

**To: Early Childhood Care and Education Community**

**Subject: Policy Updates to DECAL SCHOLARS**

The goal of the DECAL Scholars programs (SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS for Early Educators, and INCENTIVES) is to support, reward, and retain Georgia's early care and education (ECE) workforce. To ensure the continued success and sustainability of these programs, the following policy changes are being implemented August 1, 2015:

**SCHOLARSHIPS:**

- As of the fall 2015 semester, SCHOLARSHIPS recipients enrolled in three (3) credit hours or less will receive a \$250 stipend for books and other expenses. SCHOLARSHIPS recipients enrolled in four (4) credit hours or more will receive a \$500 stipend.
- The allowance for tuition and mandatory fees will remain the same at public institutions. Private institution allowances will meet the match maximum, according to updated HOPE guidelines, at \$1,968.

**INCENTIVES:**

- As of the fall 2015 INCENTIVES period, the award date of the highest-earned qualified credential or degree must be five years or less from the year applying for INCENTIVES (i.e., 2015 applicants must present a credential or degree dated 2010 or later). This applies to all **new** INCENTIVES applicants and **re-applicants** applying at a higher educational level. This requirement is waived through the fall 2016 INCENTIVES application period for INCENTIVES applicants who have previously been approved and are reapplying for the remaining additional payments. All other eligibility requirements remain the same and must be met. As of the spring 2017 INCENTIVES application period, all applicants must meet this requirement.

**AWARDS for Early Educators:**

- **Pre-applications:** As of June 5, 2015, AWARDS for Early Educators pre-applications are not being accepted while policies are being reviewed and updated by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning because of the overwhelming success of the program. Visit [www.decalscholars.com](http://www.decalscholars.com) in September for updated information.
- **Final Applications:** As of August 1, 2015, the receipt date of your final application must be within 12 months of the award date of your credential or degree as reflected on your official transcript. Final payments could be delayed until fall.

DECAL appreciates the overwhelming response by Georgia's ECE workforce wanting to improve the quality of education for Georgia's children through professional development. For complete information on all the programs mentioned above, visit [www.decalscholars.com](http://www.decalscholars.com).