



# AWARDS for Early Educators

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

**Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning** is proud to support Georgia's early care and education professionals through the AWARDS for Early Educators program. This time-limited program requires individuals to pursue higher early childhood education (ECE) credentials and degrees than the credential/degree they currently hold.



## Pre-Qualification and Application Form

The **AWARDS for Early Educators** program will award a bonus to eligible applicants who have earned a higher qualifying credential/degree no more than 12 months prior to the month of applying for **AWARDS for Early Educators**. Applicants may qualify for a maximum of two payments at each level.

### CDA/TCC

**\$1,200** for attaining a CDA Credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition or a Technical Certificate of credit (Infant/Toddler Care Specialists will receive \$1,300)

**475 CDA/475 TCC**

**Awarded!**

### TCD/AAS

**\$1,500** for attaining a Technical College Diploma or Associate of Applied Science Degree

### BA/MA

**\$2,500** for attaining a Bachelor's or Master's Degree

### TO BE ELIGIBLE:

- ✓ You must be able to document that you are a United States citizen, legal permanent resident, qualified alien or non-immigrant.
- ✓ You must be a teacher, assistant teacher, director, or assistant director (all other positions do not qualify) employed and paid by one of the following:
  - ✦ A child care learning center that is licensed by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
  - ✦ A child care learning center that is licensed by the Department of Defense
  - ✦ An exempt Head Start center
  - ✦ A Georgia Pre-K teacher/assistant teacher in a public school
  - ✦ A registered family child care learning home
- ✓ You must work a minimum of 25 hours per week in your primary role as a teacher or assistant teacher in an infant, toddler, three-year-old **OR** Pre-K classroom in the instructional part of the day (before/after school program personnel do not qualify) or 40 hours per week as a director, assistant director or family child care learning home provider. Volunteer work does not qualify.
- ✓ You must earn \$16.50 per hour or less, including bonuses.
- ✓ You must submit a copy of your Professional Development System profile reflecting your GaPDS number, the name of your current employer, and a "Pending" or "Active" status. See instructions on page seven.
- ✓ You must have been employed with your current employer for at least six consecutive months in an eligible position or be a registered family child care learning home provider for six consecutive months.
- ✓ Your work setting must be **ONE** of the following:
  - ✦ A program that is participating in or has earned a Quality Rated designation

**OR**

  - ✦ Is a Georgia Pre-K program in a public school

**OR**

  - ✦ A participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

**OR**

  - ✦ Serving children of whom 25% or more receive a child care subsidy from the Child and Parent Services (CAPS) program.
- ✓ You must have earned an early childhood education, child development or child care administration credential or degree **no more than 12 months prior to applying for AWARDS for Early Educators**.

Rev. 10/2017

**AWARDS for Early Educators** funds are awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. All rules and eligibility requirements re subject to change without notification. Applications are updated when program revisions occur. Visit [www.DECALscholars.com](http://www.DECALscholars.com) to download the most recent application or to apply online.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **I am paid a salary. How is my hourly wage calculated?** Your hourly wage is calculated by dividing your annual salary (including bonuses) by the actual number of hours you work all year to determine your hourly wage. Regardless of whether you are a 10 or 12 month employee, your actual hourly wage must be \$16.50 or less to qualify for **AWARDS for Early Educators**.
2. **What is the Professional Development System?** The Professional Development System (GaPDS) is an innovative resource developed by Bright from the Start for early care and education (ECE) professionals. It allows individuals to track their career, training hours, and any credentials or degrees earned. See page seven for instructions.
3. **What is Quality Rated?** Quality Rated, developed by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early education and care programs. Similar to rating systems for other service related industries, Quality Rated assigns a quality rating (one, two, or three stars) to early education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in Georgia's voluntary Quality Rated, early education programs embark on a path of continuous quality improvement.  
  
Your work setting qualifies if your facility has been accepted to the Quality Rated program OR has received a Quality Rated designation of one, two or three stars.
4. **Where can I find a Notary Public to notarize the "Affidavit for Lawful Presence Verification?"** A Notary can often be found at your local bank, post office, public library or court house.
5. **Are all ECE degrees accepted?** No. Your degree must have been earned through a college or university that is regionally accredited. See [www.chea.org/ Directories/ regional.asp](http://www.chea.org/Directories/regional.asp) for a list of regional accrediting agencies.
6. **How many ECE credit hours must my associate or bachelor's degree have to qualify for AWARDS for Early Educators?** The **AWARDS for Early Educators** program requires your associate degree to have at least 30 semester or 39 quarter hours in ECE-specific courses. A bachelor's degree must have at least 36 semester or 48 quarter hours in ECE-specific courses.
7. **Should I send a copy of my credential/ degree or do I need to send an official transcript?** If you have earned a CDA Credential, submit a copy of your credential. If you have earned a Technical Certificate of Credit, Technical College Diploma, Associates, Bachelor's or Master's degree, submit a copy of your **official** transcript from the Registrar's Office. Unofficial transcripts are not accepted.
8. **When should I have been awarded my credential/degree?** All credentials and degrees must be issued or conferred no more that 12 months prior to applying for **AWARDS for Early Educators**.

**STEP 1: Personal Information (Please print):**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ County of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
First-middle initial-last (as it appears on your social security card)  
 Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apartment Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or post office box (Enter only one)  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Home Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: / /  
 Social Security Number: / / E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

OFFICE USE ONLY	Gender:	Race:	Ethnicity: (any race)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black / African-American <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Native American / Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Bi- / Multi-Racial <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic / Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Not Hispanic / Latino

**Note: You will receive an IRS Form 1099 as required and must report AWARDS income on your tax return.**

**Employment Information (Employer must complete, sign, and date):**

Name of Facility: \_\_\_\_\_  
Enter name as it appears on Bright from the Start license/registration  
 Work Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Enter address as it appears on Bright from the Start license/registration  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 License/Registration Number: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Facility type (check one):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care Learning Center <input type="checkbox"/> Family Child Care Learning Home	<b>Home or center is licensed by (check one):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Bright from the Start (BFTS) <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Defense (DOD)	<b>OR</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Georgia Pre-K in a Public School <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt Georgia Head Start Center
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**Family Child Care Learning Home Owners Only**

Date you opened your family child care home: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Number of hours your family child care home operates each week: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of children currently enrolled in your family child care home: \_\_\_\_\_

Ages of children currently enrolled (circle all that apply):  
 Birth - 1    1    2    3    4    5

Your Net Income from previous year's IRS Schedule C tax form: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?  
 Yes     No

Serve GACAPS subsidized children?  
 Yes     No

**Applicant's Employment Information**

Applicant's Job Title (mark all that apply):  
 Asst. Teacher     Asst. Director     Owner  
 Teacher     Director (other positions do not qualify)

Is the applicant a Georgia lottery-funded Pre-K teacher?     Yes     No

Is the applicant a Head Start or Early Head Start teacher?     Yes     No

Number of hours applicant works each week: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of months per year applicant works (circle one):    9    10    12

Number of months per year applicant is paid (circle one):    9    10    12

Applicant's current hourly wage: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant is paid:    Weekly    Bi-Weekly    Bi-Monthly    Monthly (circle one)

Applicant's date of hire: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (use original hire date if employment has been continuous with present employer, but at different locations)

If applicant is in the classroom, # of children in applicant's classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

If applicant is in the classroom, ages of children in class (check all that apply):  
 Birth-1     1-2     2-3     3-4     4-5     5-12

*As Owner, Director or Human Resources Manager, I verify that the above employment information for this applicant is true and accurate. I understand and agree that receipt of AWARDS for Early Educators monies by the applicant will not affect any salary adjustments the applicant may be eligible to receive through our program.*

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Title (print): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicants Must Complete This Page**

I am applying for **AWARDS for Early Educators** for the following credential or degree:

<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> CDA <b>or</b> <input type="checkbox"/> TCC	Earned Date ____/____/____	Name of Institution
<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> TCD <b>or</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AAS	Earned Date ____/____/____	Name of Institution
<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<input type="checkbox"/> BA <b>or</b> <input type="checkbox"/> MA	Earned Date ____/____/____	Name of Institution

**The Following Documentation Must Be Submitted With Your Application:**

- A copy of your valid Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™ OR a copy of your official transcript if you hold a Technical Certificate of Credit, a Technical College Diploma, or an Associate, Bachelor’s, or Master’s Degree
- A copy of two recent pay stubs reflecting the name of your employer, your name, and your gross (before deductions) wages. Family child care learning home providers and owners who do not pay themselves W2 wages submit a copy of last year’s Schedule C or other federal tax form documenting net business income
- A copy of your Georgia Professional Development System profile reflecting your GaPDS number, the name of your current employer, and a “Pending” or “Active” status. See page seven for more information.
- Your completed and notarized Affidavit for Lawful Presence Verification (page five) and a copy of the FRONT and BACK of a secure and verifiable document (see page six for information)

**STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION:** Read carefully before signing and dating.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (*Applicant’s Name*) attest that all of the information appearing on this application and in supporting documentation is true to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false or incomplete information knowingly provided on this application or in supporting documents may be grounds to be denied participation in this program and may prevent me from future participation in any DECAL Scholars programs. I understand that intentionally providing false information on this application or in supporting documents is a violation of state law and may result in civil or criminal proceedings. I authorize any agent or employee of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning to verify this information and release it to any necessary party for my consideration in this program. I understand that, if approved and awarded funds, I will receive a 1099 tax form and am required by the IRS to report the income on my tax return. I also understand and agree that my personal information may be shared with the Georgia Professional Development System.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Applicant’s Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_ *Date*

You must have earned your credential/degree no more than 12 months prior to applying for AWARDS.

**Awards will be issued on a first come, first serve basis. Completed applications will be processed in the order they are received. An application will not be considered complete until ALL supporting documentation is received.**

Mail your completed application and supporting documentation to

**DECAL Scholars Programs**  
 c/o Care Solutions, Inc.  
 1117 Perimeter Center West, Suite W-300 Atlanta, GA 30338  
 support@DECALscholars.com

**AWARDS for Early Educators** is funded through a grant made possible by the U. S. Department of Education.

If you have any questions, call 800-227-3410 or 770-642-6722.

**www.DECALscholars.com**



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning



**DECAL Scholars programs** are managed by Care Solutions, Inc.

Affidavit for Lawful Presence Verification:

**Affidavit For Lawful Presence Verification  
For  
Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning  
AWARDS for Early Educators**

By executing this affidavit under oath, as an applicant for an AWARDS for Early Educators payment or for other public benefit as referenced in O.C.G.A. §50-36-1(a)(3)(A), I hereby swear and affirm that the following is true and correct with respect to my application for an AWARDS for Early Educators payment from Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

Name of Person Receiving Benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check only ONE of the following:**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ I am a United States citizen 18 years of age or older.
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ I am a legal permanent resident of the United States, 18 years of age or older.  
(You must submit a copy of the FRONT and BACK of your Legal Permanent Resident card).
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ I am a qualified alien or non-immigrant under the Federal Immigration and Nationality Act, 18 years of age or older, with an alien registration number issued by the Department of Homeland Security or other federal immigration agency  
(You must submit a copy of the FRONT and BACK of your Alien Registration Receipt card).

My alien registration number issued by the Department of Homeland Security or other federal immigration agency is: \_\_\_\_\_ **(Required if #2 or #3 is checked).**

I also verify I am providing **A COPY OF THE FRONT AND BACK** of at least one secure and verifiable document, as required by O.C.G.A. Sec. 50-36-1(e)(1), with this affidavit. A complete list of acceptable documents is on page 8 of this application.

The **FRONT AND BACK** of the secure and verifiable document I am providing with this affidavit is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Identify the document, such as driver’s license, birth certificate if last name is still the same, permanent resident card, etc.)

**In providing the above information under oath, I understand that any person who knowingly and willfully makes a false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation in an affidavit in any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of state government shall be guilty of a violation of O.C.G.A. §16-10-20 and face criminal penalties as allowed by such criminal statute.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN  
BEFORE ME ON THIS THE  
\_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

## Secure and Verifiable Documents Under O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2

*Issued August 1, 2012 by the Office of the Attorney General, Georgia*

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011 (“IIREA”) provides that “[n]ot later than August 1, 2011, the Attorney General shall provide and make public on the Department of Law’s website a list of acceptable secure and verifiable documents. The list shall be reviewed and updated annually by the Attorney General.” O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(f). The Attorney General may modify this list on a more frequent basis, if necessary.

The following list of secure and verifiable documents, published under the authority of O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2, contains documents that are verifiable for identification purposes, and documents on this list may not necessarily be indicative of residency or immigration status.

- **A driver’s license** issued by one of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the United States Virgin Island, American Samoa, or the Swain Islands, providing that it contains a photograph of the bearer or lists sufficient identifying information regarding the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A United States passport or passport card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An original or certified copy of a birth certificate** issued by a State, county, municipal authority, or territory of the United States bearing an official seal [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A United States Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A United States military identification card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An identification card** issued by one of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, the United States Virgin Island, American Samoa, or the Swain Islands, providing that it contains a photograph of the bearer or lists sufficient identifying information regarding the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A tribal identification card** of a federally recognized Native American tribe, provided it contains a photograph of the bearer, such as name, date of birth, gender, height, eye color, and address to enable the identification of the bearer. A listing of federally recognized Native American tribes may be found at: <http://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre?BIA/OIS/TribalGovernmentServices/TribalDirectory/index.htm> [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **An Employment Authorization Document** that contains a photograph of the bearer [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A passport issued by a foreign government** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Merchant Mariner Document or Merchant Mariner Credential** issued by the United States Coast Guard [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Free and secure Trade (FAST) card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A NEXUS card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI) card** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A driver’s license issued by a Canadian government authority** [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Certificate of Citizenship** issued by the United States Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Form N-560 or Form N-561) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **A Certificate of Naturalization** issued by the United States Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Form N-550 or Form N-570) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **Certification of Report of Birth** issued by the United States Department of State (Form DS-1350) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **Certification of Birth Abroad** issued by the United States Department of State (Form FS-240) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- **Consular Report of Birth Abroad** issued by the United States Department of State (Form FS-240) [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(b)(3); 8 CFR § 274a.2]
- In addition to the documents listed herein, if, in administering a public benefit or program, an agency is required by federal law to accept a document or other form of identification for proof of or documentation of identity, that document or other form of identification will be deemed a secure and verifiable document solely for that particular program or administration of that particular public benefit. [O.C.G.A. § 50-36-2(c) ]



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

If you have any questions,  
call 800-227-3410 or 770-642-6722  
[www.DECALscholars.com](http://www.DECALscholars.com)



**DECAL Scholars programs** are managed by Care Solutions, Inc.

## GEORGIA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

**All individuals applying for the AWARDS for Early Educators program must register with the Georgia Professional Development System for Early Childhood Educators (GaPDS) as a part of the application process.** The GaPDS is separate from DECAL Scholars. It records and maintains your professional development information – your training and/or any credentials or degrees you earn, in one convenient location.

Registering is easy! You can sign up immediately, even if you have not earned a credential or degree, by entering any recent early childhood or related training you have received.

1. Gather your relevant training certificates, credentials, and/or transcript(s).
2. Go to <https://gapds.dec.al.ga.gov>. Click the Login/Register button.
3. Click **“Create new account for GaPDS.”**
4. Select **“I want to create and manage my Georgia Professional Development System profile or enroll in training”** and click Continue.
5. Follow the directions, including selecting your employer, to create your confidential account. Be sure to record your username and password and secure them for future use. You will receive a confirmation email. Follow the instructions in the email to complete your account.
6. After completing and saving the Contact, Education, Employment, and Training sections, scroll to the bottom of the page and look for the message **“Ready for Submission?”** Click on **“My Profile”**.
7. Scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on the **“Continue to Submission”** button.
8. Check the box next to **“I certify that the statements I have made to Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning . . .”** and click Submit. This will change your GaPDS status from Incomplete to Pending and you will be assigned a GaPDS Number.
9. Click the **“Profile”** link in the Reports box on the left side of the screen, print your GaPDS profile and submit with your **AWARDS for Early Educators** application. Your GaPDS profile must reflect your name, your GaPDS number, **the name of your current employer**, and a Pending or Active status.
10. You will receive an email identifying what you need to submit to the GaPDS to verify the information you entered. **The documents are not shared with the DECAL Scholars programs.**

Two other tabs appear when you enter the system to view your profile: Other Career Data and Demographics. Completing the information under these tabs is voluntary; this data is used by Bright from the Start to determine additional supports and services needed across the state.

You can update your profile at any time by submitting documentation of state-approved trainings, credentials, degrees, conference attendance, etc. as you complete them.

The GaPDS is a tool that benefits the early care and education community in Georgia, and we encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. Thank you for your continued dedication to your professional development and your commitment to improving the quality of care for young children.

If you have questions or need technical support, contact the GaPDS at 404-334-6461 (866-258-7737 outside the metro Atlanta area) or email [gapds@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:gapds@dec.al.ga.gov).

### **Child Development Associate**

In order to be eligible for **AWARDS for Early Educators**, your initial CDA credential must have been issued by the Council for Professional Recognition no more than 12 months prior to applying for **AWARDS**. CDA renewals are not eligible.

### **Eligible Academic Programs**

Academic credentials and degrees must be awarded by a college or university that is regionally accredited (see [www.chea.org/Directories/regional.asp](http://www.chea.org/Directories/regional.asp) for a list of regional accreditation agencies) and must be in early childhood education, child development or childcare administration. In addition, a credential/degree must be conferred no more than 12 months prior to applying for AWARDS.

### **SCHOLARSHIPS and INCENTIVES**

The **SCHOLARSHIPS** program provides tuition assistance and a stipend to eligible applicants pursuing credentials and degrees in early childhood education (ECE). **SCHOLARSHIPS** also awards 100% of the \$425 CDA Application fee (\$400 sent directly to the Council for Professional Recognition and \$25 reimbursed after the CDA credential is earned). The **INCENTIVES** program promotes teacher retention by offering a salary supplement for having earned an ECE credential or degree.

#### **More Information**

The [www.DECALscholars.com](http://www.DECALscholars.com) website has complete program information and online applications for each of the following programs: **AWARDS for Early Educators**, **SCHOLARSHIPS** and **INCENTIVES**.



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

If you have additional questions about the programs above,  
please call the program administrator,  
Care Solutions, Inc.  
800-227-3410 or 770-642-6722.



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