and partners to provide professional development, technical assistance, and resources designed to support programs in identifying and addressing barriers to serving children with developmental delays or disabilities, including those with challenging behaviors, in the same classrooms as their typically developing peers. The inclusion specialists also assist with referrals to community resources.
- Contracted with trusted local entities to act as “hubs” of support to help child care partners meet federal HSPPS that were higher than some state rules. Georgia contracted with an EHS grantee for centers and child care resource and referral to work with family child care homes.

Supported continuous access to infant and toddler child care for working families earning low incomes.

- Allowed parents to count hours they volunteered in Partnerships classrooms toward the state child care subsidy regulation requiring 24 hours of approved work or education/training activities.
- Ensured children aging out of the Partnerships slots would maintain their child care subsidy to ensure continuity of care rather than go on the state waitlist.
- Waived family copayments toward the child care subsidy that would have been required under the state’s rules for families with incomes under 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or in Partnerships settings.

Raised the bar for what quality infant and toddler child care could and should be.

- Required child care partners to participate in the state QRIS. This requirement had the impact of raising quality across the whole center or family child care home, which benefits all children served in these settings, not only the children in Partnerships slots.

Built a higher education pathway for the infant and toddler workforce.

- Leveraged existing scholarship program and the QRIS to provide support for teachers and family child care providers. The DECAL Scholars program offers education counseling, scholarships and cash awards to those who achieve higher levels of education and continue to work in the early childhood field. This helped Partnership teachers attain Child Development Associate (CDA) degrees as required by HSPPS, as well as access other professional training and coaching to improve practices with children under three and their parents.

Piloted reforms that could be expanded statewide to improve care for many more infants and toddlers.

- Expanded the coaching and quality supports for family child care homes that were piloted in metro Atlanta by partnering with the state’s child care resource and referral agency.
- Implemented changes in state subsidy policies – such as using some 12-month grants to providers rather than certificates or vouchers – to support higher quality infant and toddler care and to enhance the stability and continuity of early learning and development services extending through the transition to school.

USEFUL LINKS AND CITATIONS

The state agency website includes several resources describing the program in GA and research on its implementation. <http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/ChildCarePartnership.aspx>

Policy describing volunteer work as a state approved activity may be found in Section 6.8.2.2. of the Georgia’s Subsidy Program Policy Manual. https://caps.dec.al.ga.gov/assets/downloads/CAPS/06-CAPS_Policy-Eligibility%20Requirements.pdf

Information on the regionally-based inclusion specialists. <http://dec.al.ga.gov/InstructionalSupports/InclusionServices.aspx>

DECAL Scholars program. <https://www.dec.al.scholars.com/>

Administration for Children and Families, Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships Georgia State Grantee Profile. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/ga_ehsccp_grantee_profile_final.pdf

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The Ounce of Prevention Fund (the Ounce) gives children in poverty the best chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest-quality care and education from birth to age five. The Ounce envisions a world in which high-quality early learning opportunities beginning at birth are an integral part of our nation's education system. With commitment to quality as our guiding principle, the Ounce works at the intersection of practice, policy and research and forges public-private partnerships. Over the last 30 years, the Ounce has developed an effective approach to advancing knowledge, testing ideas in real-world settings, advocating for policy change, engaging champions and training practitioners and leaders.